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THE TRAGEDIES OF SOPHOCLES.

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Enchiff.

Sophocles.

THE TRAGEDIES
OF
SOPHOCLES

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE FROM THE
TEXT OF JEBB

BY
EDWARD P. COLERIDGE, B.A.



LONDON
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE appearance of a new translation of the seven extant plays of Sophocles may appear almost like presumption, at a time when Professor Jebb's masterly edition, combining text, notes, and an English version, is gradually approaching completion; nor, indeed, would such a task have been undertaken by the translator, were not his own efforts solely directed towards replacing, without delay, the volume in Bohn's Classical Library, for which the publishers have for some time been seeking a substitute. When they suggested this work to me, I pointed out, and they fully perceived, the disadvantage, under which any less well-known scholar would necessarily labour in following Professor Jebb over ground he had so recently and so thoroughly explored. However, as a translation of Sophocles was required for their old-standing series, and as further delay was undesirable, I consented to undertake the work.

Comparison between Jebb's great masterpiece of modern scholarship and my own humble effort will not, of course, be made by those qualified to offer an opinion; his is essentially an edition, complete and exhaustive, for advanced students; mine is merely one part of such an undertaking, produced, too, as well for the general reader as for the critical scholar. Again, the necessarily long time, which has elapsed since Jebb's first volume appeared,—the "Œdipus

Tyrannus," in 1883,—and the period, which must yet elapse before the edition is complete, coupled with the costliness of the work, offer, perhaps, some excuse for the production of a translation in a more popular form.

Having used Jebb's text as a basis for the following translation, I should wish, at the very outset, gratefully to record my heavy obligations to him. To have neglected this latest recension of Sophocles would have been mere folly, though its very excellence has not infrequently caused me a feeling of deep dissatisfaction with my own attempts. The consciousness, too, that in places my own version may seem to be a faint echo of the Professor's inimitable translation, has not by any means decreased my difficulties. Wilful plagiarism I can honestly disclaim; accidental similarities of expression may well be excused, for such cases do undoubtedly occur in work of this kind, even when one writer has never seen the book, from which he may appear to borrow. Certain turns in translating become almost stereotyped in classical circles; and in all versions, that aim at literal accuracy, there must, in the nature of things, be many verbal resemblances.

If it be necessary to give reasons for the selection of Jebb's text, one might shortly settle the matter by saying, that the universal chorus of approbation, which has greeted the periodical appearance of his volumes, is sufficient evidence that it is generally regarded as the best; to have used any other, under these circumstances, would have argued either want of sense or want of appreciation. But there is a further reason: printed, as his volumes are, under the auspices of the Cambridge University Press, there can be little doubt, that, even apart from the intrinsic excellence of the work, it will ere long become the standard text for a large majority of English students.

So much has already been written elsewhere, and by more able critics, on Professor Jebb's methods, that little need be

added here. Suffice it to say, that his text contains far less of daring emendation, and far more of lucid correction,—where correction is necessary,—than any of its predecessors; it is conservative in the best sense,—no MSS. reading having been lightly rejected, and no conjecture admitted without good reasons being given for its acceptance; cases of hopeless corruption have been noted, and temporary makeshifts quoted or provisionally adopted for what they are worth; in no single instance have difficulties been slurred over; and the result is a text, which, without any wide divergence from authority, is completely intelligible. And this presumably is the kind of text, which any one, bent on translating an ancient classic, would naturally select.

Speaking of editions of Sophocles, Blaydes, in the preface to his edition, wrote: "Of English editions of Sophocles we cannot boast much"; and in a similar strain we find Professor Kennedy saying: "An adequate edition of Sophocles remains yet to be achieved in England." This reproach to English scholarship or diligence can never be urged again since the appearance, first of Professor Campbell's edition, and now of Professor Jebb's, which bids fair to remain long without a rival. It was also to supply this felt want that Blaydes produced his edition, which, deserving as it was of the gratitude of scholars at the time of its appearance, has now been pushed into the background by a newer school of criticism.

Blaydes' edition was too full of corrections of the text and conjectural readings to have more than an ephemeral existence. It is true he proposed to himself for his guidance the famous *dictum* of Porson: "The first care of an editor ought to be to settle the text, so as to preserve a due medium between rashness and timidity"; but it cannot fairly be said that Blaydes altogether succeeded in following these lines. Two great merits he undoubtedly had: he acted as a pioneer to all who should go over the same ground after him, often

detecting errors, if not happily emending them; and secondly, he has applied the following canon with good results,—the interpretation of Sophocles by himself, that is, by a careful study and comparison of his style and language.

Blaydes belonged to that school of critics, who assume an extensive and deep-seated corruption in all the existing MSS., and regard conjectural emendation as our only chance of restoring a text; whereas the criticism, of which Paley, Campbell, and Jebb are, in recent times, among our most distinguished English exponents, considers it safer and wiser, as a general rule, to adhere closely to the written text, so long as sense, metre, and grammar permit it.

The followers of the first school, as Paley points out, reduce the text of an ancient author to little better than a field for the exercise of ingenious guessing; and they run a risk of at last entirely losing the original words of the writer, and making emendations, not upon him, but upon previous emendations. To translate from such a text would be hopeless work, and would necessitate innumerable footnotes explanatory of the reading; added to which, any work, based upon such a shifting foundation, would become obsolete in the very short period required for the growth of a new school of these wholesale correctors, who will have none of their predecessors' work, but start at once on a crusade of destruction against it, only to expose themselves to as certain a fate at the hands of others like themselves.

Having explained, then, why and how Jebb's text has been used, it remains for me to add a word on the footnotes appended to this translation. These are both explanatory of the text and of the more obscure allusions. Of the latter I need say nothing. With regard to the former, they have, as a rule, been added only on such passages as are well known for textual corruption or difficulty. Occasionally the

Greek words have been cited in full, that those who have not Jebb's edition by them, and yet are tolerably familiar with the ancient language, may see the reading he has preferred, or be warned, where conjecture has been resorted to. In the very few cases, where any departure from Jebb's text has been admitted, a note to that effect is appended, and his reading given as well. Where two or more explanations of a difficult passage seem equally plausible, they have sometimes been all given; for in a writer like Sophocles, who seems to aim at saying ordinary things in an unusual way, there will admittedly be cases, in which a final decision is well-nigh hopeless. Emendations, which have by this time won general acceptance, have not been noticed, as they have practically become part of the received text.

In short, the aim has been to make these notes as few as seemed consistent with clearness, and yet to enable even those, who are using a different text, to see at a glance any striking variations from it, and, as far as may be, to put the best accepted explanations before them.

It should also be added that Professor Campbell's valuable edition of Sophocles has been consulted throughout, and much help derived from his sympathetic treatment of a difficult author.

Students of Sophocles have indeed little cause for complaint nowadays, with two such works as Campbell's and Jebb's before them, issued respectively by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge,—sufficient guarantee, if the names of such scholars needed any such, for the high standard of their work. The former of these, in an introductory essay, supplies practically a complete commentary to the chief "cruces" in Sophocles; and this, together with the same scholar's "Sophocles" in the "Classical Writers" series of Macmillan and Co., will enable any student to approach the poet with a fair hope of understanding his meaning and realizing his beauties, and at the same time of getting to

know all, that intelligent study in the past has done to elucidate his many obscurities of language and style.

For a list of editions and works bearing on Sophocles, ample information may be obtained from any of the following sources:—Professor Mayor's "Guide to the Choice of Classical Books" (new edition, George Bell and Sons); the larger "Dictionary of Classical Biography," by Dr. Smith; the preface to Blaydes' edition of Sophocles in the *Bibliotheca Classica*, where a most useful summary of all previous editions, with their characteristics, is given; the special introductory note on this subject prefixed to each of his volumes by Jebb.

From these sources the following brief list of the most famous editions is compiled.

- (i.) The *editio princeps* of Aldus. 1502. An excellent edition, having nearly the authority of a MS. This edition served as the basis of all subsequent editions up to that of Turnebus, 1553, which then took the lead until the time of Brunck, who judiciously reverted to that of Aldus.
- (ii.) Brunck, in 4 vols. Strasburg. 1786-89. And in 2 vols. Strasburg. 1786. Both editions containing the Greek text with a Latin version, and the scholia and indices.
- (iii.) Musgrave, concerning whose edition Blaydes is of opinion that, though it appeared later, yet it had been made use of by Brunck. 2 vols. Oxon. 1800. Reprinted, 3 vols. Oxon. 1809-10.
- (iv.) Erfurdt, with scholia, notes, and indices. 7 vols. Leipsic. 1802-25. His notes reprinted separately. London. 1824.
- (v.) Erfurdt and Hermann. 7 vols. Leipsic. 1817. Re-edited by Hermann in full. 1851.
- (vi.) Hermann. Leipsic. 1833-45.
- (vii.) Dindorf. Third edition. Oxon. 1849.

- (viii.) Hartung. Plays and fragments, with German translation and notes. Leipsic. 1850-51.
- (ix.) Linwood. Latin notes. London. 1846.
- (x.) Wunder. Separate plays. Göttingen. 1831-50.
- (xi.) Schneidewin. Leipsic, Berlin, and London, 1851-53.
- (xii.) Schneidewin and Nauck. Separate plays. Leipsic. 1871-78.
- (xiii.) Blaydes (vol. i.), Paley (vol. ii.), in the *Bibliotheca Classica*. London. 1859-80.
- (xiv.) Campbell. Clarendon Press. 1879.
- (xv.) Jebb, still appearing in parts. Cambridge University Press. 1883.

Such are some of the more famous editions of the whole of Sophocles. Of separate plays there have been almost innumerable editors, some few only of whose names can here be given. Among the best known are Lobeck, Donaldson, Monk, Elmsley, Burges, Matthiæ, Campbell and Abbott, Kennedy, etc., etc.

Of translations in verse, those of Francklin, Dale, Plumptre, Campbell, and Whitelaw are the most meritorious; but there is as yet not a single complete prose version in English deserving of mention.

The MSS. of Sophocles are numerous, but very few contain all the seven extant plays.

(i.) The oldest and best is the Laurentianus or Mediceus, which contains all the plays, together with those of Æschylus and the "Argonautica" of Apollonius Rhodius. It belongs to the tenth or eleventh century, and is known by the letters L or M. Cobet was of opinion that all other MSS. were derived from this, but this view is not generally held.

(ii.) A Parisinus MS., known as A, contains all the seven plays, with valuable marginal glosses; assigned to the thirteenth century.

(iii.) A Parisinus MS., known as T, containing the seven plays ; revised by Triclinius ; some readings occur in it which are not found elsewhere.

(iv.) A Parisinus MS., known as B, said to be of high authority ; possibly V (the Vaticanus) was copied from it, as it exhibits many resemblances ; each of these contains four plays only.

A fuller discussion of this subject may be found in Blaydes Index to the MSS., which is prefixed to his edition.

MEMOIR OF SOPHOCLES.

As with many another great poet, whose masterpieces remain the wonder of all succeeding ages, very little is known of the personal life of Sophocles; but this dearth of detail is less to be regretted in the case of a writer, respecting whose age we have ample evidence. The poet is, to a great extent, the product of his age, and, if we know something of his environment, we shall be fairly qualified to reconstruct his life even from rather scanty materials.

Now the long life of Sophocles, extending from B.C. 496 or 5 to 406 or 5, is coincident with scenes the most stirring and names the most illustrious in the whole period of Athenian, if not of Greek, history.

Thus his boyhood would have been passed amid the excitement of the Persian wars, and his imagination fired by the wonderful development of Athens, immediately the danger of foreign invasion was over. He would have witnessed, in his manhood, the rapid steps by which Athens mounted to a position of power and splendour never attained by any Greek state before or after; while, in his later years, the various scenes of the Peloponnesian war, that great struggle for supremacy between Athens and Sparta, unfolded themselves one by one before his eyes. Death came to him at a singularly fortunate moment. The battle of Arginusæ had restored to Athens some of her old prestige, and, though it was but a momentary success, the old poet did not live to see all hope finally extinguished by the disastrous defeat at Ægospotami.

What a list of great names, other than those of general

and statesman, crowds these ninety years! Æschylus, the tragedian; Simonides and Pindar, the lyric poets; Herodotus, the historian; Euripides, the dramatist; Aristophanes, greatest of all comic poets; Zeno and Anaxagoras, the philosophers; sculptors like Phidias, Polycleitus, and Myron; painters like Polygnotus; deep thinkers like Socrates and the Sophists Hippias, Prodicus, and Gorgias. And these are only a few of the great men of that age, with many of whom so popular a poet as Sophocles was doubtless on friendly terms. Little wonder then that his plays, the outcome as they were of a period so intellectually rich, exhibit that perfect workmanship and marvellous finish that have been the delight and despair of all succeeding dramatists.

Passing from the poet's surroundings to the actual facts of his personal life, we find not only that our authorities are extremely scanty, but also that much of what they tell us is little better than the doubtful gossip which ever pursues the steps of those who are something different from the mass. An anonymous life of the poet, of uncertain date, a brief notice in Suidas, with certain incidental remarks scattered through the works of Athenæus, most garrulous of story-tellers, or gleaned from the pages of the accomplished Plutarch, are our main sources for the little that is related about Sophocles.

He was born in B.C. 496 or 5, at Colonus, an Attic deme of great natural beauty on the banks of the Cephissus, within easy walking distance of Athens. His father, Sophilus or Sophillus by name, must have been a man of some means, though his exact employment is unknown; for he gave his son the very best education then obtainable. And such skill did the son acquire in music, dancing, and gymnastics, and so naturally graceful was his figure, that he was chosen in B.C. 480 to lead the chorus of young Athenians in the triumphal dance round the trophy erected after the victory at Salamis.

Twelve years later comes a great epoch in his life. It was the spring festival of the Dionysia, and Sophocles had entered the lists with the veteran Æschylus. Public opinion was divided, and it was only after considerable delay that the Archon Eponymus, whose duty it was to select by lot

the judges in the dramatic contest, hit upon the happy expedient of calling upon the general, Cimon, and his colleagues, who had just returned from Scyros with the bones of the hero Theseus, to take the oath and decide between the two. They awarded the first prize to Sophocles, the second to Æschylus.

According to Plutarch, the old poet was so mortified at his defeat that he retired to Sicily; but Aristophanes, in the "Frogs," depicts such a friendly feeling as subsisting between the two poets, that we might fairly surmise other reasons for the retirement of Æschylus from Athens. What the plays were on this memorable occasion, we are not told. Critics, who have gone deeply into the question, believe that Sophocles exhibited the "Triptolemus," a play dealing with the Eleusinian mysteries; but this is little more than guess-work.

From the year B.C. 468 till his death, Sophocles enjoyed unshaken popularity, gaining no less than eighteen or twenty first prizes, and, even when defeated, never falling below the second place, and that, too, with such a formidable rival as Euripides, who began exhibiting in B.C. 455, a year after the death of Æschylus, and gained the first prize in B.C. 441, the very year before Sophocles made such a deep impression with his "Antigone." It is said that, by way of compliment to the author of this play, Sophocles was chosen in that year, with Pericles and eight other generals, for the subduing of Samos. He does not seem, however, to have evinced any taste for military service; and Pericles is reported by Athenæus to have said of him, that he was a good poet, but a bad general. Not only, then, must Sophocles have been brought into close contact with the greatest statesmen of the day, but it was also during this expedition, if we may credit our authorities, that he made the acquaintance of Herodotus, the father of historians. That a close friendship did spring up between the two can scarcely be doubted, for there is a fragment of a hymn to Herodotus written by Sophocles; and further, the striking parallelisms in their works suggest that one of them was more deeply influenced by the other than would have been the case, probably, if one had merely been familiar with the other's writings.

Of the latter part of the poet's life we have very few details. It was the period of his greatest poetical activity, and perhaps for that very reason the least marked by any stirring incident. To these later years, from B.C. 440 onwards, belong all his extant dramas. Still, it would be unjust to suppose that he shirked his duties to the state. On the contrary, we find among the ten *πρόβουλοι*, a committee appointed to provide for the public safety after the news of the disaster in Sicily, the name of Sophocles. If this *was* the poet, which some have doubted, he would have been performing a somewhat arduous duty for his country at a very critical time and at a very advanced age.

Towards the close of his life, his peace was temporarily disturbed by the unfilial conduct of his elder son. The circumstances were as follows: Sophocles had married twice; by his first wife he had a son Iophon; by his second, a son Ariston. Now Ariston had a son called Sophocles, for whom the old poet conceived so deep an affection, that Iophon suspected he would leave him an undue portion of his property. Accordingly he brought his father before a jury of his tribe, charging him with senile imbecility and consequent incapacity to manage his estate,—a charge from which the old poet triumphantly cleared himself by reciting to his judges that magnificent eulogy on his native place which is contained in the “*Œdipus at Colonus*.” All know the dramatic sequel: how the judges rose in a body and escorted the poet to his home after severely rebuking his son.

This is all that we really know of the life of Sophocles. Neither the date or manner of his death are precisely ascertained, but it probably took place either in B.C. 406 or 5, and as this would bring the poet to his ninetieth year, we shall not, perhaps, be very far wrong in attributing it rather to natural decay than to any of the more fanciful causes which later writers, with an eye to realistic effect, have delighted to invent.

So died Sophocles; full of years and full of honour, blest in his death as in his life, having seen his country in her triumph, and being spared the grief of her humiliation; retaining his faculties to the end, and leaving behind him,

if ever poet did, κτῆμα ἐς αἰὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχοῆμα ἀκούειν.

The deep respect with which the memory of Sophocles was treated by Phrynichus and Aristophanes is no small evidence of his universal and well-deserved popularity; both publicly made honourable allusion to him in the year following his death. Why he was so popular is best explained, perhaps, by the epithet εὐκόλος, "a man of easy temper," which Aristophanes so emphatically applies to him. In him, too, Nature and training had combined to produce almost the Greek ideal of a man,—a beautiful mind in a beautiful body,—and this happy combination, together with his even temperament, no doubt made it easy for him to gain many friends and make few enemies.

If it be worth noticing a charge afterwards brought against him, that he was too much addicted to sensual pleasures, a sufficient answer may be found to it in the following sentence of Mr. John Addington Symonds: "That a poet, distinguished for his physical beauty, should refrain from sensual enjoyments in the flower of his age, is not a Greek, but a Christian notion. Such abstinence would have indicated in Sophocles mere want of inclination." That he was no lifelong slave to his passions is proved by the passage in the "Republic" of Plato (p. 329), where Cephalus is telling Socrates how Sophocles, in his old age, rejoiced to have escaped from carnal pleasure as from "a frantic and savage master." These are scarcely the words of a sensualist.

A second charge brought against him is really scarcely better supported. On a passage in the "Peace" of Aristophanes (ll. 696-700), some have built up a theory that Sophocles, in his old age, turned a second Simonides in his greed for gain. It is, of course, conceivable, as these critics urge, that he may have found himself forced to work for pay in order to meet his expenses; but the remark of Aristophanes is far more probably a piece of banter, not seriously meant; and even were it otherwise, the evidence is far too slight to convict Sophocles of miserly avarice. The feeling against taking money for intellectual work was undoubtedly strong in Greece; this was one of the chief

causes of prejudice against the Sophists, that they taught for pay ; and, this being so, we can scarcely believe that, had Sophocles offended in this respect, he would have retained his popularity to the end of his life, or that his countrymen would have paid him such extravagant honours after his death as to institute a solemn yearly sacrifice to his memory.

One hundred and thirty plays were anciently ascribed to him ; of these, seventeen were regarded as spurious by Aristophanes the critic of Byzantium ; there were also other works that passed under his name. Seven tragedies alone are extant, with a great number of fragments, mostly very short and unimportant. These seven were generally supposed to have been the poet's best work,—the “*Trachiniæ*,” perhaps, excepted, in which there are not wanting traces of that inequality of composition noticed by ancient critics.

Too little is known about the order of their production for any dates to be given, save in the case of the “*Antigone*,” which is thought to have appeared in B.C. 440, and of the “*Philoctetes*,” which is assigned to the year B.C. 409. Both of these won the first prize.

The “*Œdipus at Colonus*” was brought out posthumously by Iophon, but is not on that account to be necessarily regarded as a work of the poet's last years ; indeed, were it not that this play shows signs of interpolations,—the work of a later and less skilful hand,—it would scarcely be too much to say that it is as fine as any, if not the finest, of all his extant works.

Several important changes are attributed to Sophocles in the form and mechanism of the drama. Thus, by the addition of a third actor, he immensely enlarged the scope of the dramatic action. He increased the number of the Chorus from twelve to fifteen, but gave it a more subordinate part in the action of the play, while he reduced the number and length of the choral odes. He is also said to have introduced scene-painting. But the most important of his innovations was the abandonment of the trilogistic form. Tragic trilogies at first dealt with three portions of the same story ; Sophocles is said to have contended with three tragedies wholly unconnected in plot, or even with one

tragedy alone, instead of the old tetralogy, consisting of three connected tragedies, followed by a Satyric drama.

Lastly, owing to the weakness of his voice, Sophocles broke through the custom of the poet appearing himself in character, except, perhaps, in a few slight parts, where this defect would not prove any serious obstacle.

Any discussion of the style and language of Sophocles must be omitted here as a subject requiring too lengthy treatment for the limits of an introductory essay. Students interested in the subject will do well to refer to Professor Campbell's essay, to Mr. Symonds' article on Sophocles in his "Greek Poets," or to Mahaffy's "History of Greek Classical Literature," in any of which will be found an adequate account of him, on whom the ancients conferred the name of "the Attic bee" for the sweetness of his style.

ŒDIPUS THE KING.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS.

A PRIEST.

CREON.

TEIRESIAS, led in by a boy.

MESSENGER.

SERVANT OF LAIUS, a herdsman.

SECOND MESSENGER.

JOCASTA.

CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS.

ANTIGONE } Mutes.

ISMENE }

SCENE.—Before the royal palace at Thebes.

INTRODUCTION.

THE great Theban legend, of which the fortunes of Œdipus form a part, was so well known to an Athenian audience, that Sophocles did not feel called upon to preface his play with any account of the previous history of his hero. To a modern reader, however, of the poet's great masterpiece some few introductory remarks are almost indispensable for a full and ready comprehension of the plot ; and it is to supply this want that the following brief outline of the story is given.

Laius, King of Thebes, being childless, had consulted Apollo at Delphi as to his hopes of issue, and the god had told him, that he should beget a son, but lose his life by that son's hand. Accordingly, when Jocasta, the queen, gave birth to a son, his father, to avoid this danger, gave the babe to a shepherd to expose on Mount Cithaeron, after first maiming the child by boring a hole through its feet and so fastening them together.

The shepherd, however, touched with pity, refrained from actually killing the child, and gave it instead to another herdsman, in the service of Polybus, King of Corinth. This man took the child to Corinth, where Polybus and his wife Merope, being childless, adopted it as their own ; and as such it was reputed, until, one day at a banquet, a man, heated with wine, taunted the young prince with being no true son of the royal house. Upon this Œdipus—such being the name he had received in consequence of the wounds in his feet—questioned his supposed parents, and was partly reassured ; still, to set his own mind completely at rest, he started off secretly to consult the oracle of Delphi and learn the story of his birth. Apollo gave him, however, no clear answer on this point, but thrilled him

with amazement and horror by foretelling that he should murder his own father, marry his mother, and beget unnatural offspring. His resolve is taken at once ; he will never see Corinth and his parents any more. Accordingly he turns his steps towards Thebes, taking the road through Phocis to Bœotia. On his way, he comes to a narrow pass where three roads meet ; a chariot, carrying one man attended by a small retinue, is coming in the opposite direction ; there is no room for the wayfarer on the narrow track, and he is insolently bidden to stand aside ; a quarrel ensues, in which Œdipus kills the occupant of the chariot and all his followers, save one who escapes and carries tidings to Thebes, that robbers have slain the king and all his retinue save himself on the way from Delphi.

Shortly afterwards, it may be surmised, Œdipus arrives at Thebes, where he finds the city, already distracted by the ravages of the Sphinx,—a monster sent by Hera to persecute the old home of her rival Semele,—plunged into utter helplessness and despair by the loss of its king.

The distress of the Thebans is too great even to allow them to make any lengthy inquiry into their monarch's murder. Daily the Sphinx is propounding her dark riddle and exacting a life for every failure to solve it. Œdipus succeeds, where others have failed ; the Sphinx kills herself in vexation ; Thebes is saved ; and the citizens, in gratitude, make the newcomer king, and give him to wife Jocasta, the late king's widow. Upon this the herdsman, recognizing in his new master the man who had slain Laius at the pass in Phocis, but not daring now to publish the knowledge, obtains the queen's permission to leave the neighbourhood of the court, without exciting any suspicion.

Some years elapse before anything occurs to mar the happiness of the new king ; he has children by his wife, two sons and two daughters ; his subjects are devoted to him, and the land has rest and is prosperous. Suddenly and without any apparent reason a fierce pestilence swoops on the city ; there is a murrain on man and beast, and the earth will not yield her increase. All in their dire affliction turn to the great Œdipus for succour ; he has saved them before, and he will not fail them in their present need.

It is this graphic point which Sophocles has seized for the

opening of his play. A body of suppliants, young and old together, with the priest of Zeus for their spokesman, have ranged themselves round the palace-altar to crave the king's assistance. In answer to his fatherly and sympathetic inquiries, they tell him, through their spokesman, of the wide-spread suffering; adding that, next to the gods, they deem him most competent to devise a remedy (ll. 1-57). Œdipus assures them of his sympathy; what they suffer is intensified in his case; all he can do, he will; indeed he has already sent Creon, his wife's brother, to ask Apollo at Delphi what must be done. He is still expressing surprise at Creon's long absence, when the approach of the latter is announced (ll. 58-81). The answer Creon brings is, that the murderer of Laius must be found and expelled from the land, which is still harbouring him. Difficult as it now is to find a clue after the lapse of years, Œdipus at once confidently declares that he will unravel the matter from the very beginning; and, with this promise, he dismisses the suppliants, and summons his subjects to meet him forthwith for the purpose of a general inquiry. (ll. 82-150.)

As Œdipus quits the stage, the Chorus, consisting of Theban elders, chant an ode invoking all kindly deities to protect their city against Ares, the dealer of death and pestilence. (ll. 151-215.)

Œdipus re-enters, and bids all who know anything of the murder of Laius speak, while he pronounces a solemn curse on the guilty wretch, and on all who harbour him. At the same time, he declares his intention of leaving nothing untried to bring home the crime to the murderer. (ll. 216-275.)

The Chorus suggest that the best course will be to summon the prophet Teiresias; to which Œdipus rejoins, that he has already done so; and, as they are still speaking, the aged prophet is led in (ll. 275-299). The king entreats him to use his best skill to rescue the State; but Teiresias is very reluctant to speak; so much so that Œdipus is wroth with him and rebukes him for his selfishness in concealing knowledge, which would benefit the community; even going so far as to accuse the old man of complicity in the crime. Then, at last, Teiresias speaks and declares that the defiler of the land is no other than Œdipus himself, who is not only a murderer, but is guilty of yet deeper

shame. At this unexpected accusation, Œdipus loses all self-control and taunts the prophet with blindness in his art as in his eyes (ll. 300-377). Next he accuses Creon of having suborned the seer, in order to serve his own ambitious schemes to gain the throne. "This prophet," he exclaims, "is a mere charlatan. Why, when the Sphinx was here, had he no good advice to offer? Well, he shall rue his villainy." The Chorus mildly interpose; but the quarrel has become too heated to end here, and Teiresias in impressive language pronounces on Œdipus his coming doom, and hints at the awful abyss of misery in which he will soon be plunged, when the truth is all revealed (ll. 378-428). Œdipus calls upon his servants to remove this prophet of evil from his sight; but, before the seer quits the stage, he repeats his prophecies and bids the king take heed of them and judge of his skill by the result. (ll. 429-462.)

The Chorus have heard what the prophet says, but they will not yet believe that Œdipus is guilty. Who can the murderer be? Let him fly without delay; doubtless he is already a wanderer in secret places; it cannot surely be Œdipus who has done the deed; the prophet is mortal after all, and may be wrong; Œdipus has ever served the State; it is impossible to believe in his guilt. (ll. 463-511.)

Meantime Creon, having heard of the vile insinuations against his loyalty, comes in excitedly to learn why such baseless charges have been brought. Œdipus, however, now accuses him to his face, and refuses to listen, when Creon attempts to clear himself and prove the unreasonableness of the king's suspicions (ll. 512-615.) The Chorus endeavour to mediate,—but in vain; and the quarrel is becoming every moment more bitter, when Jocasta enters and bids Creon depart, and her husband forbear. Creon imprecates a curse upon himself, if he has done aught treasonable, and then leaves the stage, though Œdipus is still far from pacified by the queen's intervention. (ll. 616-677.)

Then follows a long conversation between Œdipus and Jocasta. Œdipus relates what Teiresias has predicted; whereupon Jocasta cuts him short, by saying that little faith is to be put in oracles, instancing the case of Laius, of whom it was foretold,—if not by Apollo, at least by his ministers,—that he should die by the hand of his own son; and yet that could not have happened, for the

child was exposed on Cithaeron, when three days old ; while Laius met his death by the hand of robbers, at a place where three roads met. (ll. 678-725.)

The mention of the spot, where Laius fell, startles Œdipus ; he asks for a description of the murdered man, and every known detail of the tragedy. Everything tallies with his own forebodings ; Laius must have been the very man he killed himself, on his way from Delphi years ago ; in which case he has put himself beneath a curse, and is of all men most miserable. " But who brought the tidings of the disaster to Thebes ? " " It was a servant," answers Jocasta, " the sole survivor who came home." " Then would I could see him ! " (ll. 726-765). The queen replies that this will be an easy matter, and then asks her lord why he is so disquieted. Œdipus recounts the story of his life, telling how he had gone to Delphi to inquire about the secret of his birth, and how, in self-defence, he had killed a man on his way back. From what he has since learnt, there is grave reason for believing that it was Laius he then slew ; the only ground for hope is, that the current story spoke of several actors in the tragedy, not of a single wayfarer. Jocasta repeats that so the story ran at first, and adds that, even if the sole survivor now diverges somewhat from his former tale, there is small reason to believe the predictions of prophets, seeing she has already had convincing proof of their falseness, in the case of her own child. " It may be so," says Œdipus, " but let the herdsman be summoned." (ll. 776-862.)

The Chorus offer up a prayer for purity in word and deed. The impiety of Jocasta and the suspicion hanging over Œdipus fill them with consternation ; they feel that such irreverence and high-flown pride are but preludes to something worse ; the eternal laws of right and wrong must be observed, and whoso transgresses these will surely fall ; the oracles of the gods cannot come to naught ; Apollo must and will defend his honour, which is endangered by the scepticism now in vogue (ll. 863-910.)

But the queen has not really lost all faith in the gods ; only she feels that their prophets may have erred. Troubled, as she is, by her lord's anxiety, she determines to offer prayer to Apollo ; but as she is on her way to do so, a messenger from Corinth encounters her with the news, that Polybus, the reputed

father of Œdipus, is dead, and that the people have sent to offer the throne to her husband. Overcome with joy, she sends a servant to fetch Œdipus, exclaiming exultantly, "Oh ye oracles of the gods, look where ye now are!" (ll. 911-949.) In this expression of relief and joy Œdipus joins; one cause of alarm is gone; he cannot now become his father's murderer; but there is still the risk of marriage with his mother, Merope. The messenger, who has overheard part of the conversation, thinking to relieve the king's mind, tells him he has nothing to fear from that quarter, since he is not the son of Polybus and Merope at all, but a foundling from Mount Cithaeron, whom the royal pair had adopted. He then tells Œdipus how he was himself once a shepherd on the mountain, and, whilst there, received a babe, with maimed feet, from another herdsman,—one, he thinks, who was in the service of Laius. (ll. 950-1042.)

Œdipus inquires, if anyone present knows aught of this herdsman, and appeals to Jocasta to know, if it is the man they have already summoned. Jocasta, on whom the whole truth has now flashed in its terrible reality, endeavours to parry her husband's questions; but he is resolute to discover all, entirely misunderstanding Jocasta's motives for wishing to break off the quest. Unable to shake his resolve, the queen, with one cry of agony, rushes into the palace, not to appear again. (ll. 1043-1072.)

The Chorus are struck by the intensity of the queen's grief, but the eyes of Œdipus are blinded, and he attributes her sorrow and silence to pride and the fear that her husband may prove of lowly birth; but what cares he,—child of Fortune as he is? (ll. 1073-1085.)

The Chorus seem to be reassured by their master's bold words, and, in a joyous ode, predict, that, ere long, Œdipus will be found a true Theban, and, it may be, the son of some god. (1086-1109.)

But the catastrophe is very near. The Theban herdsman is brought in and confronted with his old comrade from Corinth. Most unwillingly he admits that he knows the Corinthian shepherd, who, on his part, is only too eager to boast of his own share in the past. Word by word the truth is wrested from the old Theban, but not before Œdipus has threatened him with severe

punishment for refusing to speak. Œdipus, the King of Thebes, and Jocasta's babe, which was exposed on Cithaeron, are one and the same. The truth is out, and it is Œdipus who has brought it to light. Now he knows the worst ; no need now to ask the other question—"Who slew Laius?" With a bitter cry he rushes frantically into the palace. (ll. 1110-1185.)

"How vain is mortal life!"—chant the Chorus ; "here is Œdipus, once the saviour of Thebes, but now the most wretched of all men living ; his is a fate which warns us to call no earthly creature blest. Time has found thee out ; time has judged. Would God we had never known thee !" (ll. 1186-1222.)

Scarcely have their lamentations died away, when a second messenger appears from the palace, to tell how Jocasta has put an end to herself by hanging, and how the unhappy Œdipus has blinded himself with the golden brooches torn from his dead wife's raiment, and is now bent on relieving the land of his polluting presence. (ll. 1223-1296.)

At this point, Œdipus reappears with bleeding eyes, bemoaning in wild grief the horror of his fate and filling the Chorus with dread. "It was Apollo, Apollo"—he cries,—“who drove me to the frenzied act. Could I have acted otherwise? Nothing was left me in life ; let some kindly hand lead me away, where no man will see me more ! Curses on the man who saved my life on Mount Cithaeron ! If only I had died then, all had been well !” Thus in pathetic strain he reviews the past, attempting, as it were, to justify himself, until the arrival of Creon once more humbles his heart, as he remembers the injustice with which he had treated his former subject (ll. 1297-1421). But Creon has not come to taunt him ; the past is past ; he has nothing but pity for the broken man, and it is with a noble compassion he listens to his agonized laments, and undertakes to perform his last requests. "Bury thy sister," says Œdipus, "and let me wander henceforth on the hills,—aye, on Cithaeron, my appointed tomb ; and for my children,—leave my sons to take care of themselves ; they are men ; but for my daughters,—oh ! see that theirs is not a life of shame and beggary ! Would I could take them to my arms once more !”

Without a word, Creon, filled with a generous impulse, sends

to fetch the children, Antigone and Ismene ; and Œdipus, after embracing them and addressing to them his last words, is led from the stage ; while the Chorus chant the sad and solemn lesson of the play : “Call no man happy, until he hath crossed life’s border, free from pain.” (ll. 1422-1530.)

ŒDIPUS THE KING.

ŒD. My children, latest issue of old Cadmus' line, pray tell me why ye sit¹ here thus, your suppliant branches wreathed with wool? And the city, the while, is full of the smoke of incense, of solemn chants, and moaning cries withal. These things, my children, I thought not fit to learn from the lips of others, and so I have come hither myself,—I, whose name is Œdipus, of whom all know.

Tell me, therefore, reverend sir,—since 'tis clearly thy office to be their spokesman,—what means your station here? is there aught ye fear or crave?² Speak, for I would gladly lend my aid in all; yea, without feeling should I be, did I not pity such-like suppliants.

PRI. O Œdipus, thou ruler of my land, thou seest our years as we sit before thy altars; some as yet have not the strength to take far flights, and some with age are bowed; priests, too, like myself,—the priest of Zeus; and here a chosen band of youths; and yonder in the market-places sit the rest of the folk with their wreaths, and before the temples

¹ Others, "sit here thus earnestly." Kennedy maintains the existence of two distinct verbs, both having the same form *θαάζω*, one connected with the same root as *θοός*, "swift," the other with the root of *θαάσσω*.

² Kennedy connects *στέρξαντες* with *ὡς θέλοντος*, "reposing in the trust that I shall willingly give full assistance;" but the rhythm is much in favour of a stop after *στέρξαντες*, and there is no difficulty in supplying *φράζε* again before *ὡς*.

twain of Pallas¹ and at the ashes of Ismenus,² where the seers divine. For the vessel of our state, as indeed thou seest thyself, is now too sorely tossed and no longer can she lift her head from the depths of the deadly surge; the fruitful blossoms of her land decay; a murrain is on the cattle in her pastures, and a curse on her women's fruitless travail; yea, and the fiery god, detested Pestilence, hath swooped upon the town and is vexing it; whereby the house of Cadmus is being emptied; while black Hades groweth rich in lamentation and mourning.

Now, it is not because we judge thee the peer of gods that I and these children here sit as suppliants before thee, but deeming thee the first of men in life's events as well as in men's dealings with the gods; for it was thou,³ that, on coming to the citadel of Cadmus, didst free us from the tribute we were paying to the ruthless songstress;⁴ and that, though thou hadst learnt nothing from us to help thee and hadst had no careful teaching; but by a god's assistance art thou said and thought to have righted our life for us; so now, O Œdipus, best of kings in all men's eyes, all we suppliants here beseech thee find us some help, whether thou knowest thereof from hearing some god's voice or haply the aid a man can give; for with men of experience I see that, for the most part, the issues of their counsels also prove effectual.⁵

¹ Shrines of Pallas Ὀγκά and of Athene Ἴσμηνία are mentioned by ancient writers at Thebes, and these may be meant here.

² Divination by burnt-sacrifice was carried on in a temple of Apollo on the banks of the Ismenus at Thebes.

³ Reading ὅς γ' with MSS. Elmsley conjectured ὅς τ' to answer νῦν τ' in l. 40, and so Campbell reads.

⁴ *i.e.*, the ravages committed by the Sphinx on the citizens of Thebes, until Œdipus solved her dark riddle.

⁵ *i.e.*, practical experience in the past generally makes men's advice as to the future reliable; they counsel the right course, and the results are good. Kennedy renders, "since I perceive that experienced counsellors do also, most of any, keep alive the habit of conferring in counsel;"—τὰς ξυμφορὰς τῶν βουλευμάτων being taken to mean "comparisons of

Up then, prince of mortal men, right our city once again !
Up ! and be on thy guard, for now this land is calling thee
saviour for thy past goodwill ; and never be this our memory
of thy reign, that we once stood upright and fell afterwards ;
but right this city once again in all security !

'Twas with favouring omen thou didst vouchsafe that good
fortune then, so now too act alike. For if thou art to rule
in Thebes, as now thou dost, better to be king with men
still here than o'er an empty waste ; for neither fenced town
nor ship is aught, if void of men, with none to dwell within.

ŒD. Ah my poor children, full well I know the deep
desire that brings you here ; for well I know ye suffer, one
and all ; yet suffering as ye do, there is not one among you
all whose suffering equals mine ; for your pain cometh home
to each of you, alone and for himself, and for none else ; but
my soul mourns at once for the state, for myself, and for
thee. Wherefore ye rouse me not as one who sleepeth
soundly ; nay, be sure that I have wept, ay, many tears ; and
trod full many a path in wanderings of thought ; and the
only cure that I could find by careful inquiry, this have I
employed. I have sent Creon, the son of Menœceus, mine
own wife's brother, to the Pythian home of Phœbus, to learn
what I may say or do to save this city. And now the day,¹
when reckoned up to date, misgives me as to how he fares ;
for he is absent longer than is reasonable,² beyond the proper
limit. But when he comes, then were I a sorry king if I fail
in aught that the god declares.

their counsels"—but can *ξυμφορὰς* mean "comparison," and, if so, does
this rendering give a suitable meaning here? Both Jebb and Kennedy
have long appendices on the passage in their respective editions of this
play, in which their own views and those of other scholars are fully
discussed.

¹ *i.e.*, when I think what to-day is, and remember also when he left,
I feel anxious, for the period of absence has been needlessly long.

² Porson conjectured *περῶν*, "he overstays the due limit," regarding
l. 75 as spurious ; and so Bentley, but no alteration is needed.

PRI. Well, thy words are very seasonable ; lo ! these are just signing to me that Creon is approaching.

ÆD. O king Apollo, radiant is his look ; such be his coming with some saving fortune !

PRI. Yea, with glad tidings he comes, I trow ; or he would not approach with that thick wreath of berry-laden bay upon his head.

ÆD. We shall soon know ; for he is within hearing distance. O prince, my kinsman, son of Menœceus, what news hast thou brought us from the god ?

CRE. Good news ; e'en sufferings, I say, if haply they turn out aright, will all end well.

ÆD. But what are thy tidings ? Thy words as yet give me no confidence nor fear either before the time.

CRE. If thou wouldst hear, whilst these are by, I am prepared to speak or else to go within.

ÆD. Speak for all to hear ; the grief I bear for these is deeper even than for my own life.

CRE. Then will I tell what I heard from the god. King Phœbus clearly bids us drive out a pollution,—for such is harboured in this land,—not cherish it till past all cure.

ÆD. By what cleansing rite ? What is the manner of this trouble ?¹

CRE. By banishing some one, or by atoning for blood with blood in turn, for 'tis this blood that vexes Thebes as with a tempest.

ÆD. Who then is the man, whose fate the god reveals ?

CRE. We had Laius once, O king, to rule this land, before thou didst direct this state.

ÆD. I know that well,—by hearsay, for I never actually saw him.

¹ Kennedy renders, "What is the mode of compliance ?" This, at first sight, suits the context better, but gives a very doubtful meaning to *ξυμφορά*.

CRE. Vengeance on the authors of his death, whoe'er they be, is what the god now clearly enjoins on us.

ŒD. And where are they? Where shall be found the faded trace of this old crime?

CRE. In this land, he said. That which is sought is found; but that, which men neglect, escapes.

ŒD. Well, was it in his house or in the fields or on foreign soil that Laius met this murderous doom?

CRE. He left his land to visit the oracle,—so he said; and he came home no more, when once he had started.

ŒD. Came there none to tell the tale? had he no comrade on the way who saw the deed, from whom one might have learnt somewhat and made use of it?

CRE. Nay, all were slain, save one alone, who fled in terror, and, of all he saw, could tell but one thing for certain.

ŒD. What was that? One thing might find a clue to many, if we were to get a small beginning for hope.

CRE. Robbers, he said, met and slew Laius, not single-handed but with combined onset.

ŒD. How then could the robber have ventured on such recklessness, unless some intrigue, backed by bribery, had been going on from here?

CRE. So 'twas thought; but, Laius dead, there was none to help us in our troubles.

ŒD. And what trouble stood in your way and prevented your full inquiry, when royalty had fallen thus?

CRE. The Sphinx, with her riddling song, was bringing us to let the unseen be and turn our thoughts to what was near.

ŒD. Well, I will bring the dark to light again, starting afresh. Full worthily hath Phœbus, and worthily hast thou directed attention to this for the dead man's sake; wherefore shall ye find me too upon your side, as is but right,—a champion for this land and for the god at once. For it is not

for distant friends but for mine own self that I shall scatter this pollution. For whoever it was that slew the other might haply wish to take vengeance on me too with such another blow. And so, in helping him, I help myself.

Up, my children, leave the altar's base at once, lifting from it yon suppliant boughs; and let some other gather the people of Cadmus hither, since I intend a thorough search; for with the god's help our fortune shall be clear, or else our fall. (*Exeunt* ŒDIPUS and CREON.)

PRI. My children, let us rise; for it was to compass that, which he promises himself, that we e'en came hither. May Phœbus, who sent these oracles, come withal, to save and stay us from the plague! (*Exeunt Priest and band of suppliants.*)

CHO. O word of Zeus, of accents sweet, how comest thou. I wonder, from those golden treasures of Pytho to our glorious Thebes? I am all suspense, my fearful heart with terror quaking, thou Healer from Delos so loudly invoked! in holy awe of thee, to learn what thou wilt bring about for me, some purpose new or something that returns as the seasons come round; oh, tell me, child of golden Hope, thou voice divine!

First on thee I call,¹ daughter of Zeus, divine Athene, and on thy sister Artemis, the guardian of our land, who sitteth on her far-famed throne within the circle² of our place of gathering, and on Phœbus the far-darter; oh appear to my joy, ye three averters of doom! If ever, in the days gone by, ye drove the flames of mischief from the land, to stay³ the ruin rushing on our city, so come e'en now!

¹ Reading *κεκλόμενος* with the MSS. The sentence is irregular, but no change such as Blaydes' *κίελομαι*, ω is necessary, such *anacolutha* being frequent in Greek.

² Others understand (α) "her round throne consisting of the *ἀγορά*," (β) "her round seat in the *ἀγορά*."

³ Others following Musgrave, join *ὑπερ* with *ὀρνυμένας* as one word and regard the participle as *genitive absolute*.

Ah me ! mine is a load of sorrows unnumbered ; from end to end I see our host diseased, and no weapon of man's devising can be found to ward the mischief from us. The fruits of the glorious earth grow not ; our women rally not from the throes, which wring loud screams from them in child-birth's hour ;¹ but one upon another mayest thou see us speeding swift as wingèd bird, faster than resistless fire, to the shore of the god in the west.²

Such countless deaths are ruining the state ; unpitied³ on the ground her children are lying, tainting the air with death, with none to mourn ; and brides withal and grey-haired mothers too, in groups along each altar's base, are lifting up their wail,⁴ entreating for their grievous woes. Loud and clear their chant is ringing, and, blending therewith, the voice of lament ; wherefore do thou send us help with its cheering face, O golden daughter of Zeus.

And grant that this fierce murderous god, who now, without his brazen shields, yet heralded by cries, attacks me with a breath of fire, may turn his back in headlong flight from our country, wafted⁵ hence to Amphitrite's mighty chamber⁶ or to the waves of the Thracian sea,⁷ that haven strangers rue ; for if night leaveth aught undone, this he comes to

¹ *i.e.*, die in childbed. Schneidewin, followed by Jebb, understands "are not raised from their throes by births," *i.e.*, do not bring forth live babes.

² Hades, whose kingdom is placed by Homer beneath the gloom of the west.

³ Kennedy conjectures *νεκρά* for *νηλέα*, objecting that there is no authority for a passive use of *νηλής*, and, secondly, that it is redundant with *ἀνοίκτως*.

⁴ Kennedy, regarding this passage as corrupt, emends as follows: *ἔδραν παραβώμιον . . . ἐπιστεφανοῦσι*, "from various sides fill with wreathed rods the seat along the altar." Here as elsewhere in this play it is interesting to compare the different views of Jebb and Kennedy.

⁵ There is a var. lect. *ἄπουρον*, "away from the borders."

⁶ The Atlantic.

⁷ The Euxine.

bring about by day ;¹ him, I pray thee, father Zeus, lord of the flaming lightning's might, slay beneath thy thunder-bolt.

And fain would I, Lycean king,² see those shafts of thine, sped from the golden string of thy bent bow, showered abroad in might invincible,—our champions in the van ; and with them the flame-lit brands of Artemis, with which she darts across the heights of Lycia ; him too I invoke, that wears the golden snood, whose name this country bears,³ wine-flushed Bacchus, called with cries, the comrade of the Maenad rout, to draw near with the blaze of his glowing pine-brand against this god, who has no honour of his fellow-gods.⁴

ÆD. (*entering as the strains of the choral ode are dying away*). Thou cravest somewhat ; and for thy petition, if thou wilt hearken and obey my words and help to stay the plague, thou mayst find succour and relief from trouble ; and what I now shall say will be said by me as one who knew not of this story nor of what happened then ;⁵ in any case⁶ I could

¹ Reading *τελεῖν*, and making Ares the subject of *ἔρχεται*, *ἐπ' ἡμᾶρ* being adverbial. Jebb makes *ἡμᾶρ* the subject of *ἐπέρχεται*, "day follows to accomplish this ;" but some reference to Ares seems necessary. Kennedy emends *στέλλειν . . . εὔχεται*, "this he boasts to despatch during the day." Elmsley, reading *τέλει*, renders "in fulness—if night spare aught—day attacks this," *i.e.*, to complete the havoc. Others render "if night at its close spare anything" (cf. Jebb's Appendix, note 4).

² Apollo.

³ *Or*, "who is named from this land," *i.e.*, Bacchus is called Theban or Cadmean ; but Thebes is also called Bacchic.

⁴ To complete the metre Kennedy proposes to insert *σύμμαχον* after *ἀγλαῶπι* ; others suggest an epithet of *πέρικα*, such as *δαία*, "consuming," or *πυροφόρος*.

⁵ *i.e.*, the murder of Laius ; though others understand it of the inquiry afterwards held, although Creon has previously said there was little or none.

⁶ The *γάρ* seems to imply some suppressed clause, such as, "Citizen or stranger makes little difference ; I could not have gone far, if I had

not have tracked it far by myself, if I had not had some clue. But now,—for I am counted one of you since those events,—I make this proclamation to all you citizens of Cadmus: “Whosoever of you surely knoweth the man that slew Laius, the son of Labdacus, I bid him tell me all; yea, though he is afraid, withdrawing the charge from others by denouncing himself; for he shall suffer naught more harsh than this—he shall leave the land unharmed;¹ if, again, any of you knoweth that a stranger from another land was the murderer, let him not hold his peace; for I will pay his price² myself and he shall have my thanks to add thereto. But if, on the other hand, ye will keep silence; if any, from fear, seek to thrust these words of mine away from his friend or even from himself,³ in that case must ye hear from me what I intend. I forbid any citizen of this land, whereof I hold the sovereign power, to admit that man, whoe’er he be, to his house or hold converse with him, to make him partner in his prayers to the gods or in sacrifices, or dispense to him a share in lustral rites; all are to thrust him from their doors, sure that he is our pollution, as the oracle of the Pythian god hath just made clear to me.”

Thus then do I show myself an ally of the god and of the murdered man. And my earnest prayer is this, that the guilty man, whether he be some single undetected wretch or have accomplices, may drag out in utter wretchedness his

had no clue,—and there was none. However, as I am now counted a Theban, and it is imperative to track this crime, I make the following proclamation to you all in the hopes of finding such a clue.” Several other views are discussed by Jebb in his Appendix to this play, note 5.

¹ Retaining *ὑπεξελών αὐτόν* of MSS. ; it is easy to supply in thought a verb like “let him speak in spite of that,” as Kennedy suggests. Jebb reads on his own authority *ὑπεξελεῖν αὐτόν*, governed by *κελεύω*.

² *i.e.*, the gain he may have expected to make by giving information.

³ Others render “fearing for a friend or even for himself shall repulse this order of mine,” *or*, “shall refuse to utter this.”

luckless life ; while on myself I imprecate this curse ; if ever with my full knowledge, he should come to share my hearth and home, may I suffer the very evils I have just called down on others !

On you I lay this hest ; fulfil all this, alike for my sake, and the god's, and for this land of Thebes, thus cursed with barrenness and angry gods. For even if this thing were not of Heaven's ordering, it was not right that you should leave it thus unpurged, when one of your best, and he a king, was slain ; nay, ye should have searched it out. So now, since I have come to hold the sway, which erst he held, to take to wife the bride that once was his, and since, had not Fortune frowned upon his issue,¹ we should have had a common tie in having children born to us by the same mother ; but, as it was, misfortune leapt upon his head ; wherefore I will champion him herein, as he were mine own father, and will go to every length in my efforts to find the murderer, in the cause of² him that sprung of Labdacus, from Polydorus too, from Cadmus his forefather, and Agenor of ancient days.

And for all such as do not my bidding, I pray that Heaven raise them up no increase of their land, nor offspring either of their wives, but that they may be consumed by their present fate or by one still more cruel than it.

But for all the rest of you, the sons of Cadmus, who favour these decrees, may Justice, who is on our side, and all the gods be with you for ever for your good !

CHO. Even as thou hast bound me under a curse,³ so will I speak, O king. I did not kill him nor can I show thee

¹ Probably a double sense is intended : Œdipus means he was unlucky in having no issue ; the audience will understand the words as referring to Œdipus, the exposed babe, and his unhappy destiny.

² Kennedy makes the dative dependent on τὸν αὐτόχειρα τοῦ φόνου, "the perpetrator of the murder committed on."

³ *i.e.*, to speak the truth.

who did. And as for the quest, it was for Phœbus, who sent it, to have told us, who the doer could have been.

ŒD. Justly urged; but none of men can force gods to what they will not.

CHO. I would fain say what seems to me the next best course after this.

ŒD. If it is but the third best, omit not to mention it.

CHO. I know our prince Teiresias beyond all other men sees as his prince Phœbus sees; from him one might inquire, my liege, and learn these things most clearly.

ŒD. Not even this have I neglected to do. By Creon's advice I have sent to fetch him twice; and I have long been wondering he is not come.

CHO. Well, truly, all else is old and half-forgotten rumour.

ŒD. What kind of rumour that? I weigh each word.

CHO. 'Twas said he was killed by certain travellers.

ŒD. I have heard that too; but the eye-witness¹ is nowhere found.

CHO. Truly, if he shares at all in fear, he will not wait, when he hears such curses as thine.

ŒD. The man, who shrinks not in the act, is not frightened by any words.

CHO. (*as TEIRESIAS is seen approaching, led by a boy*). Well, there is one who will² convict him; for lo! they are bringing the inspired seer hither, who alone of mankind hath truth implanted in his heart.

ŒD. Teiresias, thou master-mind, within whose ken all knowledge is and all mysterious lore, both things in heaven and things on earth—e'en though thou seest not, yet thou knowest what a plague infects our land; from this, sir prince,

¹ A conjectural reading, τὸν δρῶντ' for τὸν ἰδόντ' has found favour with several editors, so that the allusion to the murderer in the next line may not come in so abruptly.

² Reading οὐξελέγξων, though the pres. part. gives an expressive meaning, and implies more certainty.

we find in thee our only saving help and succour. Know then that Phœbus, if indeed thou dost not already know this from the messengers, sent back answer to us, that in one way only could deliverance come from this disease, if we should learn for certain who slew Laius, and then slay them or have them banished from the land. Grudge not then thy augury or any other seer's craft thou hast, but save thyself and save the city, save me, aye, and all that the dead man's blood pollutes; for on thee we now depend; and 'tis the fairest of all toils for a man to help his fellows as best he can and may.

TEI. Ah me! how terrible it is to have knowledge, where it profits not the knower! Yes, I knew this well, but had forgotten it; else had I ne'er come hither.

ŒD. How now? In what despondency thou hast come to us!

TEI. Let me go home; thou wilt carry through thy part, I mine, most easily if thou hearken to me.

ŒD. Thy words accord not with our laws; they are unfriendly to this city, which reared thee, if thou wilt now withhold the message of the gods.

TEI. Aye, for I perceive that thy words are uttered not in season; wherefore I am on my guard that I too suffer not the same fate.¹

ŒD. In Heaven's name turn not from us, if thou knowest aught, for all of us entreat thee here in suppliant wise.

TEI. Aye, for none of you know aught: but I will never reveal my troubles—not to call them thine.²

¹ Probably an ellipse of some word like *σιγῶ* or *ὀρῶ*. Kennedy's explanation is that Teiresias is turning to go without ending his sentence, when Creon hurriedly calls him back—*i.e.*, there is an intentional aposiopesis, the act of going supplying the want of words.

² Others interpret, "in order that I may not utter thy griefs," or, "but never will I speak my secrets—in whatever way (*i.e.*, whatever they may deserve to be called)—lest I disclose thine evil." The latter is Kennedy's view.

ŒD. What meanest thou? Thou wilt not speak, though thou knowest all, but meanest to be a traitor to us and ruin the city?

TEI. I will not pain either myself or thee. Why dost thou question thus in vain? Thou wilt not learn aught from me.

ŒD. Thou miscreant knave!—yea, thou wouldst anger e'en a very stone—wilt thou never tell thy tale? Wilt show thyself so hard, and so impracticable?

TEI. Thou upbraidest my temper, but perceivest not that which thou hast lodged with thee;¹ instead thereof thou blamest me.

ŒD. Who would not be wroth at hearing such talk as thine,—these thy insults to this city?

TEI. Ah, well! 'twill come of itself,² e'en though I veil it in silence.

ŒD. Why then, as it will come, 'tis e'en thy duty to tell me of it.

TEI. My words shall go no farther. So rage then, if thou wilt, with the utmost fierceness of thy wrath.

ŒD. Yea, verily, I will not leave a word unsaid of all that I perceive,—so angry am I. Know then that, in my opinion, thou hadst e'en a hand in devising the deed, yea, didst do it, all but the actual slaying; and hadst thou only eyes to see, I should have said the doing too was thine, and thine alone.

TEI. Indeed, and is it so? Abide then by the proclamation thou didst make, I charge thee; from this day forth address no word to these or me, for thou art the accursed wretch whose crime pollutes this land.

¹ Eustathius fancifully points out a second possible meaning of these words, and some editors notice it with approval as being in the style of Sophocles, "thou seest not that thine own kinswoman (thy mother) is dwelling with thee (as thy wife)."

² *i.e.*, the future, when the blow will fall, but the language of Teiresias is purposely vague.

ÆD. Hast thou thus shamelessly flung out this speech? Pray, how dost thou think to escape punishment for this?

TEI. I *have* escaped; it is the truth I hold, and that is strong.

ÆD. Whence didst thou learn it? Not from thy art, at any rate.

TEI. From thee; thou didst urge me on to speak against my will.

ÆD. What kind of words? Say them once more, that I may learn them better.

TEI. Didst thou not understand them at the first? or art thou tempting me to talk?¹

ÆD. Not so as to speak of them as known; nay, speak again.

TEI. Thou art the slayer, I say, of the man whose slayer thou seekest.

ÆD. Thou shalt not say such words of hurt twice without ruing it.

TEI. Am I then to say aught else, to add to thy rage the more?

ÆD. Say all thou wilt; it will be said in vain.

TEI. I say that thou, without knowing it, hast been living in foulest union with thy nearest and dearest, nor seest the goal of misery thou hast reached.

ÆD. Dost really think thou art to speak thus for ever and go thy way rejoicing?

TEI. If there is any strength in truth, I do.

ÆD. Strength there is, for all save thee; for thee 'tis dead, for thou art blind alike in eye, and ear, and mind.

TEI. Thou art thyself a hapless wretch to taunt another with that which every one of these will soon be flinging in thy teeth.

¹ Retaining λέγειν, the MSS. reading. Jebb, stigmatizing this as weak in sense, adopts the conjectural λέγων, "art thou tempting me by thy talk?" *i.e.*, so as to provoke me to a fuller statement.

ŒD. 'Thine is one life-long night, so that thou canst ne'er hurt me nor any other that sees the light of day.

TEI. No, 'tis not fated I should cause thy fall; for Apollo can do that, and his the task to accomplish it.

ŒD. Are these thy stratagems, or Creon's?

TEI. Creon? he is not thy bane at all; thou thyself art that.

ŒD. O wealth and princely power and art surpassing art in this our envied life,¹ how great the store of envy that ye keep by you, if to gain this very power, which the city intrusted to me as a free gift, not of my asking, Creon, my old, my trusted friend, in his eagerness to oust me from it, hath stolen on me unawares, suborning such a juggling, scheming rogue as this, a cunning, thieving quack, one that seeth only in the case of gain, but is blind as regards his art!

For, come now, tell me, where hast thou shown thyself a seer? How was it thou hadst naught to say that could release these citizens, when the hound, the riddling songstress,² was here? And yet the riddle was not for the first chance-comer to explain, but needed the seer's art; but this thou wert not seen to possess either from birds or from some heaven-sent lore; but when I came, I, Œdipus, whose knowledge was as naught, I made an end of her, succeeding by my own good sense, not by lore derived from birds; this, forsooth, is the man thou art trying to cast out, thinking to stand by Creon's throne, at his right hand. To thy cost, methinks, wilt thou drive out the curse, both thou and the framer of this plot; wert thou not, to all seeming, an old man, thou shouldst have learnt by bitter experience the nature of thy schemings.

¹ *i.e.*, the life of kings, whose craft is above all other craft. Jebb, however, understands in a more general sense "in life's keen rivalries."

² The Sphinx, who was set like a hound to watch Thebes, chanting her riddle to all comers.

CHO. Both this man's words and thine, O Œdipus, seem to our way of thinking to have been spoken in anger; of such there is no need; but this is what we have to consider, how we shall best find quittance of the god's prophetic bidding.

TEI. Although thou art a king, the right, at least, of answering on equal terms must be held the same for all; yea, I too have that in my power; for it is not to thee at all that I devote my life of service, but to Loxias; wherefore I shall never stand enrolled under Creon's patronage.¹ And I tell thee, since thou hast e'en mocked at my blindness, thou hast sight and yet seest not to what misery thou art come, nor where thou art dwelling, nor with whom consorting; dost know from whom thou art sprung? Yea, and thou hast been a foe to thine own kin, there in the world below, and here on earth above, without knowing it; and one day shall a twofold curse, with footsteps dread—the curse of thy mother and thy sire—drive thee forth from this land, the light thou seest clearly now, turned then to gloom. And where will thy cries not find a resting-place, and will not all Cithaeron soon re-echo them, when thou hast learnt the import of that marriage-hymn, which welcomed thee home to thy harbourless port after a prosperous voyage? And plenteous other woes there be, as yet beyond thy ken, which shall bring thee to a level with thyself and thy own children.² Wherefore flout and scorn both Creon and the words I speak; for there lives not the man, who shall ever be brought to naught more miserably than thou.

ŒD. What! must I endure to hear such things from him?

¹ An allusion to the Athenian law, requiring every *μῆτοικος*, "resident alien," to have himself enrolled with the name of some citizen as his *προστάτης*, "patron."

² *i.e.*, by showing thee what thou art—a parricide and worse; and by the discovery of thy double relationship to thy children by Jocasta, as their father and brother too. Markland conjectures ὄσ' for ἄσ', and Porson, ἕσσ', "which shall equally befall."

Perdition seize thee! Begone, at once! Away! turn thy back upon this house and go!

TEI. I should ne'er have come, if thou hadst not summoned me thyself.

CED. I never knew thou wouldst utter such folly; else had I tarried long ere sending for thee to my house.

TEI. Such am I by nature,—a fool in thy judgment; but to them who gave thee birth, a man of sense.

CED. Who were they? Stay. Who of mortal men begat me?

TEI. This day will find a sire for thee and prove thy ruin.

CED. How all thy speech is too much veiled in riddling words!

TEI. Well, art thou not the best of men at finding out their drift?

CED. Make that my reproach, wherein thou wilt find me great.

TEI. And yet it was this very luck that ruined thee.

CED. Well, if I saved this city, I care not.

TEI. Why then, I will be gone. Come, boy, lead me hence.

CED. Aye, let him; for thy presence here is both a hindrance and offence to me; ¹ when once thou art gone hence, thou wilt vex me no more.

TEI. I will depart, when I have told the object of my coming, without any dread at thy dark looks; for thou canst ne'er destroy me. This then I tell thee; the man thou hast long been seeking, with threats and proclamations about the murder of Laius,—that man is here, in name a stranger dwelling in the land, but soon to be found a Theban born and bred,—no joyous chance for him. Blind instead

¹ Following Kennedy's conjecture, $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\mu'$, which he believes to have been the original of the $\tau\acute{\alpha}\gamma'$ found in some copies. Jebb, retaining $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\gamma'$, holds that scorn is added by the insertion of $\gamma\epsilon$.

of seeing, a beggar who once was rich, he shall journey to a stranger's land, feeling his way with a staff. Brother and father alike shall he be found of the children at his knee; and son and husband too of her who gave him birth; and wedded to his father's wife and guilty of his blood.

So go within and meditate thereon; and if thou find that I have lied, then say henceforth that I have no skill in the prophet's art. (*TEIRESIAS is led away, and CŒDIPUS enters the palace.*)

CHO. Who is he, of whom the voice oracular, from Delphi's rock, hath spoken, as one that hath wrought with murderous hands a deed too dire to name? 'Tis time he took to flight, speeding his steps in stronger wise than coursers, swift as wind; for on him is springing the son¹ of Zeus, in full panoply of flame and lightning's blaze, with Fate's dread ministers following in sure pursuit.

For a message, newly sent from snow-crowned Parnassus, hath darted like a flash, bidding us do all to track the unknown man. Deep in the woodland wild he roams, 'mid caves and rocks, e'en as a bull,² forlorn and wretched on a path of woe, seeking to shun the oracle spoken at Earth's centre; but it lives on for aye and hovers round him ever.

Terribly, aye, terribly, 'tis true, does the wise augur disturb me, who can neither approve nor yet deny his word. I know not what to say; 'twixt hope and fear I hover, seeing no light in the present or the future. For I have never heard, in times long past or now, what quarrel there was

¹ *i.e.*, Apollo, whose oracle will bring the guilty wretch to account; for which purpose he is armed with his father's lightnings.

² The reading is doubtful, though the sense is tolerably clear, "restless and lonely as a bull," which shuns the herd when defeated by a rival. The reading of the first hand in L is *πετραῖος ὁ ταῦρος*, which has been variously emended, *e.g.*, *πέτρας ὕπερ ταῦρος* by Dorville, now commonly adopted, *πέτρας ἰσόταυρος* by Martin or Lushington, whom Jebb follows.

between the race of Labdacus and the son of Polybus, from which I should draw convincing proof¹ to attack the current fame of Œdipus, championing the house of Labdacus for undetected murder.

Nay, Zeus and Apollo have understanding, 'tis true, and know the ways of men; but that any human seer has the advantage over me, this there is no means of deciding for certain; though one man's knowledge might surpass another's. But, until I see straightforward proof, never will I assent, when men are blaming him; for when, in days gone by, the winged maiden came against him for all to see, then was his wisdom shown, and he won the people's heart, when put to the proof; wherefore in my judgment he will ne'er get the credit of being a sinner.

CRE. Fellow-citizens, I have come hither in no patient mood, for I have heard that Œdipus the king is bringing dire charges against me. Now if in our present troubles he thinks that he has suffered, either in word or deed, aught leading to his hurt at *my* hands, truly I have no wish to prolong my life, with such things said about me; for the loss caused me by this rumour leads not to a single issue, but is most comprehensive, if I am to be called villain in Thebes, and that by thee and those I love.

CHO. But this reproach may haply have been uttered more from some angry impulse than of deliberate purpose.

CRE. Who² made it appear that the seer was persuaded by my suggestions to utter falsehoods?

CHO. That was said; but on what suggestion, I know not.

¹ Reading *πρὸς ὅτου δὴ βασανίζων βασάνῃ*—so Jebb after Schneider, who inserted *βασανεύων* to complete the metre, and make it correspond with the antistrophe. *ὅτου* is here referred back to *νεῖκος*. Others make it masculine, and supply an antecedent, "at whose word."

² Reading *τοῦ πρὸς*. Kennedy and others prefer *τοῦπος*, a reading also found in some MSS., citing line 848 in support of it; Creon is then made to state the accusation, not inquire into its nature.

CRE. And was this accusation brought against me with steady eye and steadfast mind? ¹

CHO. I know not; my masters' doings are not for my eyes. But see, the king himself is coming forth e'en now from the palace.

ÆD. Ho! sirrah, how cam'st thou hither? Hast thou so bold a face that thou hast e'en come to my house, though thou art clearly here to slay me and openly to seize my throne? Come, tell me, I adjure thee, hast thou seen aught of cowardice or folly in me that thou hast plotted thus? Or didst thou think that I should fail to mark the stealthy progress of thy plot, or, marking it, to ward it off? Is not this attempt of thine a foolish one,—without either numbers ² or friends to seek a throne,—that prize, which wealth and numbers win?

CRE. Dost know what thou shouldst do? In answer to thy words, hear me in turn; and then decide thyself upon the evidence.

ÆD. Thou art a wondrous clever speaker, but a poor pupil I for lessons of thine, having found thee my grievous foe.

CRE. The very thing I will begin by explaining now; hear me.

ÆD. The very thing I forbid thy explaining,—that thou art not a knave.

CRE. If it is thy opinion that stubbornness without reason is a thing worth having, thou thinkest not aright.

ÆD. If it is thy opinion that thou canst wrong a kinsman without paying the penalty, thou thinkest not aright.

¹ *i. e.*, did his outward appearance lead you to suppose he was in his right mind when he said it?

² A conjectural reading *πλούτου* has been admitted by some editors; but the vulgate *πλήθους*, understood of the usurper's rank and file as distinct from his rich or powerful friends (*φίλοι*), gives an intelligible sense.

CRE. I agree with thee that this is justly urged ; but tell me, what is the wrong thou sayest thou hast suffered?

ŒD. Didst thou, or didst thou not advise, that I should have a servant sent to fetch that grave and reverend seer?

CRE. I did ; and I am still of the same mind now.

ŒD. About how long is it now since Laius——

CRE. Laius—what of him ? I do not understand.

ŒD. —Disappeared, done to death by violence?

CRE. It would be many a long year to measure back.

ŒD. Was this seer then engaged in his art?

CRE. Aye, as skilled as ever and equally honoured.

ŒD. Did he, then, make any mention of me at that time?

CRE. No ; never, at least, when I was standing anywhere near.

ŒD. But did ye not hold an inquiry about the murder?

CRE. Inquiry? Yes, of course we did ; and we could hear nothing.

ŒD. Well, how was it that this wise seer did not then speak out?

CRE. I know not ; 'tis my way to say nothing on matters I do not understand.

ŒD. Thus much,¹ at least, thou knowest, and couldst declare with good understanding.

CRE. What is that? I will not deny it, if, at least, I know thereof.

ŒD. That, if the seer and thou had never met, he would never have talked about my slaying of Laius.²

¹ Reading *τοσόνδε γ'*, though L has *τὸ σὺν δέ γ'*, which many editors prefer.

² The language is again, as so often in Sophocles, purposely ambiguous ; Œdipus does not, of course, mean to admit his own guilt ; but his words to the audience, who know the sequel, are really such an admission. To read *τάσδ'* for *τάς*, as some editors do, is to miss this point.

CRE. If this was what he said, thou knowest for thyself; for me, I claim to learn of thee in the same way¹ that thou also hast now learnt of me.

ÆD. Learn thy lesson thoroughly; I shall not be found a murderer, be sure.

CRE. Well then,—art thou my sister's husband?

ÆD. Thy question admits of no denial.

CRE. Dost rule the land as she doth, holding equal sway?

ÆD. Whate'er she will, she gets from me.

CRE. Well, am I not a third, taking equal rank with both of you?

ÆD. Thou art indeed, and 'tis just there thou showest thyself a false friend.

CRE. Not so, if only thou wouldst reflect as I do. Now first consider this; dost think that any one would choose to rule in the midst of terrors rather than in fearless calm, if, that is, he is to have the self-same powers? Nay, for my part, I feel no inborn longing to be king rather than to act as such, nor doth any other man, who knoweth how to keep the mean. For now I get each wish from thee without alarm; whereas, if I were king myself, there are many things I should be doing e'en against my will. How then can a king's estate be sweeter to me to have as mine than power and influence free from trouble? Not yet am I so much beguiled as to desire honours other than those, which are linked with profit. Now, all give me joy;² now, each man bids me welcome; now, such as crave a boon of thee, beg my support, for there rests all their³ chance of gaining it. Why, then, should I let go the one and take the other? The heart will ne'er turn traitor, while its thoughts are

¹ Reading *ταῦθ'* with Brunck for MSS. *ταῦθ'*.

² Others understand, "I am happy in the sight of all," or, "I rejoice in all"—*i.e.*, without disliking any.

³ Reading *ἀποῖσι πάν.*

sound.¹ Nay, 'tis not my nature to like such counsels, nor could I e'er endure to join another, if he acted thus.

In proof thereof first go to Pytho and inquire about the answer given, whether I announced it to thee truly; then, if thou find, that I have conspired at all with this soothsayer, take and slay me,—not by a single vote, but by a twofold verdict, my own as well as thine. But accuse me not on vague surmise, apart from other proof; for it is not fair to reckon traitors true, without good grounds, or true men traitorous. To fling away an honest friend is the same, I say, as flinging away one's own life, which most one loves. But thou wilt get to know this in time without fail; for 'tis time, and nothing else, that shows a just man; though thou mightest know a knave for what he is, e'en in a single day.

CHO. He has spoken well, my liege, from the view of one who guards against a fall; yea, for those who are quick in their judgments are not sure therein.

ŒD. When he, that is secretly plotting against me, advances somewhat speedily, I too in turn must form my plot in haste. If I sit still and wait for him, his plans will have succeeded, while mine will have missed their mark.

CRE. What, then, is thy wish? Wouldst make me an outcast from the land?

ŒD. By no means; death, not exile, I design for thee, that² thou mayst be a warning what an evil envy is.

¹ *i.e.*, Such treachery as you suggest would be mere folly; no sensible man could act in this way.

² Jebb reads *ὡς ἂν* for MSS. *ὄταν*, and arranges ll. 624-6 as above, assuming that a verse, spoken by Œdipus, has fallen out after l. 625, to the effect: "No: for thou persuadest me not that thou art worthy of belief." Those who retain *ὄταν*, and assign l. 624 to Creon, render: "Aye, when thou shalt first have shown my ground of envy." *Œd.* "Thou speakest as resolved not to submit or obey." *Creon.* "No, for I see thee unwise." Kennedy's correction, *τῶφρονεῖν*, with Meineke's *γ'* after *προδείξῃς*, is tempting. Creon then says, "Aye, after first displaying what manner of thing folly is"—*i.e.*, to what lengths it can

CRE. Dost say this, resolved neither to yield or believe?

ÆD. * * * * *

CRE. Nay, for I see thou art not well advised.

ÆD. At least I am in my own interest.

CRE. Well, but thou shouldst be equally so in mine.

ÆD. Nay, thou art traitor born.

CRE. What, if thou understandest naught?

ÆD. A ruler must rule, for all that.

CRE. Nay, not when he ruleth badly.

ÆD. O my city, my city!

CRE. I too have a share in the city, not thou alone.

CHO. Forbear, my lords; for I see Jocasta coming forth from the palace yonder, in good season for you; with her help ye should arrange the present feud.

JOC. Unhappy men, why have ye raised this senseless wordy warfare? Have ye no shame, when the land is thus diseased, to stir up private troubles? (*To* ÆDIPUS.) Go thou within; and thou, Creon, to thy own home; nor give such vast importance to your trifling grief.

CRE. Sister mine, thy husband Ædipus claims to treat me in terrible fashion, propounding one of two evils—either exile from my native land or death forthwith.

ÆD. I own it true; for I have caught him plotting against myself with treacherous arts, my wife.

CRE. May I ne'er prosper, but perish accursed, if I have done to thee aught of the deeds thou layest to my charge!

JOC. In Heaven's name, believe this, Ædipus,—first from reverence for this oath by the gods, and then for me and for these whom thou seest here!

CHO. Harken, my liege, I implore thee; consent, be well advised. .

ÆD. In what, then, wouldst thou have me yield to thee?

go. The only objection to it is that *ἀφρονεῖν* is not apparently Attic. The passage is discussed at length in Jebb's and Kennedy's editions, from which the above is drawn.

CHO. Respect him, who was formerly no weakling in wit, and now is great in the strength of his oath.

ŒD. Dost know what thou art asking?

CHO. Yea, I know.

ŒD. Declare thy meaning then.

CHO. That thou never lay thy friend, who has bound himself by a curse, under an accusation, to his dishonouring, on the strength of an unproved rumour.

ŒD. Now be thou well assured, that, in seeking this, thou seekest death or exile from this land for me.

CHO. Nay, by that chiefest god amongst them all, by Helios, no! Banned by Heaven, shunned of friends, be mine the very worst of dooms, if I harbour such a thought! Nay, but my heart is wasted with sorrow at our land's decay, and by the thought that to its former sorrows it will add others,¹ that ye twain have caused.

ŒD. Then let him go; and let me die outright, or be thrust from this land by force, dishonoured. 'Tis thy appeal, not his, that moves my pity by its piteousness; while he, no matter where, will have my hate.

CRE. Thy hate is clearly seen when yielding, as was thy violence when thy rage had passed all bounds. Such natures are rightly most grievous for themselves to bear.

ŒD. Wilt thou not let me alone and begone?

CRE. Yea, I will go; for, though I have found thee void of knowledge, yet amongst these I rank as ever.² (*Exit CREON.*)

CHO. Lady, why dost thou delay to lead this man within?

JOC. I will, when I have learnt what befell.

¹ Reading τὰ δ' with Kennedy for MSS. καὶ τὰδ'. Some take προσάψει as intransitive, a doubtful construction, in sense of "will be added."

² So the Scholiast, ἴσος, "the man I was before." Jebb and others render it "just." Possibly both meanings were intended.

CHO. A vague suspicion had found utterance, and injustice rankles.¹

JOC. Were both to blame?

CHO. They were.

JOC. And what was said?

CHO. Enough, methinks, enough, that, when our land is already afflicted, the matter should rest where it ceased.

ÆD. Dost see to what thou art brought, with all thy honesty of purpose, through seeking to set aside and blunt my heart's desire?²

CHO. My king, be sure of this,—and it is not once alone that I have said it,—I should appear as one distraught, incapable of sober sense, were I to part myself³ from thee, who didst speed aright on a prosperous course my country dear, beside itself with woe, and now wilt prove⁴ its happy guide.

JOC. In Heaven's name, O king, tell me too for what reason thou hast conceived such lasting rage.

ÆD. I will tell thee; for thee I honour more than these, my queen. Creon is the cause, with his plotting against me.

JOC. Say on, if, when imputing the blame of this feud to him, thou hast a clear tale to tell.

ÆD. He says that I am the murderer of Laius.

JOC. Of his own knowledge, or on another's evidence?

¹ *i.e.*, Ædipus had given vent to his unfounded suspicions, and Creon was vexed at this injustice. Others make τὸ μὴ ἔνδικον quite general, "even a false accusation stings."

² *i.e.*, the dilemma in which they are now placed through having prevented him from prosecuting his inquiries.

³ Reading εἴ σ' ἐνοσφιζόμεν, a correction made by several editors, and admitted by more.

⁴ Reading τανῦν τ' εὐπομπος ἂν γένοιο. So Blaydes and Jebb. Other corrections of the MSS. εἰ δύναιο γενοῦ are εἰ γένοιο, "mayst thou become," or, simply omitting γενοῦ, and understanding ἴσθι with εὐπομπος, as Hermann proposes. Kennedy conjectures εἰ τό γ' ἐν σοι, "as far as in thee lies, thou art . . ."

ŒD. Nay, but by bringing in a rascal of a seer ; for as for himself he keeps his lips free from all blame.

JOC. Why then, hearken to me, and, as to the tale thou tellest, be rid of it, and know that thou wilt find no mortal thing possessed of the diviner's art. Of this will I show thee proof concise. There came an oracle, one day, to Laius,—from Phœbus's own lips I will not say, but from his ministers,—saying that death's doom would come on¹ him at the hand of his son, one that should be born of me and him. As for him, robbers from another land slew him one day,—at least, so rumour says,—where three main roads converged ; while for the child, three days had not passed from his birth when his father cast him forth on a trackless mountain-side by the hands of others, after he had fastened his ankles together. In that case, then, Apollo failed ; the son never became his father's murderer, nor was Laius slain² by his child,—the fearful fate he dreaded. This is how seers, with their inspired utterances, determine things ; do not thou then heed them at all ; for God will himself reveal—and easily—whate'er he needs and seeks.

ŒD. What bewilderment and restlessness is now filling me, lady, after listening to thee !

JOC. What anxious thought made thee turn again³ and say this ?

ŒD. I heard thee say, I think, that Laius was slain where three main roads converge.

JOC. Aye, 'twas said so, nor has the rumour yet died away.

ŒD. And where is the place where this trouble befell ?

¹ Others read ἕξοι, " would seize him," an unnecessary correction.

² There is a var. lect. παθεῖν, but nothing is gained by its adoption.

³ Reading ὑποστραφεῖς, a word used often of flying men turning round short for another stand ; others read ὑπο στραφεῖς. Œdipus may be supposed in either case to have turned a little away in thought, and suddenly to have wheeled round, startled by Jocasta's story.

JOC. The land is called Phocis, and there is a branching road leading to the same spot from Delphi and from Daulia.

ŒD. What period hath elapsed since these events?

JOC. The news was announced to Thebes just before thy appearance as ruler of this land.

ŒD. O Zeus, what hast thou determined to do to me?

JOC. Why, what is this, Œdipus, that weighs upon thy heart?

ŒD. Ask me not yet; but tell me, what was Laius like, and how far advanced in manhood's prime?

JOC. A tall man, with the silver threads just sprinkled through his hair; not much unlike thyself in build.

ŒD. Ah, woe is me! It seems I have but now exposed myself unwittingly to fearful curses.

JOC. What meanest thou? I fear to look thee in the face, my king.

ŒD. I have a fearful misgiving that yon seer sees well enough. But thou wilt show this better if thou tell me yet one thing.

JOC. Indeed I have my fears, yet will I answer all thy questions when I hear them.

ŒD. Was he travelling with but few attendants, or with a large escort, as a chieftain might?

JOC. There were five in all, a herald amongst them, with one carriage for Laius.

ŒD. Ah me! now 'tis all too clear. Who was it that told thee this story, lady?

JOC. A servant, the only man who escaped home.

ŒD. Can he be here in the palace, even now?

JOC. No, not here; for after he came thence, and found thee on the throne and Laius dead, he touched my hand and earnestly besought me that I would send him to the fields, where the flocks are pastured, that he might be as far from sight of this city as possible. So I sent him; since,

for a slave, he deserved to win even a greater boon than this.

ŒD. I would we could see him come again without delay !

JOC. 'Tis possible. But why dost thou give this order ?

ŒD. I have my fears, lady, that I have said too much, and that is why I wish to see him.

JOC. Well, he shall come. But surely I might also learn, my king, what thoughts are troubling thee.

ŒD. Thou surely shalt not miss the cause, since I have gone so far in hopes and fears ; for to whom better could I speak than thee in this stage of my fortune ?

My father was Polybus of Corinth, my mother Dorian Merope ; and I was held the chiefest of the townfolk there, until a thing befell me, worth wondering at, 'tis true, but undeserving of the heed I gave it. 'Twas at a feast, and a fellow, who had drunk too deep, called out to me, while in his cups, that I was foisted on my father as his son ; and I, being sorely angered, scarce could hold myself that day, and on the morrow went and stood before my mother and my sire, and questioned them ; and they were very wroth with him who fired that random shot, for the reproach thereof. So I took comfort as regarded them, but still this taunt was ever stinging me, for the rumour was spreading abroad.¹ So, without a word to my father or mother, I start for Pytho ; and Phœbus, sending me thence without an answer to that which brought me, was heard² to tell instead a tale of woe, and terror, and despair, how that I was doomed to take my mother to wife, and to show to mankind a race they could not bear to see, and to be the murderer of the father who begat me. Now when I heard this, I took to flight, measuring my distance thenceforth from the land of Corinth by the

¹ Others render "for it sank deeper and deeper into my heart."

² Reading *προῦφάνη* of the MSS. Jebb, however, follows Wunder and Hermann in reading *προῦφηνεν*, "he set forth ;" and so many other editors.

stars,¹ seeking some spot where I should ne'er behold the shameful issue of my direful prophecies. Thus, as I went my way, I came to the very place where thou sayest this king was slain. Lady,² I will tell thee the truth. When, as I journeyed on, I was near that threefold road, there met me there a herald, and a man riding in a carriage drawn by young horses, just as thou sayest ; and he who led the way, and the old man no less, were for driving me from the road by force ; wherefore in wrath I smote the driver, even him who tried to turn me from the path ; and when the old man saw it, he watched for me to pass, and then from his chariot smote me full upon the head with a two-pronged goad. Yet no mere quittance did he pay for that ; one short sharp blow from the staff I carried, and he was straightway reeling backward from the middle of the car ; and I slew them one and all.

Now if this stranger was in any way related to Laius, who is now more luckless than myself ? Who could be more heaven-detested ? A man whom no³ stranger or citizen may welcome to his house, nor yet accost, but drive from his doors ! And this—this curse I say—I, and I alone, have laid upon myself. The bed of the murdered man am I polluting, with these hands of mine by which he died. Am I not vile and utterly unclean ? Exiled as I must be, and in my exile ne'er set eyes on those I love, nor tread my native soil, or else be wedded to my mother and slay my father Polybus, who begat and brought me up.⁴

¹ *i.e.*, keeping far from it, and only knowing its position by the stars.

² L. 800 is originally wanting in L, and is therefore rejected by Dindorf and Nauck as interpolated.

³ Reading $\delta\nu . . . \tau\iota\mu$ with Wunder and others for MSS. $\psi . . . \tau\iota\mu\alpha$, which, however, is defended by Hermann as meaning "to whom it is not allowed that any should receive him"—a very awkward construction, to say the least of it.

⁴ L. 827 is rejected by Wunder and others as spurious, though Jebb endeavours to defend it.

Would not anyone speak truly in my case, if he judged that these things proceeded from a ruthless deity? Oh, never, never, let me see that day, ye pure and awful gods! Nay, let me vanish from the sight of men, ere I behold so dark a stain of woe come on my life!

CHO. We have our fears, O king, heret; yet have hope, at least until thou hast learnt all from the eye-witness.

ŒD. In truth that is all the hope I have, to await the herdsman's coming,—that and nothing more.

JOC. And when he appears, what art thou bent on doing?

ŒD. I will tell thee. If he is found to tell the same story as thine, I, at any rate, shall be cleared of calamity.¹

JOC. What was there remarkable in the story I told thee?

ŒD. Thou saidst that the man spoke of robbers having slain Laius; now, if he still speak of a number, as before, I was not the slayer; for one single man could not be the same as the many he spoke of. But if he tell of one solitary traveller, clearly this deed points, then and there, to me.

JOC. Well, rest assured that *was* the way the story was set forth; and this can he not retract, for the city heard it, not I alone. But even should he swerve at all from what he said at first, he certainly will never show that the murder of Laius, at any rate, followed its strict course; seeing that Loxias declared, that he was to die by the hand of my child. Yet that poor babe ne'er slew him, but died himself ere that. And so, for all the seer's art can tell, henceforth will I look neither this way nor that.

ŒD. Thou reasonest well. Still send some one to fetch yon labourer, and neglect it not.

JOC. I will send with all dispatch. But let us go within; naught will I do save what thou wishest done. (*Exeunt* JOCASTA and ŒDIPUS into the palace.)

¹ There is no reason to change *πάθος* into *ἄγος*, as some have done.

CHO. May it ever be my lot to win the praise of hallowed purity in all such words and deeds, as have set forth for them on high a code of laws, whose birth-place is the heaven above, whose father is Olympus only; theirs was no sire of mortal race, nor shall man's forgetfulness e'er make them sleep; a mighty god is in them, and he grows not old.

'Tis wanton insolence that breeds the tyrant,—insolence, which vainly gorged with many a thing, that profits not nor suits the time, mounts to the highest pinnacle¹ and plunges thence to an abyss of doom, where it uses not its foot to any purpose.² But the good fight,³ which profiteth the State, may God ne'er end, I pray; in God I ne'er will cease to find my champion.

But if any man goeth on his way disdainfully in deed or word, with no fear of Justice and no reverence for the abodes of the gods, him may an evil doom o'ertake for his luckless arrogance, if he will not make his gains by righteous means and keep from godlessness, or if, in the folly of his heart, he touch⁴ the things he should not. What man, amid such acts, shall any longer boast that he wards from his life the arrows of the gods?⁵ If deeds like these are held in honour, why should I join in the dance?⁶

No more will I with reverent steps approach Earth's holy

¹ Jebb supplies the hiatus before *ἀπότομον* with the word *ἄκρον*, as good an expedient as any proposed.

² The metaphor is apparently taken from a precipice where it is impossible to find any footing.

³ *i.e.*, patriotic zeal, each man vying with his neighbour to benefit his country.

⁴ Jebb follows the conjecture of Blaydes, *θίξεται* for MSS. *ἔξεται*, which correction gives an intelligible sense to a probably corrupt passage.

⁵ Reading *θεῶν βίλη εὔξεται* for the corrupt *θυμῷ βίλη ἐρξεται* of the MSS. ; so Jebb, from the emendations of Hermann and Musgrave.

⁶ *i.e.*, why attempt to keep up the outward requirements of our religion?—the solemn dance and chant being a very essential part in the worship of many gods, *e.g.*, Dionysus, Apollo, etc.

centre, nor Abae's shrine,¹ no more Olympia, unless these things so fit the case, that all mankind shall point the finger at them.

Almighty Zeus,—if thou art rightly called,—O King omnipotent, let not this escape thee and thy power that knows not death for aye! Already are men setting aside the old² oracles respecting Laius, so that they are fading; nowhere is Apollo held in open honour; gone is all respect for gods!

JOC. Ye princes of the land, it hath entered my heart to seek the temples of the gods, bearing in my hands these wreaths and offerings of incense. For the heart of Œdipus is tossing all too much with divers troublous thoughts; nor does he, like a man of sense, judge of the new by the old; but he is the sport of any speaker, if he tell of terrors. Now therefore, since by my counsels I can do no good, to thee have I come, Lycean Apollo, as being most nigh,—a suppliant with these marks of prayer,³—that thou mayst find us some release from guilt; for now are we all afraid at seeing him thus terror-struck, e'en as had we seen our helmsman so.

MES. Sirs, may I learn from you where is the palace of Œdipus the king? Or, best of all, tell me where he is himself, if ye know.

CHO. This is his house; he is himself within, sir stranger; this lady here is mother of his children.

MES. Then happy may she be, with them to share her joy for ever, his true and honoured wife!

JOC. Be thine the self-same joy, good sir! Thy kindly

¹ At Abae in Phocis, as well as at Delphi, "earth's holy centre" was a famous temple of Apollo.

² Reading *παλαίφατα* after *Λαίου*, the conjecture of Linwood for *παλαιά*.

³ *i.e.*, the *στέφη κάπιθυμιάματα* of l. 913. Wunder's conjecture, *κατάργμασιν*, is not necessary.

greeting merits it. But tell me the object of thy coming,—the news thou hast to tell.

MES. Good news, lady, for thy house and lord.

JOC. What is this news? And who sent thee hither?

MES. From Corinth I come; and the word I shall speak anon will cause thee joy without a doubt, yet haply grief as well.

JOC. What is it? What is this double power it hath?

MES. The dwellers in the Isthmian land—so 'twas said there,—will make Œdipus their king.

JOC. Why, is the old man Polybus no longer ruling there?

MES. No, in sooth, for he is dead and in his grave.

JOC. How sayest thou? Is Polybus then dead, old man?¹

MES. Unless it is the truth I tell, I willingly would die.

JOC. Away, girl, with all speed, and tell thy master this! O ye oracles of the gods, look where ye stand now! This was the man Œdipus long shunned from fear of killing him; and now, lo! he hath died in Nature's course and not by my lord's hand.

ŒD. Jocasta, dearest wife, why hast thou sent for me hither from yonder palace?

JOC. Hear this man's tale; and, hearing, see to what those awful oracles of the god have come.

ŒD. And who, pray, is this man, and what news hath he for me?

JOC. A messenger from Corinth, to say that thy father Polybus is no longer alive, but dead.

ŒD. What sayest thou, sir stranger? With thy own lips declare thy news to me.

¹ To complete the defective line of the MSS. Bothe added the words, *ὦ γέρον*. Nauck's conjecture has also found favour, *ἢ τίθνηκεν Οἰδίπου πατήρ*. It is extremely possible that the word *Πόλυβος* from being a gloss on *Οἰδίπου πατήρ*, eventually ousted the true reading.

MES. Be well assured that he is dead and gone, if I must first announce this for certain.

ŒD. Died he by treachery, or the visitation of sickness?

MES. A little extra in the scale sends old folks to their rest.

ŒD. 'Twas sickness then, it seems, that caused his death, poor wretch.

MES. Yes, that and the length of years which he had measured out.

ŒD. Ah, lady, why then should one regard the altar of the Pythian prophet, or the birds that scream above us, according to whom I was to slay my own father? But he is dead and buried now, while I am here and have never touched a weapon; unless, perchance, he pined away in longing for me; and so I might have caused his death. As for the oracles in our case at any rate, Polybus has taken them away with him to his grave; they are with Hades now and worthless.

JOC. Well, did I not foretell thee this long, long ago?

ŒD. Thou didst indeed; but fear misled me.

JOC. Then give not a thought to aught of this henceforth.

ŒD. But how should I not fear that union with my mother?

JOC. And why should man fear aught, in whose life Fortune reigns as queen, and who hath no clear foresight of anything? 'Tis best to live a careless life, howe'er one may. So fear thou not for this marrying with thy mother; for many a man, ere now, hath dreamt of wedding even so; but whoso makes these things of no account, his is the lightest load through life.

ŒD. All this had been well spoken by thee, were not my mother still alive; but now, since she is living, I cannot but be afraid, e'en though thy words are fair.

JOC. Well, but thy father's death, at any rate, is for us most reassuring.

ÆD. Yes,—that I know ; but my dread is of her who lives.

MES. What woman then is she, who causes your fears?

ÆD. Merope, with whom Polybus shared house and home, old sir.

MES. And what is there to do with her, that tends to fear for you?

ÆD. A dread oracle of Heaven's sending, sir stranger.

MES. Canst tell it? Or is it not right for another to know it?

ÆD. I can tell it, surely. Loxias once said that I should wed my own mother, and with these hands take my father's blood. Wherefore Corinth, as a home, has long been far away for me,—with Fortune's favour, it is true, but yet to look upon our parents' face is very sweet.

MES. Was it then from dread of this that thou didst hold aloof therefrom?

ÆD. Yea, and from a wish to be guiltless of my father's blood, old sir.

MES. Then why have I not set thee free, O king, from this alarm, coming, as I did, with kind intent?

ÆD. In sooth thou wouldst win due gratitude from me.

MES. In sooth I chiefly came for that, that, on thy coming to thy home, I might profit somewhat.

ÆD. Nay, I will never go to dwell with my parents.

MES. My son, 'tis very plain thou know'st not what thou dost.

ÆD. How so, old friend? I entreat thee, tell me.

MES. If this is why thou avoidest going home.

ÆD. Yea, it is ; I fear I may find the word of Phoebus proved true.

MES. Pollution from thy parents, is that thy dread?

ÆD. Even that, old man ; yes, that is my constant fear.

MES. Dost know then thou hast no just grounds for terror?

ŒD. How so, if I was indeed the son of these parents?

MES. Because Polybus was nothing in kin to thee.

ŒD. What dost thou say? Was not Polybus my true father?

MES. No more than I am, but as much.

ŒD. And how can he, who begat me, stand on the level of one who is as naught to me?

MES. Nay, but he was not thy sire, nor yet am I.

ŒD. But why, then, did he call me son?

MES. Know that he received thee as a gift one day from my hands.

ŒD. And did he, then, love me so dearly, whom he received from another?

MES. Yes, it was his previous childlessness, that prevailed on him.

ŒD. Hadst thou bought or found¹ me, when thou gavest me to him?

MES. I had found thee in the wooded dells of Cithaeron.

ŒD. And what carried thy footsteps o'er that ground?

MES. I was in charge there of flocks upon the hills.

ŒD. Thou wert a shepherd, then,—a rover in another's pay?

MES. Thy preserver at any rate, my son, on that day.

ŒD. What pain was mine, when in a lucky moment² thou didst find me?

MES. Thy ankles might bear witness thereto.

ŒD. Ah me! Why dost thou mention that old trouble?

MES. Thou hadst the extremities of thy feet pierced through, when I loosed thee.

¹ The MSS. have *τεκῶν*, involving a contradiction of l. 1020, which even the excitement of Œdipus will hardly excuse. The conjecture of Bothe, *τυχῶν*, is now almost universally accepted.

² Reading *ἐν καλῷ* with Wunder. The best MSS. give the unmetrical *ἐν καιροῖς*; some others *ἐν κακοῖς*, probably a not very skilful emendation, giving as it does a very feeble sense. Jebb suggests *ἐγκυρῶν*; but possibly the corruption extends even further.

ŒD. Ah, 'twas a dire disgrace which I took from infancy!¹

MES. So dire, that from this misfortune thou hadst thy present name.²

ŒD. Tell me, in Heaven's name, was it my mother or my father that did this?

MES. I know not; he who gave thee to me knows this better than I.

ŒD. Didst thou receive me, then, from another,—not find me thyself?

MES. I found thee not, but another shepherd delivered thee to me.

ŒD. Who was he? Dost thou know how to describe him clearly?

MES. He was called one of the servants of Laius, I believe.

ŒD. The king of this country long ago?

MES. Even so; this man was a herdsman of his.

ŒD. Is he still alive, for me to see him?

MES. Why, ye who dwell in the land should know that best.

ŒD. Is there any of you, who stand before me, that knoweth the herdsman of whom he speaks, either from seeing him afield or even here? Speak out; for now is the time for these things to be discovered.

CHO. He is none other, I trow, than that countryman, whom thou wert e'en seeking ere this to see; but this lady Jocasta would best tell that.

ŒD. Lady, thou rememberest him, whom lately we

¹ Others understand *σπαργάνων* of the ornaments, sometimes attached to children when exposed, as means of recognition, Lat. *crepundia*—i.e., "a dire disgrace in the way of tokens," viz., the wounds in his feet; but this seems rather strained.

² i.e., the name *Οιδίπιδος*, "swollen-footed," from *ὀ-δέω*, "I swell" and *πούς*.

ordered to come hither? Doth this man speak of him? ¹

JOC. Why ask of whom he spoke? Pay no heed to him. Resolve even to forget what has been said; 'tis idle talk.

ŒD. Impossible! With such clues I am bound to solve the secret of my birth.

JOC. In Heaven's name, oh, end this search, if thou hast any care for thy own life! My sufferings are enough.

ŒD. Fear not; for e'en though ² I be proved a son of slavish mothers to the third generation, thou wilt not appear base-born.

JOC. Yet be persuaded by me, I implore; do not this.

ŒD. I cannot consent to refrain from learning the whole plain truth.

JOC. And yet I tell thee what is best, of right goodwill.

ŒD. Why then, this best of thine is pain and grief to me, and has long been.

JOC. O curst of fate! never mayst thou learn, who thou art!

ŒD. Go one of you and bring that herdsman to me here; but leave this queen to the joys of her rich ancestry!

JOC. Woe, woe is thee, O hapless man! That is the only word I can address to thee, none but that, from henceforth and for ever! (JOCASTA *rushes wildly into the palace.*)

CHO. Why hath the lady darted hence, O Œdipus, sped by her violent grief? I fear me, there will burst a tempest of woe after this silence.

ŒD. Let burst what will! My wish will be to know my stock, mean though it be. This queen, perhaps, who for her sex is puffed with pride,³ feels shame at my lowly origin. But

¹ Reading *τόνδ'*, not *τόν θ'*, the reading of most MSS.

² Reading *οὐδ' ἐὰν τρίτης*, a conjecture of Hermann's for MSS. *οὐδ' ἂν ἐκ τρίτης*, which has found wide acceptance.

³ Jebb renders "for she hath a woman's pride;" but, considering the position of women in ancient Greece, it is not likely that Sophocles

I, counting myself a child of bounteous Fortune, shall suffer no dishonour. Yea, she is the mother that gave me birth; and the months, which are my kin,¹ have marked me out now small, now great; and such being my parentage, I can never turn out to be different, so that I should shrink from the full knowledge of my birth.²

CHO. If I can read what is to be, if I am skilled in wisdom's ways,—by Olympus, O Cithaeron, thou shalt surely learn to know, what time the moon shines full to-morrow,³ that Œdipus⁴ doth honour thee as his own native soil, as nurse to him and mother too,—yea, and that thou art made a theme of choral song by us, for the service thou didst do our king!

O Phœbus, with loud cries invoked, may this be pleasing unto thee! Who was it, my son, who amongst the long-lived Nymphs that gave thee birth, wedded to thy father⁵ Pan, the rover of the hills? Or was Loxias the sire that begat thee?⁶ For well he loves each terraced height, where the

meant to imply that all women were naturally proud, but rather that *she* was proud beyond her sex.

¹ *i.e.*, the months, like Œdipus, are the children of *τύχη*. Others regard *συγγενεῖς* as merely meaning “the coeval months”—*i.e.*, all the months of my life.

² This seems to be the meaning intended, “I am Fortune's child; I cannot alter that, so why need I be ashamed of my birth?” Some, however, reject this more obvious meaning, and insist that Sophocles intended “Such being my parentage, never will I turn out different (change my present intention), so as to abandon the investigation of my birth” (Blaydes).

³ The MSS. give *οὐκ ἔσθ' τὰν αὔριον*, and this is what I have attempted to render, but the passage is almost certainly corrupt. Jebb suggests *τὰν ἐπιούσαν*, “the coming full moon.”

⁴ Reading *Οἰδίπουν* with Schmidt and Jebb. If *Οἰδίπου* be retained, render “that we honour thee as native to Œdipus.”

⁵ Reading *πατρός πελασθεῖς*, Lachmann's almost certain emenda'tion for MSS. *προσπελασθεῖς*, which leaves the metre a syllable short.

⁶ The sense here is doubtless what Jebb and others give, as above;

cattle feed. Or else it was Cyllene's lord,¹ or he that is the Bacchants' god, whose home is on the mountain-tops, that received thee, when a new-born babe,² from one of the Nymphs of Helicon, who share most oft his sport.

ŒD. (*catching sight of the Herdsman being brought in from the country*). If I, old friends, may also form a guess,—albeit I have never met the man,—methinks I see the herdsman, whom we have long been seeking; for, measured with this messenger, he matches him in hoary age; and, further, I recognize those who are bringing him, as though they were servants of my own; but thou, I trow, mayst haply have the advantage of me here in knowledge, from having seen the herdsman aforetime.

CHO. Yes, I know him, be sure of that; he was a servant of Laius,—for a shepherd, as trusted a man as he had.

ŒD. (*as the Herdsman enters.*) Thee first I ask, the stranger from Corinth, is this the man thou meanest?

MES. 'Tis he, this man thou seest.

ŒD. What ho! thou aged man, come, look me in the face and answer all I ask thee. Wast thou once a servant of Laius?

HER. I was,—a slave not bought, but bred in his house.

ŒD. With what work wert thou busied, or what was thy mode of life?

HER. Most of my life I tended flocks.

ŒD. What places didst thou mainly haunt?

but the text is a matter of pure conjecture, the MSS. reading, *ἦ σέ γέ τις θυγάτηρ Δοξίου*, being almost hopeless. Either Arndt's *ἦ σέ γ' εὐνάτειρά τις . . .* or Jebb's *ἦ σέ γ' ἔφουσε πατήρ Δοξίας* gives the required sense.

¹ Hermes, the son of Maia, was born on Mt. Cyllene in Arcadia.

² Reading *λόχνημα* with Wecklein, for MSS. *εὕρημα*, which Jebb explains as expressing the sudden delight of the god on receiving his babe, and he compares *ἔρμαιον*. In this sense one might understand that the god finds his babe, which the Nymph has left upon the hills for him to find.

HER. Cithaeron sometimes, at others some neighbouring spot.

ÆD. Dost thou, then, remember noticing this man anywhere there?

HER. How engaged? Of what man art thou speaking?

ÆD. Of him who standeth here. Or¹ dost thou remember ever having had any dealings with him?

HER. Not so as to speak at once from memory.

MES. No wonder surely, master. But I will call things clearly to his mind, as he forgets. I am sure he remembers the time, when he and I were comrades in the parts about Cithaeron,² he with two flocks, I with one, three whole half-years from spring to autumn;³ while for the winter, soon as it came, I would drive my flock to my own fold, and he drove his to the steading of Laius.

Is this fact or fiction I am telling?

HER. Thou art telling the truth, though 'tis a long time since.

MES. Come, tell me now, dost thou remember giving me then a boy one day, to bring up as my own child?

HER. What now? Wherefore dost thou ask this question?

MES. There stands the man who was that babe, my friend.

HER. Perdition seize thee! There, be dumb!

ÆD. Ha! old sirrah, chide him not; thy own words need that more than his.

HER. Good master, what is my offence?

ÆD. Refusing to tell of the boy about whom this man is asking.

¹ Reading ἡ ξυναλλάξας, the second half of an interrupted question. There is a var. lect. ἡ ξυνήλλαξας, "hast thou ever met?" But this misses the excitement which Ædipus shows.

² The construction is irregular, but the sense is quite clear, and emendation is out of place.

³ *i.e.*, from March till September,—Arcturus being visible just before dawn in this month.

HER. Aye, for he speaks without any knowledge; he labours in vain.

ŒD. Though thou wilt not speak to pleasure me, thou shalt speak under pain.

HER. In Heaven's name, ill-treat not an old man like me!

ŒD. (*to his attendants*). Tie his hands behind him instantly!

HER. Ah, woe is me! Why? What more art thou bent on learning?

ŒD. Didst thou give this man the boy, about whom he is asking?

HER. I did,—and would I had died that day!

ŒD. Thou'lt come to that, unless thou tell the honest truth.

HER. Much more am I lost, if I speak.

ŒD. This fellow, it seems, will still delay.

HER. Delay, not I! Nay, I said erewhile I gave him the boy.

ŒD. Whence hadst thou him? Was he thine own or given thee by another?

HER. It was not my own child I gave; I had received him from some one.

ŒD. From one of the citizens here, or from what home?

HER. In God's name, master, ask, oh! ask no more!

ŒD. Thou art undone, if I have to ask thee this again.

HER. Why then, 'twas of the children of the house of Laius.

ŒD. Was it a slave, or one of kin to him by birth?

HER. Ah me! I am upon the verge of what is terrible to tell.

ŒD. And *I* of what is terrible to hear;¹ yet hear I must.

¹ Reading ἀκούειν, which has now been generally restored, though some still read ἀκούων.

HER. 'Twas said,—mark me, 'twas *said*—to be the king's own son ; but she that is within—thy wife—could best tell thee as to this.

ÆD. So it was *she* who gave thee the child ?

HER. It was, O king.

ÆD. For what purpose ?

HER. That I might get rid of it.

ÆD. She its mother, wretched woman ?

HER. Aye, from dread of evil prophecies.

ÆD. What prophecies ?

HER. 'Twas said the babe would slay his sire.

ÆD. How cam'st *thou* then to give him up to this old man ?

HER. From pity, master ; methought he would carry him to another land, whence he came himself ; but he saved him for the deepest woe. For if thou art the man he saith, believe me, thou wert cursed at birth.

ÆD. (*with a cry of horror*). Ah, woe ! Then all will have turned out true !

O light, now may I look my last on thee !—I who stand convicted thus :—born of an ill-omened line, marrying where I never should, and shedding blood I should have spared !

[*he rushes frantically into the palace.*

CHO. Ah ! ye generations of men, how I count your life just as if it were no life at all ! For what man obtains a larger share of bliss than just the semblance of it, and, after that, the setting of his sun ? With thy¹ fate as a warning,—thine, yes, thine, unhappy Ædipus,—I count naught² blest in mortal's life.

This was the man, O Zeus, who shot so passing well, and won³ his prize of happiness supreme ; for he slew the riddling maiden with the taloned claws, and rose as a tower of defence

¹ Reading τὸν σὸν τοι παράδειγμα, a conjecture of Camerarius, now widely adopted, in preference to MSS. τὸ σὸν τοι.

² Reading οὐδὲν, Hermann's correction of MSS. οὐδένα.

³ Reading ἐκράτησε and ἀνέστα in l. 1201.

against death for my land. From that day wast thou called my king and held in highest honour, lording it in mighty Thebes.

But now, whose lot is sadder in our ears? Who is more wretched in his life's reverse, dwelling 'mid cruel woes and troubles? Woe is thee, O famous Œdipus! The same wide harbour served for thee, the son and father too, to enter as a bridal bower. How, ah! how could the furrows of thy father's field have endured thee, poor wretch, so long in silence?

Time, that seeth all, hath found thee out in thy unwitting sin, condemning the unholy marriage, which has long confounded sire and son.¹ Alas for thee, thou son of Laius! Would, oh would that I had never seen thee! I lament as one who pours the death-wail² from his lips. In truth, 'twas all through thee I breathed again, as now through thee I close my eyes on light.

SEC. MES. (*coming out of the palace*). O ye who are held in highest honour in this land, what deeds are ye to hear and see, and what a load of sorrow will ye bear, if ye still regard at all, as kinsmen might, the house of Labdacus! For neither Ister nor Phasis, I trow, could ever wash this house clean, so many are the woes it hides already, while there are others it will soon bring to light,—deliberate, not unwitting acts; and the pain of such griefs as are clearly self-incurred is the keenest.

CHO. That which we knew before wants naught to make it sorely grievous; what dost thou tell besides it?

¹ Or, "condemning him who is both sire and son in an unholy marriage."

² The MSS. here give *ὡς περιάλλα ἰαχέων*, from which it is impossible to extract any satisfactory meaning, for the rendering, "I lament as one grieving exceedingly, with all my powers of utterance," is not tenable. Cf. Jebb's criticism in his note *ad loc.* His own conjecture, *ὡσπερ ἰάλεμον χέων*, is here followed, an "elegant correction," as Kennedy calls it, deserving the gratitude of all future scholars.

SEC. MES. The shortest tale for me to tell or you to hear is, that our god-like queen, the lady Jocasta, is dead.

CHO. Unhappy one ! what caused her death ?

SEC. MES. She herself. The worst of all that happened is elsewhere ; 'tis out of sight. Still, so far as mine own poor memory goes, thou shalt learn what befell yon hapless queen.

Soon as her frantic mood had carried her within the hall, she rushed straight onwards to her nuptial couch, tearing out her hair with both hands at once ; and when she was inside, she dashed the doors together and called on Laius, long since dead, remembering their child of long ago, by whom the father met his death and left the mother to bear unhappy offspring to his son. Next she bewailed her marriage, wherein, to her sorrow, she had borne a double race, husband by husband, children by her child.

After this, I know no more of the way she died ; for Œdipus burst in with loud outcries, preventing us from seeing all her agony, but our eyes followed his random-steps. To and fro he rushed, craving a sword at our hands, and asking where to find the wife, that was no wife indeed, but a mother whose double throes had born himself and his children too. And there was some god directing his frantic course ; for it was not any of us men who were there at hand. With one dread cry, as though he had some guide, he leapt upon the folding-doors, and, forcing the bolts from their sockets till they bent,¹ headlong he sprang into the room.

And there we saw the queen hanging in a noose² of twisted cords ; and as soon as he caught sight of her, with one loud cry of awful agony, he loosed the dangling rope ;

¹ Others render, "bent the yielding doors out of their sockets." Blaydes' suggestion, to read *κοίλων*, "from their hollow sockets," would simplify this very difficult expression.

² The reading *ἐμπεπληγμένην* of L, "dashed into," is probably a mere slip in writing

then, when the hapless corpse was laid upon the ground, there followed a fearful scene. He tore from her robes the brooches of gold, wherewith she was decked, and, lifting them up, stabbed the sockets of his eyes, crying out that they should see no more the horrors he was suffering or was causing all this while, but henceforth should behold in darkness¹ those whom he ne'er should have seen, and know no more those whom once he craved to know.

The while he uttered this sad refrain, with lifted hand he smote upon his eyes, not once but many a time; and, at each blow, the bleeding eye-balls rained upon his beard, sending forth not goutts of oozing gore, but one black drenching shower of bloody hail.²

Such are the woes that have burst forth from twain, not on one alone,³ but blended ill for man and wife. Their old happiness, long past, was truly such in days gone by; but now, to-day, wailing and woe, death and shame, aye, every evil, that is named, is theirs; not one is wanting.

CHO. Hath yon sufferer any⁴ respite now from pain?

SEC. MES. Loudly he calls for someone to unbolt the doors and display to all the folk of Cædmus him who was his father's murderer, his mother's—but I cannot speak the impious word he used;—his purpose being to cast himself out from the land, nor longer wait to bring the house beneath the curse which he himself invoked. But he lacks strength and one to go before; for his affliction is too great for him to bear. And this will he let thee see for thyself; for

¹ *i.e.*, cease to see.

² The reading is uncertain; either *χαλάζης αίματος τ'* as a hendiadys, or *ὄμβρος χαλάζης αίματοῦς* of Heath, or Porson's *ὄμβρος χάλαζα θ' αίματοῦσσ'* satisfy sense and metre.

³ The MSS. give *οὐ μόνον κακά*, which has been variously emended. Jebb reads *κατά* for *κακά*, which reading is followed. Winckelmann, *οὐ μονόστολα*. Lachmann, *οὐ μόνου μόνου*, etc. Dindorf rejects ll. 1280, 1281 as spurious.

⁴ Reading with Linwood *τινι*, indefinite, not *τινι*, interrogative.

lo ! the bolts of the gates are being drawn back ; and thou wilt see ere long a sight, which even one who hated him would pity.

CHO. (*as ŒDIPUS appears*). O fearful fate for man to see, more fearful than any I have ever chanced upon ere this ! What madness came to thee, unhappy man ? What deity is it that hath leapt on thy ill-starred destiny, with a spring surpassing any yet ? Woe for thee, thou hapless one ! I cannot even bear to look on thee, though there is much I fain would ask and learn and closely scan, such a shudder dost thou send through me !

ŒD. Ah me, ah me ! Alas, unhappy that I am ! Whither am I drifting on my wretched course ? Whither is my voice floating¹ at random on the breeze ? Alas, my destiny, to what has thy leap brought thee !

CHO. To horrors worse than ear or eye can bear.

ŒD. O cloud of darkness that is mine, horrible, unspeakable, settling o'er my life,—thou foe resistless, sped by a breeze with only sorrow in its breath !² Ah me ! and once again, ah me ! How deep within me I feel the sting of those stabbing pins, blent with the memory of my woes !

CHO. No wonder, truly, 'mid such woes that thou hast double grief to mourn and double pain to bear.

ŒD. Ah, friend, thou art still steadfast in thy services to me ; still dost thou endure to wait on me now blind. Ah me ! ah me ! Thou art not hid from me, but, sightless though I am, full well I know thy voice.

CHO. Thou man of fearful deeds, how hadst thou the hardihood to quench, e'en thus, the light of thine eyes ? What god was it that urged thee on ?

¹ Jebb follows Musgrave's suggestion, and edits *διαπωτᾶται* for the corrupt *διαπέταται* of the MSS. Kennedy, objecting that this word is nowhere found, reads *διαθεῖ* on his own conjecture.

² *ὄν* was added after *δυσούριστον* by Hermann to complete the metre.

ŒD. 'Twas Apollo, friends, Apollo that was bringing this my evil doom to pass,—my evil, evil doom; though the hand, that smote my eyes, was none other than mine own; ah me! What need had I of sight, when, if I saw, there were no pleasant scenes for me?

CHO. 'Twas even as thou sayest.

ŒD. Then, what is there henceforth, my friends, for me to see or love, what greeting can I henceforth hear with pleasure? Lead me hence from out the land, make no delay, but lead me hence, kind friends, so wholly lost¹ and most accursed, more loathed likewise in Heaven's sight than any son of man.

CHO. Luckless alike for thy misfortune and thy sense of it, would I had never so much as known thee!²

ŒD. Perish the man, who'er he was, that loosed me from the cruel fetters on my feet³ and rescued me from death and saved my life, conferring no kindness thereby! For had I then died, I had not been so sore a woe to friends or mine own self.

CHO. I too could have wished it thus.

ŒD. Then had I ne'er come hither to be my father's

¹ Reading τὸν μέγ' ὀλέθριον, the correction of Erfurdt, now generally adopted, for MSS. τὸν ὀλέθριον μέγαν.

² Reading μηδέ γ' ἂν γινῶναι ποτε, the correction of Hermann, for MSS. μήδ' ἀναγινῶναι ποτ' ἂν—the best, perhaps, of the many attempts to get rid of the awkward ἀναγινῶναι, which might easily have grown out of ἂν γινῶναι.

³ The MSS. give ἀπ' ἀγρίας πέδας νομάδος ἐπιποδίας ἔλυσεν (var. lect. ἔλαβέ μ'). Triclinius ejected ἀπ'. Various attempts have been made to explain or emend νομάδος. Thus the Schol. explained it (α) "feeding on my flesh," (β) "in the pastures;" but it is probably corrupt, interfering as it does with the metre, and giving no satisfactory sense; for neither of these renderings is tenable. Kennedy's ingenious conjecture is followed in the translation ἀπό μ' ἐπιποδίας ἔλαβ' ἀπό τε φόνου μ' ἔρυτο, which is at any rate intelligible. Jebb had conjectured, without, however, editing, μονάδ', "forlorn." The conjecture νομάδος ἐπὶ πόας, "on the grassy pasture," also deserves notice.

murderer, nor had I been called by my fellows the husband of her from whom I sprang ; but, as it is, I am abhorred of Heaven, son of a dishonoured line, with children born to me by her from whom I drew my own sad life ; and if there be yet one evil greater than another, this hath been the lot of Œdipus.

CHO. I know not how to say that thou art well advised ; for better wert thou as one dead than living blind.

ŒD. Seek not to prove to me that this is not best done, as I have done it ; nor counsel me henceforth. For I know not with what eyes I could e'er have faced my sire, on coming to the halls of Hades, if I had my sight ;—no ! nor my wretched mother ; for 'gainst them both have I committed crimes too bad for hanging. Well then, to look upon my children,—was that a sight I should have yearned to see, their birth being what it was ? Ah, no ! with these eyes nevermore ! Nor yet this town, or the towers thereof, nor the holy statues of its gods, from which I have debarred myself, most hapless wretch,—I whose lot was fairer far than any man's in Thebes,—proclaiming, as I did, with mine own lips, that all should drive away that impious one, whom Heaven has shown to be unclean,—and a son of Laius.¹ Was it likely I could face these citizens unflinchingly, after proving that foul stain was mine ?

Surely not. Nay, were there besides a way to block the fount of sound, which flows in through the ears, I had not refrained from closing up this wretched frame of mine, so as to have made me deaf as well as blind ; for 'tis sweet that thought should dwell outside the pale of sorrow.

Ah, Cithæron, why wert thou so ready to receive me ? Why didst thou not slay me then and there, that I might never have revealed to men from whence I sprung ?

¹ Others place a full stop at *ἀναγνον*, and connect *καὶ γένους κ.τ.λ.* with what follows, dependent on *κηλῖδα* ; but, regarded as a climax, the words are better connected with *φανέντ'*, as Jebb points out.

O Polybus, O Corinth ! thou ancient home once called my father's house, how fair to outward view was I your child, yet 'neath the skin how full of sores ! For now I stand revealed,—vile and vilely born. O ye three roads and hidden glen, thou grove of oaks and narrow pass where three ways met, that drank the blood I spilt, my father's blood,—my own,—have ye any memory¹ of me—the deeds ye saw me do, or those that I was doing afterwards, on my coming here ?

O marriage, marriage, that didst give me birth, and then, when I was born, raise up the self-same² seed again, and showed the world a race of fathers, brothers, sons, all of one blood,—yea, brides and wives and mothers—and every deed that ranks most foul amongst mankind !

But since such things as are not right to do are wrong to say,—oh ! haste and hide me, I entreat you, somewhere out of sight, or slay or cast me out to sea, where ye will never see me more ! Come, deign to touch this hapless wretch ; consent ; fear not ; these sorrows are mine own ; no mortal but myself can bear the load.

CHO. Lo ! Creon comes to meet the needs of what thou askest, to act and give advice,—he alone being left to take thy place and guard the realm.

ŒD. Ah me ! with what words shall I then address him ? What just ground for confidence shall I now show ? For in the past I have been proved unjust to him in all.

CRE. I have not come to mock thee, Œdipus, nor yet to taunt thee with some wrong now past.

(*To his attendants.*) Nay, if ye regard no more the feelings

¹ Reading *μὲμνησθέ τι*, Elmsley's correction of MSS. *μὲμνησθ' ὄτι*.

² The MSS. give *ταῦτόν*, which, if retained, must be an obscure allusion to Jocasta, who bare children to him whom she had herself borne ; so Blaydes. Jebb, characterizing this as nonsense, reads *ταῦτοῦ*—*i. e.*, seed of that very child, *viz.*, Œdipus. Nauck conjectured *τοῦμόν* ; but the obscurity of *ταῦτόν* is no argument against it in such a passage as this.

of the sons of men, at least respect the royal sun-god's flame, that nurtureth all,—enough to shrink from showing thus openly a pollution, such as neither earth, nor the holy rain, nor the light will endure. Lead him within at once; for that kinsmen, and they alone, should see and hear a kinsman's woes doth best suit piety.

ŒD. I pray thee, since thou hast relieved me of an anxious thought, by coming in thy nobleness to one so vile as me, grant me one boon; for in thy interest, not mine, shall I speak.

CRE. And what is the boon thou art so eager to obtain of me?

ŒD. Cast me forth from this land without delay, to some spot where none of mortal men will be found conversing with me.

CRE. I had done this, be well assured, save that first I was fain to learn from the god all that must be done.

ŒD. Nay, but his word divine hath been fully shown,—destruction to the parricide, to me the impious wretch.

CRE. Aye, so 'twas said; still, at our present urgent need, it were better to be sure of our duty.

ŒD. What, will ye make inquiry concerning such a hapless wretch?

CRE. Yes, for even thou wilt surely now believe the god.

ŒD. I will; and on thee I lay a charge and will e'en turn to thee in prayer: ¹ bury her, that lies within, as seemeth best to thine own heart; and well thou may'st ²; for it will be even for thine own thou art paying the last rites. As for me, never let this city of my fathers be required to have me within its walls, while life is mine; but suffer me to dwell upon the hills, out yonder on Cithaeron, which is ringing with my name,—Cithaeron, which my mother and my

¹ Reading *προστρέψομαι*; there is a var. lect. *προτρέψομαι*, "I will urge," which many editors prefer; but, as Jebb remarks, this is less in keeping with the natural utterances of a man so broken as Œdipus.

sire, while yet they lived, appointed as a proper tomb for me,—that so I may die, as *they* designed who meant to kill me.

Yet am I sure of this at least, that neither sickness nor aught else will ever take me off; for ne'er had I been saved, when on the point of death, save for some awful woe! Well, let that fate of mine go its appointed course; but as touching my children, Creon,—for my sons, I pray thee, trouble not thyself; they are men, and therefore can never want the means to live, wherever they may be; but for my two unhappy daughters, piteous pair,—apart from whom the board, at which I ate, has ne'er been placed, to sever them from me; but ever those twain would share in all that touched my lips;—oh, care for them,¹ I pray thee! And, if it might be, let me touch them with my hands, and mourn my sorrows to the full. Come, O king, consent! Consent, thou noble nature! In truth, methinks a single touch would make me feel them mine, as in the days when I beheld them. (*ANTIGONE and ISMENE are led in.*)

What! In Heaven's name is it really my darlings I hear weeping? Has Creon, out of pity for me, sent me what most I prize, my daughters twain? Am I right?

CRE. Thou art; this have I brought about; for I know the joy thou feelest now,—thy joy of days gone by.

ŒD. Good luck be thine! And for thus bringing them upon their way may Heaven be found a better guardian unto thee than it hath been to me!

My children, where are ye? Come hither, come to these hands of mine, a brother's hands, which have been the means of showing you your father's eyes,² that once were bright, e'en as ye see them now; for I, my children, never

¹ Some read *ταῖν* here, but *αῖν* may be defended, the construction having become irregular owing to the length of the preceding clause.

² Others join *ᾤδε ὀρᾶν*, "have caused the eyes to see thus," *i.e.*, to be sightless.

seeing, never knowing, am proved to have become your sire by her in whose womb I was myself begotten !

Weep for you both I do,—see you I cannot,—when I think of the bitter life henceforth which ye will have to live by men's constraint. For to what gatherings of the folk, or to what festivals will ye ever go, without returning to your home in tears, instead of witnessing the sight? But when ye shall have reached ripe years for marrying, who will be the man, yes, who will rashly run the risk, my little ones, of taking on him such reproaches as must be ruinous to my offspring¹ and to yours alike? For what evil is there wanting? Your father slew his sire; then wedded his own mother that bare him, and begat you of the very womb from which himself had issued. Such taunts will ye have to bear; and who will wed you then? None, my children, none; nay, clearly ye are doomed to waste away unwed, unblest with babes.

O son of Menœceus, since thou alone art left to be a father to these twain,—we their parents both being lost, the pair of us,—suffer them not to wander in beggary, unwed, being thy own kith and kin, nor bring them to the level of my woes. Nay, pity them, seeing their tender years so all forlorn,—save for what depends on thee. Consent, O noble prince; let hand grip hand upon it!

To you, my little ones, had ye as yet the power to comprehend, much counsel had I given; but now, be this the prayer I hear you make,² that ye may live where the time permits,³ and find your lot in life a happier one than was your sire's.

¹ Reading *ταῖς ἐμαῖς γοναῖσιν*, Kennedy's correction of MSS. *τοῖς ἐμοῖς γονεῦσιν*, which, even if referred to Jocasta alone, would have little point.

² Retaining *εὐχέσθαι μοι* of the MSS.

³ Reading *οὐδ' καιρὸς ἐστὶ ζῆν*,—*ἐστὶ*, having been conjectured by Dindorf or *ἀεὶ* of the MSS., and adopted by most editors.

CRE. Thy grief hath now gone far enough. Come, go within.

ŒD. Obey I must, although it is no pleasure.

CRE. Aye, for in season all is good.

ŒD. Dost know, then, on what terms I will go?

CRE. Say on, and I shall know them, when I hear.

ŒD. Be sure thou send me from the land, to dwell elsewhere.

CRE. Thou askest me what rests with Heaven to give.

ŒD. Nay, but in Heaven's eyes, at least, I am grown most hateful.

CRE. Why then, thou wilt soon obtain thy wish.

ŒD. Is this a promise then?

CRE. Yes, for 'tis not my way to utter idly words I do not mean.

ŒD. Then lead me hence, e'en now.

CRE. On then, but let go of thy children.

ŒD. Oh, never take these from me!

CRE. Seek not always to be master; for even the mastery thou hadst has not followed thee through life.

CHO. Ye dwellers in Thebes, our native land! this, behold, is Œdipus, who knew the famous riddle and was a man most mighty, on whose fortunes every eye in Thebes would turn in eager wonderment; ¹ in what a sea of fearful trouble is he plunged!

Wherefore keep we close watch to see that day, which closes all; calling none happy of the sons of men, till he have passed life's borderland and known not aught of grief.

¹ Reading οὐ τις οὐ ζήλην πολιτῶν ταῖς τύχαις ἐπέβλεπεν, a joint emendation of several scholars for MSS. ὅστις οὐ ζήλην πολιτῶν καὶ τύχαις ἐπιβλέπων. Kennedy changes ὅστις into ὡς τις, and without further alteration renders, "considered as one who never eyed jealously the aspiring hopes and fortunes of the citizens;" but he entirely fails to support this meaning of ἐπιβλέπω, in spite of a very long note, in which he criticises Jebb with some warmth, while endeavouring to show the soundness of his own view.

ŒDIPUS AT COLONUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS.

ANTIGONE.

STRANGER OF COLONUS.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN OF COLONUS.

ISMENE.

THESEUS.

CREON.

POLYNEICES.

MESSENGER.

SCENE.—At Colonus in Attica, near the sacred grove of the Eumenides.

INTRODUCTION.

BETWEEN the close of the "Œdipus the King" and the opening of the "Œdipus at Colonus" a considerable period is supposed to have elapsed. Œdipus, after the fearful disclosures made in the earlier play, had remained at Thebes, while Creon administered the government. By degrees, the blinded sufferer grew reconciled to his changed circumstances, and no longer felt any wish to fly from the scene of his misfortunes; but, as time went on, the Thebans came to believe that they were harbouring a pollution, and Œdipus was expelled. His sons make no effort to save him; only his daughters remain loyal,—Antigone going forth to share his wanderings, Ismene staying in Thebes to watch the course of events and help her father, as occasion may offer. But, one day, came an oracle to Thebes, which said that on Œdipus alone depended the welfare of the city; and thus it became of paramount importance that the Thebans should induce the old wanderer to return. Meantime, however, his two sons have quarrelled. Polyneices, the elder, has been driven from his native land by his brother Eteocles, and has taken refuge at Argos, where he has married the daughter of the king; with the aid of the latter and his allies, he is bent on leading an expedition to Thebes, to extort submission from his brother,—the one thing essential to success being the presence of Œdipus.

Such, very briefly, are the events which fill the interval between the two plays. The scene of the "Œdipus at Colonus" lies before a grove of the Eumenides at Colonus, to which the wanderer has made his way, guided by his daughter Antigone. He is in search of some resting-place, and is asking his child what spot they have reached. Scarcely has he seated himself, after learning

that they are close to Athens, when a native of the place enters and bids him depart and trespass not on holy ground.

On learning that he has reached a grove of the "Awful Goddesses," Œdipus declines to move, remembering the words of Apollo, that when he reached such a spot, he should at last find rest. At his request, the stranger, who has accosted him, goes to fetch Theseus, the king of the land ; and, on his departure, Œdipus, after offering up a prayer to the Eumenides, withdraws further into the sacred grove, as certain elders of Colonus make their appearance. (ll. 1-116.)

They have come to see who this rash intruder can be. As they are still searching for him, Œdipus comes slowly forward from his place of concealment. His appearance calls forth an expression of horror, and once more he is bidden to leave the holy ground he has invaded. He hesitates, but yields at last under a promise of protection from the elders of Colonus, and takes a seat, as directed by them, on a ledge of rock near the outskirts of the grove. (ll. 117-202.)

As soon as he is seated, the Chorus ask him who he is and whence he comes. Word by word, the awful truth is wrested from his unwilling lips, but at the mention of his name the Chorus raise a cry of execration, and are half inclined to break their promise and send him forth from the land ; the gentle pleading of Antigone, however, makes them waver ; and the indignant protest of their suppliant, who asks bitterly if the well-known fame of Athens for succouring the stranger and oppressed is, after all, but an idle boast. Of what are they afraid ? Of a name, forsooth ? Not surely of the man who bears it, or of any acts of his,—“a man more sinned against than sinning.” “Whatever I have done was done unwittingly ; and they whom I wronged, had first wronged me,—and that with full intent.” Eventually the Chorus are so far persuaded as to refer the matter to Theseus, whose coming is immediately expected. (ll. 203-309.)

Meantime, Ismene arrives, bringing tidings to her father from Thebes. She tells Œdipus how his two sons have fallen out about the sovereignty of the land, how Eteocles has refused his brother a share in the kingdom, and how Polyneices has gone to Argos, and by a foreign alliance is bent on humbling the young

king of Thebes. But oracles have said that the issue of the struggle rests with Œdipus ; and so Creon will soon arrive, in order to get possession of his person. The purpose of the Thebans, however, is not to reinstate their old king in the land, but to plant him somewhere on their borders, that they may be masters of his grave after his death ; for the oracle had also said that his tomb should confer safety on the land, in which it was situated. "Have either of my sons heard this?" asks Œdipus. "Yea, both have heard, and know it well." "They know it, and yet have done nothing ! God grant, then, their strife may only end in the death of both of them, each by the other's hand ! One word from them in bygone days might have saved me from beggary and exile, but they never said it ; 'tis to their sisters I owe even my daily bread and such poor nurture as I have ; wherefore let them ask my help in their hour of need and learn what it is to be refused ; with Theseus and Athens to champion me, I defy Creon and his Thebans." Thus Œdipus vents his indignation on his unfilial sons, while promising to confer on those, who protect him, a boon that shall serve them well for ever. (ll. 310-460.)

By the advice of the Chorus, who have been struck by what the sightless stranger has just said, Œdipus proceeds to make atonement to the Eumenides, as the deities to whom he has first come as a suppliant. The rites of purification are carefully described to him by the elders, and Ismene is sent to perform them for her father, whose blindness and feebleness preclude him from acting for himself. (ll. 461-509.)

After Ismene's departure, the Chorus can no longer contain their curiosity, but insist on learning from Œdipus the whole story of his sad life ; he answers their questions, and once more protests that he was but an instrument in Fate's hands ; no moral guilt can be imputed to him. (ll. 510-548.)

At this point Theseus enters. He recognizes Œdipus at once, and, almost before being asked, assures him of his help. "I was a stranger once myself ; never, then, would I turn aside from such another. Well I know I am but a man, and my portion in the morrow is no greater than thine." With such noble words the king reassures the wanderer, and then asks him what he requires of Athens. Œdipus replies that he offers his own body as a gift

to the land—a gift fraught with no small gain ; at the same time he warns the generous king, who consents at once to give him burial in his land, that to do so may involve a quarrel with Thebes. Theseus is incredulous. “How should bitterness come between us?” “Who knows?” replies Œdipus ; “it may be all sunshine to-day between Thebes and Athens, but time has much in store.” Only let Theseus make good his word, and he will never repent it. Accordingly Œdipus is received as a citizen under the protection of Athens and of the people of Colonus, more especially ; and his fears of armed intervention from Thebes are quieted by the repeated assurances of Theseus. (ll. 549-667.)

Then follows a beautiful ode, welcoming the stranger to his new home,—the most famous choral ode, perhaps, in the whole range of Greek literature,—in which the beauties and glories of Colonus, the poet’s own native place, are lovingly described. (ll. 668-719.)

The announcement that Creon is actually approaching throws Œdipus into a state of alarm, nor is he reassured by the cunning speech, by which Creon endeavours to justify himself and make a good impression on the Chorus. He first professes deep compassion for his unhappy kinsman, and begs him to return and hide the family reproach in the seclusion of his native city. But Œdipus is not to be beguiled by such smooth words. Thebes and Creon did nothing for him in days gone by ; now they offer him what he does not ask, and he knows the reason ; it is not to take him home they come, but to plant him on their borders, for their own selfish ends. “My curse upon you, one and all !” he cries, “and now get you gone !” (ll. 720-799.)

Creon endeavours to argue with him, and, failing in this, begins to threaten. He now informs Œdipus that Ismene is already in his power, and at the same time orders his guards to carry off Antigone also. The elders of Colonus interpose, but force prevails, and she is hurried away. Next, Creon is on the point of seizing Œdipus, who has cursed him for his cruelty, when Theseus hurriedly enters. He has heard cries for help and demands to know the reason. No sooner has he heard, than he despatches horsemen to overtake the Theban guards and bring back the maidens, while he sternly rebukes Creon’s overbearing

action, and warns him, that, until the maidens are produced again, there will be no return to Thebes for him. (ll. 800-936.)

Creon first attempts to justify his conduct, arguing that he is really doing Athens a service in removing a pollution from the land, and appealing to the wisdom of the council of Areopagus to confirm his act. Theseus must, of course, act as he thinks best, adds the crafty speaker, "for though my cause is just, the lack of aid makes me weak." At this shameless and impudent utterance, Œdipus can no longer contain himself. In a strain of passionate vehemence he repels Creon's taunts, defends himself from his ungenerous accusations, and proves that it is Creon who ought to be ashamed of himself for publishing the reproach of his family, far more than the unhappy victim who was but a passive instrument in the resistless hands of Fate. Finally he appeals to the Eumenides to help him and uphold the right. (ll. 937-1003.)

Theseus cuts short further recriminations by peremptorily ordering Creon to lead the way in the rescue of the maidens, at the same time warning him not to expect any assistance from possible accomplices in Athens. Creon complies with a bad grace, muttering impotent threats of vengeance hereafter, of which however Theseus takes little notice. (ll. 1004-1043.)

As Theseus leaves the stage with Creon, the Chorus chant a short ode, anticipating his speedy victory, and the rescue of the captives, at the same time offering up prayers to Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, to come and lend their aid. (ll. 1044-1095.)

Scarcely have they uttered the last words of prayer, when Theseus is descried, approaching with Ismene and Antigone. There is a touching meeting between Œdipus and his restored children, from which Theseus, who is characterized by a delicacy and nobility in strong contrast to the mean, blustering disposition of Creon, is careful to hold aloof, until Œdipus turns to thank him and ask for some account of the rescue. Theseus modestly parries the inquiry with the words, "What need that I should idly boast, when thou wilt learn it from these maidens in converse?" He then goes on to tell Œdipus that there is a matter, on which he would like to ask his advice. An unknown suppliant, claiming kinship with Œdipus, has appeared at the altar of Poseidon and craves an audience with him. After a few

questions, it becomes clear to Œdipus that this is no other than his son Polyneices, and he refuses to see him, but is eventually persuaded by Theseus and Antigone to show some reverence to the god by allowing the suppliant to come before him. (ll. 1096-1210.)

The Chorus, whilst Polyneices is being summoned, condemn the folly of all who crave for length of days, instead of being content with a modest span of life. "Not to be born is best ; and, next to that, a speedy return to the place whence one came." The aged sightless wanderer serves to point the moral of their reflections—"What has long life brought him but length of sorrow." (ll. 1211-1248.)

Polyneices enters and expresses his penitence at seeing his father and sisters in such wretched plight ; he pleads with Œdipus to hear his request and not send him away in scorn without a word ; Œdipus is an exile no less than he ; let them make common cause against Eteocles, and re-establish themselves at Thebes ; if only his father will join him, victory is assured ; without him, even life is at stake. At last Œdipus speaks, but it is only to utter a fearful curse against his son for his unfilial behaviour in the past, and to contrast it with the devotion of his two daughters, who have shared all his sufferings. (ll. 1249-1397.)

Polyneices bemoans his fate, and, after taking a touching farewell of Antigone and receiving her promise to give him burial, he goes forth to meet his doom. (ll. 1398-1446.)

Scarcely has this sad scene ended, when thunder is heard ; the Chorus express their terror, but Œdipus recognizes the sign of the gods for his approaching end, and sends in haste for Theseus, that he may render him a just recompense for his kindness. (ll. 1447-1499.)

Theseus soon arrives, in answer to the urgent summons, and asks, "What new thing hath now befallen?" Œdipus replies that the end is nigh, and that Theseus must follow him to the place appointed, there to learn the dread secret, on which depends the safety of his land. This secret only Theseus must know ; at his death let him hand it on to his successor, and so on to the end of time. Then, with sure steps, the blind man leads the way, the others following ; there is no longer any outward

sign of feebleness or blindness ; without guide or support he slowly leads them on, and thus mysteriously leaves the scene, to appear no more. (ll. 1500-1555.)

The Chorus chant a solemn ode of prayer, entreating the awful powers of the other world to receive the wanderer kindly. (ll. 1556-1578.)

Presently a messenger arrives to relate the final scene ; how he went to the appointed place without aid, finding his way unerringly ; of the rites of purification ; of his sad parting with his daughters ; and of the mysterious voice which called him. Of the closing scene none, however, but Theseus can tell aught ; he alone was allowed to witness the end ; all the messenger can say is, that Theseus was shortly afterwards seen alone, " holding his hand before his face to screen his eyes, as if some dread sight had appeared, such as none might endure to behold." He himself is evidently deeply impressed by what he has witnessed, and, as he says, " if to any I seem to speak folly, I would not care to win belief from those who count me foolish." (ll. 1579-1669.)

Antigone and Ismene now return, and bewail the loss of their father, and their future fate ; Antigone would fain visit her father's grave, but Ismene points out that this is impossible ; and Theseus, entering once more, comforts the maidens ; "'Tis well with Œdipus, and we must not mourn. As for his tomb, none may know where he lies buried ; it was his own command." Antigone begs that she and her sister may be sent to Thebes, in the hopes of stopping bloodshed between their brothers ; to this Theseus consents, adding that he will do all in his power to help them henceforth. And so the Chorus chant the final words of resignation, " Weep no more, for verily these things stand fast, whate'er betide."

ŒDIPUS AT COLONUS.

ŒD. Antigone, daughter of the blind old man, what land have we reached, to whose city are we come? Who will receive the wanderer Œdipus to-day with scantred alms? 'Tis little I crave, and still less than that little I get, and yet for me that is enough; for my sufferings and my old comrade, Time, and, lastly, natural nobleness are teaching me patience.

Come, child, if thou seest any place to sit, be it on unhallowed ground or by the groves of gods, let me stop and rest there, that we may learn where we are; for to this are we come, to learn of others,—strangers of citizens,—and to accomplish all that we are told.

ANT. Father, much-enduring Œdipus, yon towers, that guard the town, are far away, to judge by sight alone; and this is holy ground, undoubtedly, all thickly grown with olive, bay, and vine; while, deep within, full many a feathered nightingale is singing her sweet song. Here, then, rest thy limbs on this unpolished stone; for thou hast journeyed far, for an old man.

ŒD. Seat me, then, and keep watch o'er the blind.

ANT. Thanks to time, that is not a lesson I need learn.

ŒD. Canst thou tell me, now, to what place we are come?

ANT. In sooth I know Athens, but not this place.

ŒD. Yea, for every traveller told us that.

ANT. Well, am I to go somewhither and learn what place it is?

ÆD. E'en so, my child, if haply 'tis inhabited.

ANT. Inhabited, be sure, it is ; but there is no need, methinks ; for lo ! I see a man approach us twain.

ÆD. What ! on his way hither, already starting forth ?

ANT. Nay, but e'en now here ; speak whate'er thou hast to say in season, for the man is here.

ÆD. Hearing, sir stranger, from this maid, who seeth both for me and for herself, that thou art come hither, in good time to explore and solve our doubts——

STR. Then, before thou put thy further questions, leave this seat ; for thou art in a place whereon 'tis wrong to tread.

ÆD. And what is the place ? Whose of the gods is it held to be ?

STR. 'Tis holy ground and no man's home ; for the terrible goddesses, daughters of Earth and Gloom, possess it.

ÆD. Who are they, whose awful name I would invoke when told ?

STR. The people here would call them the Eumenides, who see everything ; but elsewhere other names find favour.

ÆD. May they receive their suppliant with favour ! For I will not henceforth leave my resting-place in this land.

STR. What is this ?

ÆD. The token of my destiny.¹

STR. Well, I dare not of myself make thee rise up, without the city's sanction, ere I report my action.

ÆD. In Heaven's name then, sir, scorn me not too much, poor wanderer as I am, to tell me that for which I sue to thee !

¹ Apollo had told Ædipus that, when he reached a shrine of the Eumenides, he should find rest. This was the *ξύνθημα*, "the sign agreed upon" between them. Ædipus finds he has now reached his goal, and he hails the words of the stranger as the symbol of the peace that now awaits himself.

STR. Speak out, and it shall not be by me thou wilt find thyself slighted.

ŒD. What, then, is the spot on which we stand?

STR. All that I know myself, thou shalt hear and learn in full. This is all holy ground; Poseidon holds it in his majesty, and in it is the fire-bringing god, the Titan Prometheus; the spot, on which thou treadest, is called the brazen threshold of this land, the stay of Athens; and the land hard by doth boast yon¹ knight Colonus for its earliest chief, and all the folk called after him do bear his name in common. There thou hast this place described, sir stranger,—a place not honoured in story, but rather by association.

ŒD. Are there, then, people dwelling in this place?

STR. Aye, surely, called after yon god.

ŒD. Doth one rule them, or is the right to speak in the people's power?

STR. He who is king in the city is ruler here.

ŒD. Who is this king, whose word and might have sovereign power?

STR. Theseus is his name, the son of Ægeus, who was king before him.

ŒD. Could, then, one of you go to fetch him.

STR. To speak to him or to arrange his coming,—with what intent?²

ŒD. That, by doing a small service, he may reap a great reward.

STR. And what help can a man render, if he seeth not?

ŒD. Whate'er I say, my *words* shall all be clear.

¹ Very possibly an equestrian statue of the hero Colonus was displayed on the stage, to which the speaker would here point.

² Reading *ὡς πρὸς τί λέξων ἢ καταρτύσων μολεῖν*; but L. has *μόλοι*, possibly a reminiscence from the preceding line. Those who retain it render, "that Theseus might come for what purpose,—what to say or what arrange?"

STR. To keep thy foot from tripping now, let me advise thee, sir ; for thou art noble, to judge by looks,—apart from thy misfortune. Abide here, even where thou wert found, while I go and tell these things to our folk here on the spot,—not in the town ; for these will decide for thee, whether thou art to remain, or journey hence again.

(Exit the Stranger.)

ÆD. My child, hath the stranger gone and left us ?

ANT. He is gone, father, so that thou art free to say anything in peace, sure that I alone am near.

ÆD. O queens revered of awful mien, since 'tis now at your sanctuary first in this land that I have sat me down, be not unkind to Phœbus or to me ; for the god, when he declared that lengthy tale of woe, said that this should be a rest for me in distant days, on my coming to a land, my destined goal, where I should find a seat of august goddesses, with shelter for the stranger ; there was I to end my life of misery ; a source of gain, from having lived with them, to those who gave me welcome ; a curse to those who sent, nay, drove me forth. And he told me further, there should come signs of these things, either an earthquake or thunder, maybe, or lightning sent by Zeus. Now then I know that it must have been some sure omen from you, that led me on my way hither to this grove ; for else had I never met you first upon my way,—I who drink not of strong drink, you who know not wine,—nor should I have been sitting on this holy seat of unhewn stone.

Oh grant me, goddesses, according to Apollo's word, some passage now from life to death, some end to my career ; unless, haply, I seem to come short in suffering, albeit I am sorrow's slave for evermore, beyond all mortal men !

Come, sweet children of primeval Gloom ! Come, O Athens, that art called the city of greatest Pallas, first in honour of all towns ! Pity this poor phantom of a man,—of Ædipus ; for, of a truth, his ancient self is gone.

ANT. Hush! yonder come certain men, advanced in years, to see why thou art sitting here.

ŒD. I will be quiet, and do thou hide me in the grove, off the road,¹ till I learn what they are going to say; for, in so learning, caution in action consists. (ANTIGONE leads ŒDIPUS *aside*.)

CHO. Look to it; who can he be? Where is he now? Whither hath he hurried hence, most reckless he of all his race? Look well, aye look; on every side direct the search.² Some wanderer this old man is,—a wanderer, no native of the place; else would he ne'er have made his way into this untrodden grove of yon maidens irresistible, by whom we pass without one glance, with voices hushed, without a word, breathing pious whispered thoughts. But now, 'tis said, a man hath come, who hath no reverence; but him I cannot yet discover, although I scan the whole precinct, to learn where I may find him lurking.

ŒD. (*coming forth from the grove*). Lo! I am he; for I see by sounds, as the saying is.

CHO. (*with cries of horror*). O fearful sight! O fearful sound!

ŒD. Look not on me as a lawless wretch, I do entreat you.

CHO. O Zeus, who wardest us from harm, who can the old man be?

ŒD. Not one of the very highest fortune, that ye should wish me joy of it, O guardians of this land! And this I plainly show; else should I not be thus slowly moving on my way, guided by another's eyes, or leaning all my weight on this frail stay.

¹ Following the conjectural reading of Keck, *ἐκποδῶν ὁδοῦ*, for the MSS. *ἐξ ὁδοῦ πόδα*, which is not very satisfactorily explained by taking *κοῦψον πόδα* as = *ὑπέξαγε*.

² Reading *προσδέρκου, λεῦσσε δῆ, προσπέυθου πανταχῶ*. This is Jebb's text, but it may be doubted whether we yet have the original; though *λεῦσσε νιν*, which many editors admit, can scarcely mean, as Jebb points out, "look for him."

CHO. Woe is thee! wast blind e'en from thy birth? Many and evil have been thy days, as far as one may guess;¹ but, at least, if help of mine avails, thou shalt not bring this further curse upon thee. Stay, for thou art trespassing! But, that thou plunge not rashly into the stillness of yon grassy glade, where the vessel brimmed with water mingles with a tide of honied drink,—'gainst *that*,² unhappy stranger, guard thee well,—retire, depart! 'Tis a wide stretch of road that parts us:³ dost hear me, woe-worn wanderer? If thou hast aught to propose for our discussion, withdraw from holy ground, and speak where all have right; ere that, refrain.

ÆD. Daughter, to what resolve are we to come?

ANT. Father, we must guide our conduct by the rule of the citizens, yielding, where we should, and hearkening to them.

ÆD. Then, take me by the hand.

ANT. There, my hand is touching thine.

ÆD. Sirs, I pray you, let no harm befall me, when I have put my trust in you and moved from hence!

CHO. Be sure, old man, that no one shall ever drag thee from these seats here, against thy will.

ÆD. (*beginning to advance*). Further, then?

CHO. Advance a little yet.

ÆD. Still further?

CHO. Lead him, maiden, further on; thou hast eyes to see.

¹ Reading and stopping as follows—

ἐή· ἀλαῶν ὀμμάτων
ἄρα καὶ ἦσθα φυτάλμιος; ὄνσαιων
μακρᾶιων θ', ὅσ' ἐπεικάσαι. (JEBB.)

² Reading τὸ, *i.e.* τὸ προπεσεῖν, "beware of intruding rashly."

³ The leader of the Chorus suggests this as a reason for Ædipus's non-compliance, *viz.*, that he may not have heard what has been addressed to him.

ANT.¹ * * * * *

ŒD. * * * * *

ANT. * * * * *

On then, father, follow me, this way follow, blindly stepping,
where I lead thee.

ŒD. * * * * *

CHO. A stranger in the land of strangers, constrain thyself,
unhappy man, to view with deepest hate that for which the
city cherishes dislike, and to show respect for what she
loves.

ŒD. (*still advancing*). Do thou, then, lead me, child,
where we may speak and hear, safe in piety's precincts;
and let us not fight with necessity.

CHO. Stay there! Turn thy steps aside no further, beyond
yon rocky² platform.

ŒD. E'en thus?

CHO. Enough, as thou art told.

ŒD. Am I to sit me down?

CHO. Aye, move sideways, and, stooping low, seat thee
on the edge of the stone.

ANT. Mine that service, father; quietly——

ŒD. Ah me! ah me!

ANT. ——let step fit step, leaning thine aged frame upon
my loving arm.

ŒD. Woe for my mad infatuate deed

CHO. Poor sufferer, since now thou art at rest,³ tell us,
what is thy lineage? Who art thou, guided thus with toil-

¹ Some lines are lost here, which editors assign in different ways. The above is Jebb's arrangement. Hermann restored ll. 184-7 to the Chorus; they are assigned in the MSS. to Antigone.

² Others explain *ἀντιπέτρων βήματος*, "seat of rock fronting thee." Jebb adopts Musgrave's conjecture, *αὐτοπέτρων*, "of native rock"; but this word is not found elsewhere, and it does not seem that correction is necessary.

³ Others understand, "since now thou art yielding," *i.e.*, to the advice of the Chorus.

some steps? What fatherland is thine, whereof I might inquire?

ÆD. Good sirs, I have no fatherland; but do not——

CHO. What is this thou biddest us forego, old man?

ÆD. Do not, do not ask me who I am; press not that inquiry further!

CHO. What means this?

ÆD. Mine was a dreadful birth.

CHO. Tell it.

ÆD. My child, ah me! what am I to declare?

CHO. Tell us of what line thou comest, stranger, on the father's side.

ÆD. Woe is me! What am I to do, my child?

ANT. Speak; for thou art coming to the worst, in any case.

ÆD. Well, I will speak; for I have no means of concealment.

CHO. A long delay you twain are making; come, come, no more ado!

ÆD. Know ye one that sprung from Laius? Ah woe!

CHO. O horror!

ÆD. And the race of the Labdacidæ?

CHO. O Zeus!

ÆD. Unhappy Ædipus!

CHO. What! art *thou* the man?

ÆD. Have no fear of my tale.

CHO. (*endeavouring to drown his voice*). Oh, oh!

ÆD. Ill-fated that I am!

CHO. Oh, oh!

ÆD. Daughter, what ever will befall us now?

CHO. Get you far from the land! *avaunt!*

ÆD. And how wilt thou redeem thy promise?

CHO. On no man doth Fate's vengeance fall for repaying what he first hath suffered; ¹ one act of fraud, when it is set

¹ So Hermann. Others render, "To no man cometh punishment

to balance others, makes recompense of woe, and not of weal, for prize.

Forth from this resting-place again with thee! Away! hence from my land in wildest haste,¹ lest thou fasten on my city some further trespass!

ANT. O sirs, compassionate at heart, since with mine aged sire ye cannot bear, because ye know the tale of deeds he never willed,—at least, I pray you, sirs, have pity upon me, poor maid, who plead to you for my father alone,—yes, plead to you, and not with sightless eyes, but looking in your own with mine, as any daughter of your race might plead, that this unhappy man may meet with pity.

For on you as on a god we lean in our distress. O grant us, then, the unexpected boon! By all of yours² that you hold dear I plead with you, by child or wife, by goods, or god! For if thou scan the matter well, thou wilt not find amongst mankind one who could escape, if there were a god leading him.

CHO. Be thou sure, child of Œdipus, we pity thee and him alike for your misfortune; but, fearing what the gods may do, we could not say one word beyond what hath now been said to thee.

ŒD. What profit cometh, then, of fame or fair repute, if 'tis but an idle stream of words, seeing your Athens, as men say, is a city most devout, and, more than all others, hath the power to save the afflicted stranger, and the means to help him, more than all? Now where, in my case, is all this? Seeing that ye, after making me rise up from yonder from the fates for that which he hath suffered first, that he should be punished for it."

¹ ἄφορμος is explained by the Schol. by ἀφορμηθείς, though it has also been understood as "without a harbour," in which case the meaning would be, "forth from thy haven in my land!"

² If ἐκ σέθεν is retained, the meaning should be "by the children sprung from you," to which the further ties are illogically added. Elmsley's οἴκοθεν avoids this.

seats, then seek to drive me hence, from fear of my name alone ; for surely it is not myself or my deeds that ye fear ; since my *deeds* are more what I have borne than done,—if 'twere right that I should tell thee all the story of my mother and my sire,—the reason of thy dread of me ; of that I feel quite sure. And yet how was I, by nature, evil ? I was wronged and sought revenge ; so that, had I been acting with full knowledge, not even thus should I be proved a reprobate ; but, as it was, I went unto my doom unwittingly ; while they, from whom I suffered wrong, knew what they did, when seeking to destroy me. Wherefore I entreat you, sirs, in Heaven's name, e'en as ye have made me rise, so rescue me ; and do not, with your reverence for gods, then make those gods of no account ;¹ but hold that they look upon the righteous among men and on the godless too, and that no escape hath ever yet been found for a sinner of mortal race. With their help, then, refrain from ministering to sinful deeds and blotting out the light of happy Athens ; nay, as thou hast received the suppliant with a pledge, save and keep me now through all ; and treat me not with contumely, on seeing my unsightly face ; devout and holy have I come, with gain for your folk here. But when the lord and master comes, whoe'er your chieftain is, then shalt thou hear and learn all ; meantime be found not base in aught.

CHO. The reasons thou hast urged, old sir, must needs have our respect ; for in no trivial language have they been expressed. But it is enough for me that the rulers of this land should decide herein.

ŒD. And where, sirs, is he who rules this land ?

¹ This passage is corrupt, and no very certain emendation has been offered, in spite of countless guesses. The sense is tolerably clear, and perhaps by reading *μοίρας*, which two MSS. have, the Greek will furnish the required meaning. Blaydes gives a full account of the various emendations in his note *ad loc.*

CHO. In the city of his fathers in this land ; and the messenger, who sent me hither, has gone to fetch him too.

ŒD. And do ye think he will so regard or heed the blind, as to come hither himself ?¹

CHO. Assuredly, when he learns thy name.

ŒD. But who is there to announce that word to him ?

CHO. 'Tis a long road ; and what travellers say is often wont to spread ; and, when he hears that, he will come,—rest well assured. For thy name, old sir, hath gone abroad throughout the world ; so that, even if sleep makes him slow to move, yet when he hears of thee, he will hasten to be here.

ŒD. May his coming bring good luck alike to his own city and to me ! What good man is not his own self's friend ?

ANT. O Zeus ! what shall I say ? What am I to think, father ?

ŒD. What is it, my child Antigone ?

ANT. I see a woman approaching us, riding a young Ætnean steed ; upon her head is a Thessalian hat, covering her face and shading it from the sun. What can I say ? Is it she, or is it not ? Is my judgment leading me astray ? 'Tis she, I say,—and no, 'tis not ; I know not what to say. Poor child !² it is no other. Yes ! she greets me with gladsome look, as she approaches, proving it is our dear³ Ismene, and no other.

ŒD. What sayest thou, my child ?

ANT. That I see thy daughter, my own sister ; and thou mayst know her anon by her voice.

ISM. Father ! sister ! two names I love to use the best !

¹ Porson's reading and pointing is followed, ἔξειν, αὐτὸν ὥστ' . . .

² So Reisig, referring *τάλαινα* to Ismene, which is, perhaps, better than to make it a sigh uttered by Antigone, expressing her uncertainty.

³ δῆλον of the MSS. is almost certainly spurious. From a hint in Suidas, who cites the line, in substance, with φίλον, Hermann conjectured φίλιον. Blaydes gives ἀδελφὸν.

How hard ye were for me to find, and now again how hard to see for sorrow !

ÆD. Art come, my child ?

ISM. O my father, woful sight !

ÆD.¹ Art here to see, my child ?

ISM. Yes, but not without trouble to myself.

ÆD. Take me by the hand, my child.

ISM. To both at once I give a hand.

ÆD. My children,—sisters of one blood !

ISM. O piteous mode of life !

ÆD. The life which she and I are leading ?

ISM. And I no less, the third ill-fated wretch.

ÆD. Why hast thou come, daughter ?

ISM. From thought for thee, father.

ÆD. From a yearning to see me ?

ISM. Yes, and to be my own messenger, with the only faithful servant left me.

ÆD. And thy own brothers,—they were young, where are they to serve at need ?

ISM. They are even where they are : a dreadful plight is theirs to-day.

ÆD. Ah, how have they conformed in all, the pair of them, to Egypt's ways, in nature and in modes of life ! For there the men sit working at the loom at home, while their wives provide the means of life, outside the house, from day to day. And so in your case, my daughters, they who might have served us here, mind the house at home like maids ; while ye two girls, in place of them, are bearing this poor sufferer's woes. One, from the time she ceased to need her childhood's nursing and felt herself grown strong, hath ever been with me, an ill-starred wanderer, to guide my aged steps ; oft straying through the woodland wild, half-starved, barefoot ; sore tried, poor child, full oft by rain and scorching

¹ Lines 327-331 are arranged according to Musgrave's transposition, without which no clear sense is obtainable.

sun ; yet placing her home-life but second in her thoughts, if so her father might have food.

And thou, my child, in days gone by, hast come from Thebes, bringing to thy father, without the race of Cadmus knowing aught, all oracles pronounced concerning me, and thou didst set thyself to keep a trusty watch for me, when I was being driven from the land. And now, once more, what news hast thou come to bring thy father, Ismene? What errand sent thee forth from home? For on no empty mission art thou come, full well I know, without bringing me some cause for fear.

ISM. What sufferings I myself endured, father, in seeking out thy mode of life and thy abode, I will pass by and leave unsaid ; for I have no desire to feel that anguish twice, by telling o'er again my troubles. But I have come to show what evils now surround thy two ill-fated sons.

At first, they had an eager wish¹ that the throne should be left to Creon, and the city saved from taint, professing to regard² the ancient curse upon the race,—the way that it hath clung to thy unhappy house. But now, from prompting of some god, and of their wicked thoughts, an evil rivalry hath filled their hearts,—thrice hapless pair!—to seize the rule and kingly power. And he that is the younger born, a headstrong boy, seeks to rob the first-born, Polyneices, of the throne, and hath driven him from his father-land. But he, according to the story current now with us, hath gone, an exile, unto Argos in the vale, and is taking to himself new ties of kin and friends to help him in the fight, resolved that Argos shall full soon possess the land of Thebes with honour, or exalt her to the skies.

These are no mere idle words, my father, but terrible realities ; and where the gods will have compassion on thy woes, I cannot discover.

¹ Reading $\xi\rho\omega\zeta$, Tyrwhitt's correction of MSS. $\xi\rho\iota\zeta$.

² Or, "when they considered calmly."

ŒD. So thou hast still retained a hope, that the gods will care for me enough to save my soul one day?

ISM. That is my hope, father, owing to the present oracles.

ŒD. What oracles are these? What hath been foretold, my child?

ISM. That thou, alive or dead, wilt one day be sought by the men of Thebes, for safety's sake.

ŒD. And who could be the better for such an one as I?

ISM. Men say the power of Thebes depends on thee.

ŒD. So then, when life for me is o'er, I then become a man?

ISM. Yea, for now the gods are raising thee; before, they sought thy fall.

ŒD. A paltry boon to raise old age, where youth has had the fall!

ISM. Further, know that thou wilt soon see Creon here for this purpose—and that in no long time.

ŒD. With what intent, daughter? Explain, I pray.

ISM. That they may set thee near the land of Cadmus, so as to have thee in their power, without thy setting foot on its borders.

ŒD. What gain is theirs, if I am laid beyond their gates?

ISM. Thy tomb is a danger to them, if ill-luck befall it.

ŒD. Why, thus much our own wits could tell, without a god to help.

ISM. That is the reason, then, that they would have thee settled near their land, though not where thou wilt be thy own master.¹

ŒD. Will they likewise bury me in Theban soil?

ISM. Nay, kinsman's blood, which thou hast shed, forbids that, father.

ŒD. Then shall they never get me in their power!

¹ Reading *κρατοῖς* with Brunck. If *κρατῆς* of MSS. be retained, it would mean "though not in any place where thou mayst be thy own master."

ISM. Why then, the Thebans will one day rue this.

ŒD. Through what events occurring, child?

ISM. By reason of thy wrath, when they stand beside thy tomb.

ŒD. From whom hast thou heard the words thou speakest, child?

ISM. From the envoys, who came from the altar at Delphi.

ŒD. And hath Phœbus really said this concerning me?

ISM. So they say, who came from him to the land of Thebes.

ŒD. Hath either of those sons of mine, then, heard this news?

ISM. They both alike have heard and know it well.

ŒD. And did they then, unnatural pair, when they had heard this, set sovereignty before regret for me?

ISM. Thy words pain me, but still that is the news I bring.

ŒD. Then may the gods not quench their destined strife, and may my two sons find that with *me* rests the issue of this fray, wherein they are now engaging and lifting spear 'gainst spear! Then neither should he, who now holds sceptred sway, abide; nor should he, who hath left the land, ever come back again; since they hindered not nor championed me, when I, their own father, was being thrust forth so shamefully from my country; nay, for all they cared, I was sent thence from hearth and home and publicly proclaimed an exile.

Maybe thou'lt say, it was my own wish then, and the city granted me the boon, as well it might. Not so, I say; for, all that fatal day, when my heart was hot within me, when to die and to be stoned to death was what I most desired, not one was found to help me towards that wish; but at last, when my pain was all assuaged and I began to feel that my wrath had run beyond all bounds in punishing my former

sins,—then it was indeed, and not before, that the city sought to drive me from the land by force, so late as that; and they who had the power to help,—the sons their sire,—would not do so; but for want of a little word, they let me wander forth, an exile and a beggar evermore.

From these my daughters twain, weak maidens as they are,—so far as nature doth allow them,—I get my daily bread, safe shelter in the land, and the succour kinsmen owe; while they, my sons, have chosen thrones and sceptred sway and sovereign power instead of their own sire. But they shall never win an ally here, nor shall this their reign in 'Thebes ever bring them gain; that know I well, from hearing the oracles this maiden brings and from pondering old prophecies of my own store, which Phœbus hath accomplished for me now at length. Wherefore let them send Creon to seek me, and whoso else is mighty in their city; for if ye, sirs, as well as these ¹ dread goddesses who dwell among you, will champion me, ye shall win a mighty saviour for this State, but for my foes a scourge.

CHO. Worthy indeed art thou, Œdipus, of pity, thou and these maidens; and since thou addest to this plea that thou canst keep this land secure, I fain would counsel thee for thy own good.

ŒD. Good sir, be then my friend and guide; for I will do thy every hest.

CHO. Make then atonement to these goddesses; for to them art thou first come, and theirs is the ground thy footsteps have profaned.²

¹ The reading is doubtful; Schneidewin's *πρὸς ταῖσδε ταῖς* is as near the MSS. as any of the conjectures; though Jebb, objecting that this makes the Colonates as important as the goddesses, prefers Dindorf's *προσάρισι*, "along with the protection of the . . ."

² Reading *κατέσειψάς*. There is a var. lect. *κατέσειψας*, which is explained figuratively, "came to the ground with suppliant's branch," which, however, was not the case.

ŒD. In what way must I make atonement? Teach me, sirs.

CHO. First from an ever-flowing spring have draughts of holy water drawn and brought in holy hands.

ŒD. And when I have procured this draught unmixed?

CHO. There are bowls, by some skilled craftsman fashioned; crown these upon their rims and on their handles on each side.

ŒD. With leafy shoots, or woven wool, or what?

CHO. With the fleece of a lamb just shorn, when thou hast gotten it.¹

ŒD. 'Tis well; and after that, whereto must I proceed to end the rite?

CHO. Facing east pour thy libations forth.

ŒD. From yonder jars, whereof thou speakest?

CHO. Yes, pour a triple stream; and let the last bowl be quite full.

ŒD. With what am I to fill this last and set it ready? Tell me this as well.

CHO. With water and with honey; add no wine.

ŒD. And when the ground, o'er-canopied with leaves, has had these offerings?

CHO. Lay thrice nine sprigs of olive thereupon, with both thy hands, and o'er them make this prayer.

ŒD. I fain would hear it; 'tis the chiefest thing.

CHO. As we call them "gracious ones," so with gracious hearts may they receive their suppliant in their safe keeping; pray thus, thyself or whoso else doth take thy place, in undertones, not lifting up thy voice; then steal away without once turning round. If thou do this, boldly will I stand thy friend; if not, O stranger, I should fear for thee.

ŒD. My daughters both, ye hear these strangers who dwell here?

¹ Reading οἶδος σὺ νεαρᾶς νεοπόκι μᾶλλον λαβών.

ANT. We have heard; now bid us do what must be done.

ÆD. This journey is not for me; for strength and sight both fail me, evils twain; but one of you two must go and see to this. For one, I trow, is enough to pay these rites as well as e'en ten thousand would,—if with good will he come. To it quickly; but leave me not alone, for I should have no strength to move, if left alone, with none to guide.

ISM. Well, I will go, this duty to perform; but first I fain would learn, where I am to¹ find the spot.

CHO. At the further end of this grove, maiden stranger. And if thou find thou needest aught, there dwells one near, who will explain.

ISM. I'll to this task; do thou, Antigone, keep watch o'er our father here. The toil on parents spent, must ne'er be called to mind.

CHO. Ah! stranger, 'tis a dreadful thing to wake the ancient woe that long hath slept! and yet I long to learn——

ÆD. What wouldst thou?

CHO. Of that cruel grief, so hopeless proved, in which thou wert involved.

ÆD. By thy kindness as my host, expose not the cruel things I have suffered!²

CHO. I fain would hear aright, friend, that wide-spread, never-dying tale.

ÆD. Ah me!

CHO. Consent, I pray.

ÆD. Alas! alas!

CHO. Comply, as I do with all that thou askest.

ÆD. Sirs, I have borne suffering, borne it, yes! against

¹ *χρήσει* is Jebb's happy correction of the traditional *χοῆσται*, *χοῆσται*, or *χοῆσται*, not one of which is defensible.

² Reading *ἂ πέποιθ'* *ἀναιδῆ*, and omitting any stop after *σᾶς*,—so Reising, whom Blaydes and Jebb follow. Bergk conjectures *ὄνειδῆ*, a possible improvement.

my will,¹—of that be Heaven witness !—none of these things was of free choice.

CHO. In what respect ?

ŒD. With evil wedlock, knowing naught,² the city bound me to a baleful bride.

CHO. Is it true, as I am told, that thou didst take thy mother to thy bed as wife, to its dishonouring ?

ŒD. Woe is me ! 'Tis death to me to hear these things, good sir, but these two maidens are my own—

CHO. What meanest thou ?

ŒD. Daughters, daughters twain,—nay, curses twain—

CHO. O Zeus !

ŒD. Sprung from the womb of her who bore me too.

CHO. Then they are both thine own offspring and—

ŒD. Their father's sisters by the self-same mother ?

Yes.

CHO. Ah, woe !

ŒD. Ah, woe indeed ! Renewed attacks of sorrows numberless !

CHO. Thou hast suffered—

ŒD. Yea, I have,—woes I never can forget.

CHO. Thou didst a deed—

ŒD. I did it,—no !

CHO. What then ?

ŒD. I received a gift—ah, would that I, unhappy wretch, had never won that prize from Thebes for service rendered her !³

¹ Reading with Jebb ἤνεγκ' οὖν κακότατ', ὧ ξένοι, ἤνεγκ' ἀέκων μίν, . . . which gives the probable meaning, though the emendation cannot be regarded as final.

² Most editors read ἴδριν for the Vulgate ἴδρις, though the latter was clearly what the Schol. read.

³ The MSS. reading, ἐπωφέλησα πόλεως ἐξελίσθαι, is unintelligible; the attempts to explain it being quite impossible of acceptance. Jebb reads ἐπωφελήσας and understands ὄφελον; a bold remedy perhaps, but infinitely preferable to the view of the Schol. or of Schneidewin.

CHO. Unhappy man!—what else, indeed? Hast thou shed blood?

ŒD. Why ask me this? What wouldst thou learn?

CHO. A father's blood?

ŒD. Oh, agony! A second blow, sorrow on sorrow!

CHO. Thou hast taken life away.

ŒD. I have, but then my deed has——

CHO. What?

ŒD. Some justice on its side.

CHO. How so?

ŒD. I will explain; those whose blood I shed would e'en have slain me; ¹ wherefore, before the law, I am guiltless; unwittingly I came to do this deed.

CHO. Lo! yonder comes Theseus, Ægeus' son, to help us, having set forth ² at thy summons.

THE. Son of Laius, I have recognized thee, both from what many have told me in time past of the murderous outrage on thine eyes; and now, from what I heard as I came hither, is my knowledge confirmed. For thy garb and that woful face both tell me who thou art; and in pity would I ask thee, helpless Œdipus, what petition thou hast to make to Athens or to me that thou art stationed here,—thou and this poor maid, who bears thee company. Tell me all; for dread indeed would be the fortune thou could'st name to make me stand aloof,—I who know that my own youth was passed 'mid strangers, ³ as was thine; and in a stranger's land I toiled and risked my life, as never man did yet.

¹ Reading *καὶ γὰρ ἄν, οὓς ἐφόνευσ', ἔμ', ἀπώλεσαν*, Mekler's brilliant emendation of the MSS. *καὶ γὰρ ἄλλους ἐφόνευσσα καὶ ἀπώλεσα*, from which little sense had previously been extracted, in spite of numerous emendations.

² Reading *ἀποσταλείς*, the conjecture of Turnebus for MSS. *ἀπεστάλη*. Dindorf, whom Jebb follows, reads *ἐφ' ἀστάλη*, "for that whereunto he was summoned."

³ Theseus, the son of Ægeus, king of Athens, was brought up with Pittheus, king of Trœzen, in ignorance of his true father.

Wherefore from a stranger, such as thou now art, would I never turn aside, to withhold from him a helping hand ; for well I know that I am but a man, and that my share in the morrow is no greater than thine own.

ŒD. I need say but little, Theseus ; thy nobleness, in few words shown, permits this grace. Already hast thou told both who I am, the sire from whom I sprung, and the land from whence I came, so nought is left me but to tell the boon I crave, and then my tale is done.

THE. That is the only thing ; declare it now, that I may know it all.

ŒD. I come to offer thee my wretched body as a gift,—not fair to outward view ; but better than a beauteous form are the gains it can bestow.

THE. What gain dost thou pretend thy coming brings ?

ŒD. In time, thou'lt learn ; not now, perhaps.

THE. When will this boon of thy conferring show itself ?

ŒD. After I am dead and thou hast buried me.

THE. Life's latest boon is thy request ; but all that comes between, thou either dost forget or else dost count as nought.

ŒD. True, for I have the rest all gathered in with that.

THE. Well, 'tis a trifling thing indeed wherein this grace thou askest me consists.

ŒD. Natheless, look to it ; the issue of it is not slight,—far from it.

THE. Dost speak of issues 'twixt thy sons and me ?¹

ŒD. They would fain carry me to Thebes, O king.²

¹ Reading *κάμοῦ* with Schneidewin. The MSS. *ἡ 'μοῦ* gives little point, "dost thou mean in what concerns thy sons or myself?"

² Kayser's conjecture *ἀναξ, χορῶζουσι* for MSS. *ἀναγκάζουσι* is adopted by Jebb with good reason, and is more in keeping with the next line. Most editors, however, retaining *ἀναγκάζουσι*, explain thus: "are for compelling (thee) to carry me to Thebes,"—a very harsh ellipse of the subject of *κομίζειν*; or, "are for compelling me, so as to carry me thither," which would be doing violence to the Greek.

THE. Well, but if that *is* thy wish,¹ why then, thou dost not well to fly.

ÆD. Nay, when I *did* wish it, neither would they give in.

THE. O foolish one! In trouble temper is no use.

ÆD. When thou hast heard my story, then advise; as yet, forbear.

THE. Tell me all; I must not speak without understanding.

ÆD. O Theseus, I have suffered cruelly, woe on woe.

THE. Wilt tell me of the old misfortune of thy race?

ÆD. No, indeed; for every tongue in Hellas tells of that.

THE. What, then, is there afflicting thee, beyond man's power to bear?

ÆD. 'Tis thus with me: those, whom I begot myself, have chased me from my land; my sentence is, that I return no more, because I slew my sire.

THE. Then, what could make them fetch thee thither, only to dwell apart?

ÆD. The word of the god will compel them.

THE. What trouble do they fear, foretold by oracles?

ÆD. That they must be defeated in this land.

THE. And how should bitterness arise 'twixt them and me?

ÆD. Son of Ægeus, best of friends, to gods alone comes never age nor death; all else the mighty master, Time, confounds. Earth's strength decays; decays the body's might; faith dies, and faithlessness is born; and the same spirit never rests either amongst friends or between city and city. For some at once, for others in the after time, their loves turn into bitterness, and then grow dear again. And though to-day a cloudless sky looks down on Thebes and thee, countless are the days and nights which Time, in countless courses, brings to birth; wherein, upon some trifling cause,

¹ Reading *ἀλλ' εἰ θέλοντά γ'* with Elmsley, after one MS.

they will fling to the winds these plighted fellowships by taking up the spear,—there, where¹ my slumbering corpse, within its tomb, shall one day drink with its cold lips their life-blood warm, if Zeus is any longer Zeus, and his son, Phœbus, speaketh true.

But, since it irks to speak of things forbid, suffer me to end where I began; keep but to *thy* part faithfully, and never shalt thou say of Œdipus that thou didst give him welcome and a dwelling in this place without some profit on it, unless indeed the gods beguile me.

CHO. My liege, long since hath yonder man displayed his readiness to perform these and the like promises for this land.

THE. Who, then, would throw away the good-will of a man like this,—one who, in the first place, can ever claim an ally's hearth by us, as we by him? and, next, is as a suppliant come unto our deities, offering to pay this land and me abundant recompense? These things I reverence, and therefore will I ne'er reject the grace he brings, but will settle him within our land as a citizen.² Now if it please our guest to abide here, I will charge thee to take care of him; or if it be thy pleasure, Œdipus, to come with me, I allow thee thy choice of these alternatives; for with thy choice will I agree.

ŒD. O Zeus, to such as these be gracious!

THE. What, then, is thy wish? to come to my palace?

ŒD. Yea, if I might; but this is the place——

THE. What wilt thou do here? Speak, for I will not thwart thee.

ŒD. The place where I shall vanquish those who cast me out.

¹ *Or*, "in which case, when."

² Reading *ἐμπολιν*, Musgrave's generally accepted correction of MSS. *ἐμπαλιν*, which has been variously rendered (α) "on the contrary," (β) "once more," (γ) "in return."

THE. Great would be the gift of which thou speakest,
—fruit of thy being with us.

ÆD. Yea, if with thee thy words abide, and thou fulfil
them for me.

THE. Fear not for me ; I will ne'er betray thee.

ÆD. I will not bind thee, as a bad man, by an oath.

THE. Thou wouldst not gain aught more thereby than by
my word.

ÆD. How, then, wilt thou act ?

THE. What, exactly, dost thou dread ?

ÆD. Men will come——

THE. Nay, these will see to that.

ÆD. Beware lest, if thou leave me——

THE. Teach me not what I must do.

ÆD. 'Tis fear that forces me to it.

THE. My heart knows not fear.

ÆD. Thou knowest not their threats.

THE. I do know this :—no man shall drag thee hence in
spite of me. Oft, ere now, have¹ many in their wrath
uttered threatening words in vain ; but when the mind is
once itself again, gone are all those threats. And so, per-
haps, with them ; though they have been so bold in saying
dreadful things about thy taking hence, yet know I this,—
the sea betwixt us will prove wide, no easy one to sail. Be
of good cheer, then, I counsel thee, even apart from my re-
solve, if 'tis Phœbus who hath sent thee forth ; but still, e'en
though I be not here, my name, I know, will keep thee safe
from any harm. (*Exit* THESEUS.)

CHO. Stranger, thou hast reached earth's goodliest dwell-
ing-place, within this land of gallant steeds, famed Colonus
white of soil ; where, in her favourite haunt, the nightingale
warbles her loud clear note in the glades' green depths,

¹ Several corrections of *πολλαὶ δ' ἀπειλαὶ* have been proposed, *e.g.*,
πολλοὶ δ' ἀπειλάς, *πολλοὶ δ' ἀπειλῶν*, etc., but none is necessary ; nor is
Wecklein justified in rejecting ll. 658-60.

dwelling¹ amid the wine-flushed ivy and the god's² untrodden groves, rich with their myriad fruits; through which no sun can ever pierce, nor any wind that blows can sweep; where the reveller Dionysus ever treads, attendant on the nymphs, his nurses once.

And, ever day by day, the clusters of the fair narcissus bloom, quickened by the dew from heaven, the crown from days of old for mighty goddesses;³ the crocus, too, with gleam of gold; nor fail the ceaseless, wandering⁴ springs, whence flow Cephissus' rills; but, ever day by day, the quickening stream glides on o'er the plains of his country's heaving breast, with his untainted tide; and dear to the choirs of Muses is this haunt, and to Aphrodite of the golden rein.

And there is here a thing whose like I hear not of on Asia's strand, nor that it ever yet hath grown in Pelops' mighty isle,⁵—a plant that shoots of its own self, unconquerable,⁶ a terror to the spears of foes, which groweth in this land most mightily,—the gray-leaved olive, nourisher of youth. None shall destroy it with a spoiler's hand, nor youth, nor comrade of old age;⁷ for the eye of

¹ Reading *δίνωπὸν ἔχουσα*, after Erfurdt and Hartung. The traditional *οἴνωπ' ἀνέχουσα* is rendered "remaining constant to," "upholding," and is read by Campbell and others.

² *i.e.*, Dionysus.

³ *i.e.*, Demeter and Persephone.

⁴ Others connect *νομάδες* with *ρέεθρων*, "that feed the rills," but it is difficult to produce any passage in support of this active use of the adjective.

⁵ *i.e.*, Peloponnesus.

⁶ *ἀχείρωτον*, the reading of Pollux (second century, A.D.), was understood by him to mean, "not cultivated by human hands," and this may be the right meaning.

⁷ Reading *τὸ μὲν τις οὐ νεαρὸς οὐδὲ γήρᾳ συνναίων*. So Jebb from a variety of different emendations. The MSS. *γήρᾳ σημαίνων* has been strangely rendered "commanding in old age,"—a supposed allusion to the invasions of the *elderly* Archidamus of Sparta, and of the *youthful*

Morian¹ Zeus, that watcheth ever, is on it, and Athene's bright keen glance.

Another praise have I to tell for this city, our mother,—the best of all, gift of the mighty god,² our country's³ proudest boast,—good steeds, good foals,⁴ good seamanship. For thou, O son of Cronos, king Poseidon, didst set her up on this proud throne, when thou, in these streets first, didst shape the curb to tame the steed. And the well-rowed barque,⁵ sped⁶ by the rowers' strokes, leaps o'er the main in wondrous wise, hard in the wake of the hundred nimble⁷ Nereids.

ANT. O land beyond all others praised, now is it thine to make those glorious words appear in deeds!

ÆD. My child, what new danger threatens?

ANT. Yonder is Creon, approaching to vex us, father, and an escort with him.

ÆD. With you it rests, my kind and aged friends; and the goal of my deliverance shall e'en now appear.

CHO. Fear not, appear it shall; for e'en if I be old myself, this country's might hath not grown old.

Xerxes being detected by some. Herodotus relates how the sacred olive on the Acropolis of Athens shot up a cubit in one night after its destruction by the orders of Xerxes.

¹ So called from the *μοριαί*, olives reserved for the State throughout Attica.

² Poseidon.

³ The word *χθονός* was supplied here by Porson and Hermann to complete the metre.

⁴ The addition of *εὔπωλον* may, perhaps, imply that the breed of horses is kept up by a never-failing supply of foals.

⁵ Others render *πλάτα*, "oar-blade," but Wunder's explanation, as given above, seems preferable in this context.

⁶ Reading *παραπτομένα*, a syncopated form for *παραπετομένα*. Blaydes conjectures *ἑρεσσομένα*.

⁷ Others render "fifty," as if Sophocles meant to say "the hundred feet of the Nereids." The number of the Nereids certainly varies in different writers, and it is needless to assert there were only fifty.

CRE. Good sirs, ye noble dwellers in this land, I see that signs of sudden fear have filled your eyes at my approach; yet dread me not, nor vent harsh words upon me. For I am here without a thought of using force, so old I am, and well assured that I have come to a city as powerful as any in Hellas. Nay, but at my age¹ I have been sent to urge your suppliant to go with me to the land of the Cadmeans,—not by one man's sending, but at the bidding of all our folk; for kinship laid on me this tie,—to mourn his woes beyond the city's grief.

So hear me, and come home, unhappy Œdipus! With right the people summon thee, all Cadmus' folk, and I in chief; as I, in chief,—unless I am the very basest born,—feel sorrow for thy woes, old man; seeing thee in thy misery, a stranger and a wanderer evermore, reft of the means of life, with one handmaiden's arm whereon to lean, upon thy way. Ah me! I never thought that she could fall to such a depth of misery, as now is hers, poor maid! while evermore she tends thy needs, living a beggar's life, unwedded at the age ye see, a prey to any comer.

Ah, woe is me! and is it not a sad reproach which I have flung at thee and me and all our race? Well, but 'tis impossible to hide what all can see; wherefore, by thy fathers' gods, oh! hear me, Œdipus, and thyself conceal it, by consenting to return to the home and city of thy fathers, when thou hast taken a fond farewell of this State, as she deserves; and yet hath thy native town a stronger claim on thy respect, as she that was thy nurse of yore.

ŒD. O thou who darest everything, and from any plea of right wouldst draw some subtle scheme, why this attempt, why seek once more to catch me in the snare whose toils would gall me most? For in the days gone by, when I was suffering from my own peculiar woes, and banishment had been my joy, thou wouldst not pleasure my desire; but

¹ Reading *τηλικόσδ'* with Brunck.

when my rage at last had had its fill, and sweet had been the privacy of home, then wert thou for thrusting me rudely forth, nor hadst thou then one kindly thought for this relationship. And now again, when thou seest that this State and all the people stand my friends, thou art seeking to pluck me hence, in soft words couching harsh designs. And yet what joy is there in this, in kindness forced on us?¹ It is as if a man should say thee nay and grudge his aid when thou wert fain to win thy boon, but after thou hadst all thy soul's desire, should then offer to give it, when the boon had lost all grace; wouldst thou not find that pleasure vain? Yet such are thy own proposals to me, good in word, in substance ill. To these, too, will I speak, to prove thy knavishness. Thy object in coming to fetch me was not to take me home, but to make me dwell hard by you, that so thy city may escape unharmed from troubles with this land. *That* is not for thee; *this* is,—to have my vengeful spirit lodged for ever with you in your land;² and for my sons, their portion in my realm is even this,—room to die there, and no more.

Am I not better versed in what concerneth Thebes than thou? Yea, better far, as I have surer sources whence to draw, e'en Phœbus and his father, Zeus himself. But thou hast come hither with a mouth full of lies, with tongue as sharp as tempered steel; and yet thy words are like to win thee more of hurt than saving grace. Nay, get thee gone, for I know I am not persuading thee of this,³ and leave us

¹ This could also mean, "What joy does this give thee, to show me love against my will?" But this is not so suitable to the context, as Œdipus clearly means that, even if the Thebans would receive him kindly now, it would not be of his own will that he would give them the chance.

² The traditional reading ἐκεῖ χώρας gives awkward sense, however taken; perhaps Jebb's suggestion, ἔσω χώρας, which is followed, may be accepted.

³ διδα γάρ σε . . . μὴ πείθων. If this is the right reading, the use of μὴ is

here to dwell ; for, not e'en thus, will our life be one of woe, if we be content with it.

CRE. Dost think that I lose more as touches thee, or thou with reference to thyself, in this our parleying? ¹

ŒD. My dearest wish is, that thou fail to persuade these who stand by us, no less than myself.

CRE. Ill-fated one ! wilt have it seen that not even with years hast thou ever grown wiser, but livest to be a reproach to old age ?

ŒD. A clever speaker thou ! But I know not any honest man that speaketh well on every theme.

CRE. Speaking much, and to the point, are things apart.

ŒD. As if, forsooth, *thy* words were few, but to the point !

CRE. Of course not to a man who hath a wit like thine.

ŒD. Begoné !—Yes, I will speak for these also,—and watch me not, blockading thus my destined dwelling-place !

CRE. These men, not thee, I call to witness. But as for thine answer to thy friends, if ever I take thee——

ŒD. And who could take me, in defiance of my allies here ?

CRE. Mark me, thou soon shalt have cause for grief even without that. ²

certainly most strange, and the var. lect. *πείθοντ'* makes it no easier to explain. A joint emendation of Meineke and Nauck, though extremely daring, restores admirable sense : *ἀλλ' ἴσθι γάρ με ταῦτα μὴ πείσω, ἴθι*, “begone, for be assured thou wilt not talk me into this,” *i.e.*, into going to Thebes. The *μὴ* would here be due to the imperative. Tempting as this is, it is, perhaps, too sweeping a change to adopt, though no other emendation, as yet proposed, is at all satisfactory.

¹ *i.e.*, if *I* lose something by your refusal to come, *you* lose vastly more.

² Reading *τοῦδε* with Musgrave. The MSS. *ἀνευ τῶνδε* is explained by Matthiæ as “*invitis ipsis*,” *i.e.*, “even without these men’s leave.”

ÆD. Threats, idle threats! Where are thy deeds to warrant them?

CRE. Of thy daughters twain, one have I already seized and sent her hence but now; the other will I take with me ere long.

ÆD. Woe is me!

CRE. Thou soon shalt have more cause for crying "Woe is me!"

ÆD. Thou hast my child?

CRE. And will have this other very soon.

ÆD. O sirs, what will ye do? Will ye betray me? will ye not chase this impious fellow from your land?

CHO. Begone, stranger! forth from our land at once! There is no justice in thy present deed, nor yet in what thou didst before.

CRE. (*to his attendants*). High time for you to drag this girl away perforce, if she will not go willingly.

ANT. Ah, woe is me! Whither am I to fly? what help can I find from gods or men?

CHO. What art thou about, thou stranger?

CRE. I will not lay a hand on him, but on her who is mine.

ÆD. O princes of the land!

CHO. Stranger, there is no justice in thy deed.

CRE. There is.

CHO. How so?

CRE. I only take mine own.

ÆD. O Athens, help!

CHO. (*as CREON seizes ANTIGONE*). Stranger, what dost thou? Let her go! Thou wilt soon come to test our strength.

CRE. Keep off!

CHO. Not from thee whilst thou art so minded.

CRE. Harm one hair of mine, and thou wilt have my State to fight.

ÆD. Did I not tell thee this?

CHO. Hands off the maid at once !

CRE. Give not orders, where thou hast no power.

CHO. Let go, I tell thee !

CRE. (*to an attendant*). And I tell *thee*,—lead on !¹

CHO. Come forth, come forth, ye dwellers here ! Athens, my city, is becoming a prey to violence. Come hither to my help !

ANT. I am being dragged away, ah me ! Help, friends, help !

ŒD. Where can I find thee, my child ?

ANT. They are forcing me hence.

ŒD. Reach out thy hands to me, my child !

ANT. Nay, I cannot.

CRE. (*to his attendants*). Lead her hence, sirrahs !

ŒD. Ah, woe is me ! Alas !

CRE. No more, then, shalt thou go upon thy way with these two maids, at any rate, to prop thy steps. But since thou fain wouldst worst thy fatherland and friends, whose bidding I am here to do, prince though I am,—why, have thy way. For the time will come, I trow, when thou wilt learn this lesson, that thou hast done thyself no good, now or in the past, by yielding to anger, thy constant bane, despite thy friends.

CHO. (*as CREON turns to go*). Stay, stranger, where thou art !

CRE. Lay not a finger on me !

CHO. I will not let thee go, whilst I am reft of yonder maids.

CRE. Then wilt thou soon lay up with my city a still heavier surety ;² those two girls will not be all that I shall lay my hands upon.

¹ Others, following the Schol., consider that this is said to the Chorus, “and I tell thee to begone” ; but this loses much of the cool effrontery which characterizes Creon.

² Others render, “then wilt thou put upon thy State the expense of a yet heavier ransom.”

CHO. To what, pray, wilt thou turn?

CRE. I will seize yon man and take him hence.

CHO. That were a dreadful threat.¹

CRE. It shall soon be an accomplished fact.

CHO.² Unless the ruler of this land prevent it.

ÆD. O shameless utterance! What, wilt thou lay hands on me?

CRE. Hold thou thy peace!

ÆD. Nay, may these powers divine³ prevent me not from uttering yet this curse; in that thou, abandoned wretch, hast added to my former gloom, by snatching hence with brutal force my means of sight, leaving me reft of all.⁴ Therefore may that god who seeth all,—the Sun,—reward thee and thy race one day with such old age as mine hath been!

CRE. Do ye see this, ye dwellers in this land?

ÆD. They see us both, and well they wot, that, though my wrongs were done in deeds, I have but words to pay thee back.

CRE. I will not curb my rage, but, though I am alone and slow from years, I will drag him hence by force.

ÆD. (*as CREON approaches*). Ah, woe is me!

CHO. What insolence hast thou brought with thee, if thou thinkest to accomplish this?

CRE. I do think so.

CHO. Then shall I think this no longer a city.

CRE. In a just cause even the weak worsts the strong.

ÆD. Hear ye what he says?

¹ Reading *δεινὸν λέγοις ἄν* with Hermann. Triclinius, whom many have followed, read *δεινὸν λέγεις* with *ὤς*, "be sure that," before *τοῦτο*.

² This line is assigned in the MSS. to Creon, but it is better put into the mouth of the Chorus as a stern warning.

³ The Eumenides.

⁴ Others join *ψιλὸν ὄμμα*, "my defenceless eye," "the helpless one who saw for me." In any case Antigone is meant, but the expression is a very strange one, and emendation may be needed.

CHO. Aye, but accomplish it he shall not; be Zeus my witness! ¹

CRE. Zeus may know that; not thou.

CHO. What insolence!

CRE. Insolence perhaps, but ye will have to bear it.

CHO. What ho, ye people, one and all! What ho, ye chieftains of the land, hither, come hither with speed! These men are going beyond all bounds! ²

THE. What means this clamour? What's amiss? What terror can have made you stay me at the altar in my sacrifice to the god of the sea, the guardian here of your Colonus? Speak, that I may know all; for that was why I hastened hither at more than pleasant speed of foot.

ŒD. Kind friend,—I know thee by the words thou say'st,—awful treatment have I suffered, but now, at this man's hands.

THE. What kind of treatment? Who hath harmed thee? Speak!

ŒD. Creon, whom thou seest yonder, hath torn from me my daughters twain, that were my all.

THE. What is thy story?

ŒD. Thou hast heard the very treatment I received.

THE. (*to his followers*). Away, one of you my attendants, with all haste to the altars yonder and compel the folk, footmen and horsemen all, to leave the sacrifice, and hasten, at full speed, to a spot where the two branches of the highway meet, that the maidens pass not by, and I become a laughing-stock to this stranger, if worsted by his violence. Away! as I bid thee; lose no time!

As for this fellow, had I been as angry ³ as he has de-

¹ Ζεύς μοι ξυνίστω, the lacuna in l. 882 being thus filled up by Jebb, after Campbell. Dindorf conjectures εἰ Ζεὺς ἔτι Ζεύς.

² Reading περῶσ' οἶδε δῆ with Elmsley. Others render, "are crossing the border e'en now."

³ Others render, "had I come hither in such anger."

served, I had not let him go unscathed from my hand ; but, as it is, the laws which he imported with himself, these and no others shall be used for his governance.

(*To CREON.*) Thou shalt ne'er go forth from this land till thou bring those maidens hither to me, and set them before mine eyes ; for thy doings are a slur on me, on thy own stock, and on thy land,—thou, that hast come to a city where justice is practised and law supreme in everything ; and, spite of that, regarding not this land's authorities, but, forcing an entry, as thou hast, art making spoil of what thou wilt, and drawing to thy side unwilling followers, deeming that mine was some city void of men or peopled with a race of slaves, and I but as a thing of nought.

Yet 'twas not Thebes that brought thee up to be a knave ; for it is not her way to rear her sons in lawlessness, nor would she praise thee if she learnt that thou wert robbing me of mine, and the gods of their own, by dragging hence with violence unhappy suppliants. Never would I, if I set foot in thy own Thebes, drag or seize aught thence, without the ruler's will, whoe'er he were,—nay, though I had the justest plea of all ; but I should know how it became a stranger to conduct himself amongst citizens. Whereas thou art bringing shame on a city that deserves it not, even on thine own, and, in thy case, increase of years is bringing age and senselessness together.

So have I said it already, and I repeat it now ; let some one bring the maidens hither with all speed, unless thou wouldst take up thine abode in this land by force, and not of thy free will ; and what I tell thee, I intend, as truly as it leaves my lips.

CHO. Stranger, dost thou see at what a pass thou art ? For thou, though deemed to come of honest stock, art found to be an evil-doer.

CRE. It is not that I count this city void of men, or ill-advised, as thou sayest, son of Ægeus, that I have carried

through this deed ; but because her sons, I thought, would ne'er be filled with so much zeal for kin of mine as to undertake their charge in my despite. And I was sure they would not receive a man with unclean hands, a parricide, one with whom was found the unholy marriage of a mother with her child.¹ So wise a council, set on Ares' hill, I knew they had established in their land, which suffers not such wanderers to dwell amongst its citizens. Herein I trusted, when I would secure this prey. And yet had I ne'er attempted this, unless he had been calling down on me and on my race his bitter curse ; but for that wrong suffered I deemed this but a fair revenge. For wrath has no old age, save death alone ; the dead feel not the touch of grief. Therefore work thy will ; for, though the words I speak are just, my loneliness yet makes me weak ; but, old as I am, I still will try to pay back deed with deed.

ŒD. O shameless spirit ! whom dost thou think to insult hereby,—an old man like me, or thine own self ? Thou that, to wound me, hast suffered to pass thy lips all the tale of murder, incest, and misfortune, which I, poor wretch, endured perforce ; for so it pleased the gods,—wroth, maybe, with my race for something in the past. For, taken by myself, thou couldst not find one sin to reproach me with, in retribution whereof I came to sin on this wise against myself and mine. Come, tell me this : if to my father God's oracles were bringing a message to say that he should die by his childrens' hands, how couldst thou fairly reproach me therewith, who was not yet begotten or conceived, but was then unborn ? And if, again, when born, poor wretch, as I was born, I met my father hand to hand and slew him, knowing nought of what I did or unto whom I did it, how couldst thou fairly blame the deed I did not choose ?

And of that marriage with my mother, own sister to thee as she was, art not ashamed, O reckless man, to wring from

¹ Others understand "a marriage unholy in respect of its offspring."

me what I will say anon,—for be silent I never will, when though hast gone to such impious lengths of speech. 'Tis true; she was my mother,—my *mother*, yes, ah me!—but neither of us knew it,—and, mother of me though she was, she bare me children to her shame. But of one thing at least am I sure,—'tis of thy choice that thou thus speakest ill of me and her; and yet I did not wed her of my own free choice, nor speak I thus of choice. Nay, it is not in this marriage I shall win an evil name, nor in that slaying of my father which thou art ever flinging in my teeth with bitter taunts. For answer me but one of all questions. Suppose upon the spot, and now, appeared some man who tried to slay thy righteous self, wouldst thou inquire if he who sought thy blood was sire to thee, or wouldst thou straightway make him pay the price? Methinks that, as thy life is dear, thou wouldst avenge thee on thy guilty foe, nor look about to justify the act. And yet this was the very sea of sorrow I embarked upon through Heaven's guidance; and, could my father come to life again, he would not gainsay me in this, I trow. But thou, who art no honest man, but thinkest it fair to utter all,—alike what should and what should not be said,—dost fling such taunts as these at me, in presence of yon strangers. It suits thee well to fawn on far-famed Theseus, and on Athens as a nobly-ordered state! And yet, with all this lavish praise, it doth escape thy memory, that if there is a land which knows how to give the gods their due and reverent worship, this land excels therein; yet this is the land whence thou wert for seizing me by stealth,—an old man and a suppliant,—after carrying off my daughters. Wherefore I now call on yonder goddesses, entreating, importuning them with prayers, to come to my aid and champion me, that thou mayest understand what men they be who guard this State.

CHO. My liege, this stranger is a righteous man; his fortune hath proved his ruin, which yet deserves our help.

THE. A truce to words ! They who have done the deed¹ are speeding their flight, while we the sufferers stand still.

CRE. What, then, is thy bidding to a helpless creature ?²

THE. Lead the way where they are gone, while I³ will be thine escort, that, if thou hast the maidens hereabouts for us to find,⁴ thou mayst thyself discover them to me ; but if their captors are fleeing with their spoil, no need for us to trouble ; for there are others in hot pursuit, and these shall they never boast⁵ to their gods that they escaped from this land.

Lead on ! The captor caught, be sure, art thou,—snared by Fortune,—thou the hunter ! For gains acquired by knavish tricks are never kept. Nor shalt thou have another to help thee towards this end ; for well I know thou hast not reached this pitch of insolence in thy present daring deed, all defenceless and unfurnished ; but there was one on whom thy faith was pinned in this attempt. And this must I examine well, nor make this city weaker than one man.

Dost note these things at all ? Or thinkest thou these words are e'en as idle now,⁶ as when thou wert busy scheming ?

CREON. Here canst thou say anything to me without my blaming it ; but at home I too shall know the course to take.

THE. Threaten if thou wilt, but forward now ! Do thou,

¹ Reading *ἐξεργασμένοι*, the conjecture of F. W. Schmidt for MSS. *ἐξηρασμένοι*, which is explained either passively, "the party of the captured ones," or, as an instance of a passive form used in a middle sense, "the captors" ; neither is very satisfactory.

² *i.e.*, Creon himself. Others explain it of Œdipus, "for the blind man."

³ Some editors follow Heath in reading *πομπὸν δὲ μοι*, "and that you should go as my guide."

⁴ Reading *ἡμῶν* with Elmsley for MSS. *ἡμῶν*.

⁵ Brunck and Elmsley, whom Jebb follows, explain *ἐπεύξωνται* as meaning "return thanks to Heaven," but this seems scarcely the sense required.

⁶ Reading *τανῦν* with Hermann rather than *τὰ νῦν*, "the words just said."

Œdipus, abide here in peace for my sake, well assured that, if I die not in the attempt, I will not rest till I put thee in possession of thy children.

ŒD. Fair befall thee, Theseus, for thy nobleness and righteous forethought for me! (*Exeunt THESEUS and attendants, guarding CREON.*)

CHO. Oh, might I be where soon the foemen, wheeling round, will meet in battle's brazen roar, hard by the Pythian cliffs¹ or near the torch-lit strand;² where goddesses august³ foster dread rites for mortal men,—even for those o'er whose lips hath passed the golden key⁴ of their servants, the Eumolpidae! For there, within this land, I trow, are 'Theseus, rouser of the fray,⁵ and those two sisters, girls unwed, to meet ere long, amid the shouts that tell of rescue near.⁶ Or haply they will be approaching the pastures⁷ to the west of Œa's snow-capped rock, flying on the back of steeds, or in the chariot's swift career.

¹ The shore of the bay of Eleusis just beyond the pass of Daphne. There was a temple of Apollo at the highest point in the pass.

² A reference to the torch-light procession along the Sacred Way from Athens to Eleusis at the annual celebration of the great Eleusinia.

³ Demeter and Persephone.

⁴ *i.e.*, the oath of secrecy taken by the initiated in the mysteries. Others refer ὦν to πότναι, "whose golden key hath been laid on the lips of the Eumolpidae."

⁵ There is a var. lect. ὄρειβάταν, but it seems singularly inappropriate in this connection.

⁶ The reading of this passage can scarcely be right, but no satisfactory emendation has yet been offered. Wecklein reads Θησία παῖδας, and takes ἐμμίξιν transitively; Blaydes suggests ἀντάρκη. . . βοάν; but probably the remedy still remains to be found. The phrase ἀντάρκει βοᾷ is a very strange one, whether explained as "the shout of self-reliant men," or, regarding βοᾷ as equivalent to βοηθεία, as "the rescue victorious in its own strength." Liddell and Scott render "a strong brave shout."

⁷ Reading εἰς νομόν, Hartung's conjecture for MSS. ἐκ νομοῦ, which is understood to mean "leaving the pastures of Œa, they will approach the region westward of . . ."

The foe will be overpowered! ¹ Terrible is our countrymen's valour, and terrible the might of the men of Theseus! Flashes every bridle-bit, and gallops all our chivalry with slackened bridle-gear, ² each knight who serves Athene, knighthood's queen, and Rhea's darling son, the sea-god, girdler of the earth. ³

Are they in action yet, or on the eve of it? For my mind hath a certain foreboding that I shall soon be face to face with the maidens, who have suffered so cruelly and been so evilly entreated ⁴ by their own kith and kin.

To-day will Zeus most surely bring somewhat to pass; I prophesy a good issue to the strife. Oh for the wings of a dove, swift as the storm-wind's rush, to reach some cloud in upper air, mine eye uplifted o'er the fray! ⁵

¹ Others render "the fugitive will be captured," or, "there will be a capture."

² Jebb reads *καθεῖσ' ἀμπυκτήρια στομίων*, from the joint emendations of Schneidewin and Wecklein. The MSS. *κατ' ἀμπυκτήρια φάλαρα πώλων*, "in the wake of their horses' bridles," *i.e.*, at full speed, giving the horses their heads, is probably not genuine,—most editors considering *φάλαρα πώλων* a mere gloss. Schneidewin's *καθεῖσ'* greatly simplifies the sense, and is at any rate Greek.

³ Others understand this epithet of Poseidon not in its common Homeric sense, but as "guardian of the land," *i.e.*, as the god of Colonus.

⁴ Jebb's text is—

γνώμα τάχ' ἀντάσειν
τᾶν δεινὰ τλασαῖν, δεινὰ δ' εὐρουσαῖν.

Bücheler had previously conjectured *ἀντάσειν*. The MSS. give *τάχ' ἀνδύσειν τᾶν . . .* Many editors follow Musgrave's conjecture, *ἀνδώσειν*, "that they will quickly restore," *i.e.*, the enemy will; but this is quite an unsupported meaning for this verb. Other conjectures are *ἐνδώσειν*—Elmsley after Turnebus—"the sufferings of those who have endured (*τᾶν τλασαῖν*) . . . will relax." Blaydes confidently recommends *ἀνσώσειν τῷ δεινὰ τλάσα*, "that Theseus will recover the two maidens who . . ."

⁵ Jebb reads *ἄνωθ' ἀγώνων αἰωρήσασα . . .*, after the joint emendations of Hermann and Wunder, for MSS. *τῶνδ' ἀγώνων θεωρήσασα*, from which no satisfactory sense is obtainable; for the rendering, "having

O Zeus, whose eye is over all, thou lord of all the gods, grant to the guardians of this land, with might victorious, to crown their ambush with success! May Pallas Athene grant this too, thine august child! And fain I would that Apollo, the hunter, and his sister,¹ who chaseth the fleet dappled deer, should come,—a double succour to this land and to those that dwell therein!

O stranger, that hast wandered hither, no need for thee to call thy watchman² lying prophet; for lo! I see the maidens drawing hither again under escort.

ŒD. Where, oh, where? How? What?

ANT. (*entering with ISMENE, THESEUS, and attendants*). Father, dear father, would that some god might give thee eyes to see this noble hero who hath escorted us hither to thee!

ŒD. My child! What, are ye here?

ANT. Yes, saved by these stalwart hands,—Theseus and his own good men.

ŒD. My child, approach,—both thou and she; and let me hold in my embrace those whose coming I ne'er had thought to see.

ANT. Thou shalt obtain thy boon; the grace is one we long to show.

ŒD. Where, oh, where are ye?

ANT. We are here,—approaching thee.

ŒD. My children—my darlings!

ANT. A father ever loves his own.

ŒD. O props of one—

ANT. Whom Fate hath curst,—and us no less!

ŒD. I hold my darlings in my arms. With you beside

gone thither as a spectator with mine eye," will scarcely find acceptance for this extraordinary phrase.

¹ Artemis.

² The Chorus-leader alludes to himself; he has watched by the blind Œdipus when left alone.

me, no more were my lot all woe, e'en if I died now. Support me on both sides, my children, clinging closely to your sire, and give me rest¹ from wandering thus, so weary and alone! Now tell me all that chanced, as briefly as ye may,—for brief speech sufficeth for maidens young as you.

ANT. Here is he that saved us; his the story thou shouldst hear, father, as² his too was the deed; thus will *my* tale be brief.

ŒD. Marvel not, friend, that I speak so long and earnestly to my children, brought to light again when hope was dead. For well I know that this my joy regarding them hath proceeded from thee and no other; 'twas thou who didst rescue them, and no man else. Wherefore may Heaven reward thee as I wish, thyself and this land! For amongst you beyond all other men have I found the fear of God and equity and hatred of a lie. These things I know, and with these words I repay them; for 'tis through thee and no man else that I have all I have. Stretch forth thy hand, O king, I pray, for me to touch, and let me kiss thee, if I may, upon the face. And yet what am I saying? How should I, unhappy wretch, wish thee to touch a man,³ who harboureth the taint of every ill? Nay, I'll not touch thee, nor yet allow this thing in thee. Only they of mortal men who have had my experience can help me bear this suffering. Abide thou where thou art, and take my blessing-thence; and vouchsafe me henceforth the same righteous care as hitherto.

¹ Reading *κἀναπαύσατον* with several MSS., the others having *κἀναπαύσειτον*. Jebb reads, on his own conjecture, *κἀναπνεύσατον*, "repose from this wandering."

² Reading *οὐ κἀστι τοῦργον' τοῦμόν ᾧδ' ἔσται βραχύ*. So Jebb, after Wex and Hartung. Many editors follow Hermann's *καὶ σοί τε τοῦργον τοῦτ' ἐμοί τ' ἔσται βραχύ*, but it is difficult to see what satisfactory sense is then obtained.

³ Others, regarding *ἀνδρός* as emphatic, render "how should I . . . think of touching one who is a man indeed?"

THE. That thou hast spoken at some length in thy joy o'er these children causes me no wonderment, nor yet that thou hast heard them first, in preference to me; nay, there is nothing to gall me there. For it is not by words so much as deeds I strive to shed a lustre o'er my life. I give thee proof: in all that I swore to thee, old man, have I proved true; I have brought thee these maidens alive, all unhurt by those loud threats. And why need I idly boast of how the fight was won, seeing thou wilt thyself learn it from these maidens face to face? But as to a matter that hath just come to mine ears on the way hither, aid me with thy counsel; for little though it be to tell, it well might cause surprise; and man should not make light of aught.

ÆD. What is it, son of Ægeus? Tell me, for of myself I know nought of that which thou art asking.

THE. A man, they tell me, who, though not of the same country as thyself, is yet of the same kin, hath somehow thrown himself in suppliant posture at the altar of Poseidon, whereat I was even sacrificing, when I started to come hither.

ÆD. Of what country is he? What craves he by thus sitting there?

THE. I know not, save one thing,—he craves a moment's speech, they say, with thee, fraught with little trouble.

ÆD. What would he say? His sitting there imports no trifling theme.

THE. They say he asks but speech with thee, and¹ a safe return by the way he came.²

ÆD. Who can he be that hath taken up this suppliant post?

THE. Bethink thee if there is any of kin to you at Argos, who might crave to win this boon of thee?

¹ Reading *μόνον* for *μολόντ'*, and inserting *τ'* after *ἀπελθεῖν* with Vauvilliers.

² Others render "in respect to his journey hither."

CÆD. Stay there, O best of friends !

THE. What ails thee ?

CÆD. Require it not of me.

THE. What is it I am not to require ? Tell me.

CÆD. Thy words have told me who the suppliant is.

THE. Who can he be, for me to find any fault with him ?

CÆD. My own, my hated son, O king, whose words I should bring myself to hear more hardly than the words of any other man.

THE. What ? Canst thou not hear, without doing the things thou wouldst not ? Why does it vex thee to hear him ?¹

CÆD. That voice, O king, hath come to be most hateful in a father's ears ; wherefore lay me not under the necessity of yielding herein.

THE. Nay, but consider,—doth not his sitting there compel thee ? Beware ; it may be thy duty to maintain respect for the god.

ANT. Hear me, father, young though I am to offer counsel. Suffer this man to gratify alike his own feelings and the god, as he wishes ; and yield to us twain in permitting our brother to come. For, rest assured, no words, which may be said by him regardless of thy interest, will wrest thee perforce from thy fixed resolve. But what harm were it to hear him speak ? By speech it is that evil² schemes are brought to light. He is thy own begotten son ; so, were he then to treat thee, father, with the very worst impiety, no right hast thou to pay him back in evil sort.³

¹ Reading *τοῦδ'* with Elmsley. The MSS. *τοῦτ'* would mean, "why is this painful to thee,—to hear ?"

² Reading *κακῶς εὐρημέν' ἔργα* with Hermann. Retaining MSS. *καλῶς*, one might render, "surely plans, though cunningly devised, are detected by a man's words."

³ Lines 1189-91 are considered spurious by Meineke and others,—somewhat needlessly.

But as for him¹—Others too have sons as bad and tempers keen as thine, but when their friends with soothing words advise them, they feel their nature yielding to the spell. Look thou to those former woes, and not to what is here,—all the suffering thou hast borne for sire and mother's sake ; with that before thee, well I know thou wilt perceive how evil is the end that crowneth evil wrath ; for no small grounds hast thou to ponder this, reft, as thou art, of the sight of thine eyes.

Come, yield to us ! It ill beseems to press² a claim, when only asking what is just ; or that a man should receive kindness, and know not how to requite the boon.

ÆD. My child, this pleasure, which your pleading wins, is bitterness to me ; yet be it as your hearts desire. Only, friend, if yon man is to come hither, let no one ever lord it o'er my life !

THE. Once, not twice, old sir, I need to hear that said ;³ and yet I have no wish to boast ; still be sure that thou art safe, if Heaven keeps me so. (*Exit THESEUS.*)

CHO. Whoso covets for his life that fuller span which goes beyond⁴ the mean, manifestly clingeth to folly,—so shall I judge of him. For length of days hath full many a thing in store,⁵ nearer to sorrow than joy ; and, as for that which

¹ Seemingly an aposiopesis, which, however, Jebb laughs to scorn, while introducing into his text the extremely harsh synzesis ἀλλ' ἔασον, which some editors adopt.

² Others render "to persevere against a just request."

³ *i.e.*, I have promised you my protection once ; you need not remind me of the danger.

⁴ Reading πέρα with Schneidewin ; so Blaydes. Jebb explains παρῆς of the MSS. thus : "having neglected, *i.e.*, not being content, to desire a moderate portion." The rendering, "letting go one's hold of moderation," is, as he points out, untenable, for παρῆς does not govern a genitive.

⁵ Others render "brings and places nearer to grief full many a thing."

gladdeneth thee, thou wilt not know the place thereof, when once a man exceeds the proper term ;¹ but,² at the last, to all alike, comes there a helper, when appeareth the doom of Hades, that knows not lyre, or dance, or marriage-hymn,—e'en Death that closes all.

Not to have been born at all surpasses all that words can say ; but, when a man hath seen the light, to return, as soon as may be, to the place from whence he came is the next best thing by far. For once he hath said farewell³ to youth, with all its wayward thoughtlessness, what woe-worn sufferer ever wanders⁴ from the path of pain ? What weariness is not his lot ? Envy is there, and faction, and strife, and battle, and bloodshed ; and, last of all, to crown his wretched lot, comes hateful age, infirm, unfriended, shunned by all, with whom dwell all the worst of woes.

Now this poor wretch hath reached that bourn,—not I alone ; and as some headland, facing north, is lashed by winter's waves on every side, so too on him are waves of dire affliction dashing evermore, in furious wise ; some from the setting of the sun, and some from his uprising, some in

¹ Reading *δέοντος*, the conjecture of Reiske for MSS. *έίλοντος*, which Hermann explained to mean, "when a man falls into excess in his desires."

² Reading with Hermann *ὁ δ' ἐπικούρος* for the unintelligible *οὐδ' ἐπικούρος* of L.

³ Others render "when once youth is there with its vain follies," *i.e.*, referring *παρῆ* to *πάρεμι*, not *παρήμι*.

⁴ Reading *τίς πλάγχθη* with the MSS. Jebb provisionally adopts Herwerden's weak correction *πλαγά*, "what troublous affliction is strange to his lot ?" Hermann understands, "what troublous woe ranges outside youth ?" *i.e.*, youth is regarded as a period of suffering as much as any other time ; no sooner is youth reached than sorrow begins. But possibly, as Jebb suggests, Sophocles intended the period of youth to represent the brief space of joy before the clouds gather over life ; when it is past, then begins the unending night of sorrow. But this is a vexed passage, and the traditional reading may well be corrupt in more ways than one.

the path of his noontide ray, and some from the gloom of realms Rhipæan.¹

ANT. Lo! yonder, methinks, we may see the stranger on his way hither,—all alone, father, with the tears streaming from his eyes.

ÆD. Who is this?

ANT. He, whom we had this long while in our thoughts, is here,—e'en Polyneices.

POL. Alas! what am I to do? Shall I first bemoan my own sorrow, sisters, or my aged father's, which I here behold? Whom I have found in a strange land, an outcast here with both of you, clad in this vile raiment, whose loathly filth has made his aged frame its home, wasting the flesh it long hath grown upon; while o'er his eyeless head the uncombed hair waves wildly in the breeze; and such food as he carries, to stay the pangs of hunger, doubtless matches well therewith. Too late I learn all this, abandoned wretch that I am; and I testify to my own utter worthlessness in all matters affecting thy livelihood; ask not others of my sins. But, since Mercy sits and shares the throne of Zeus himself, to temper every deed, may she be stationed at thy side as well, father! Past sins may find a cure; increase can they never have.

Why so silent? O father, say one word; turn not from me! Hast thou no answer for me? Wilt send me hence in scorn, without a word, not telling so much as the cause of thy wrath?

Daughters of Ædipus, sisters mine, seek ye, at least, to unlock our father's lips, which will not speak nor brook ad-

¹ It seems to be now generally agreed that Schneidewin was right in rendering Ριπᾶν "the Rhipæan mountains," *i.e.*, a semi-mythical region (perhaps the modern Ural chain) used by poets to denote the uttermost North. No other interpretation gives a suitable sense, *e.g.*, "from the whispering winds of night," or "from the shimmer of the midnight stars." Clearly we need an allusion to the fourth point of the compass.

dress, that he send me not hence, dishonoured thus, a suppliant of the god, without a word of answer !

ANT. Tell him thyself, unhappy one, the need that brings thee here ; for words, when there be many said, have found the dumb a tongue ere now, perchance as giving some delight, or winged maybe by rage or pity.¹

POL. Yea, speak I will,—for thy advice to me is good,—first calling on the god himself to succour me ; for from his altar was I raised by the ruler of this land to come hither, with leave to speak and hear, and then go safely hence. Which promise, sirs, I fain would see made good by you, and by my sisters here, and by my sire.

Now, father, will I tell thee the reason of my coming. I have been driven forth into exile from my country, because, as thine elder son, I claimed to take my seat on thy sovereign throne. This was why Eteocles, albeit the younger, thrust me from the land ; not that he had prevailed in argument or resorted to the test of actual might, but he persuaded the city. Now I hold it most likely that the fiend, who pursues thee, is the cause of this ; further, this is what the prophets also tell me. For, when I came to Dorian Argos, I took to wife the daughter of Adrastus, and bound by an oath to myself all that were foremost in renown and most esteemed as warriors in Apia's² land, that with them I might gather the sevenfold host of spears to march to Thebes, and either die in justest cause, or cast the authors of this villainy forth from the land. Enough of that ! Why have I now come hither ? With suppliant prayers I come to thee, father,—my own prayers and the prayers of my allies, who now on every side surround the plain of Thebes with sevenfold array

¹ The causative meaning, given by Liddell and Scott, and adopted by many editors for these participles, "touching some chord of anger or pity," is entirely unsupported by any parallel passage; and cannot be safely accepted.

² Peloponnesus, so called from a mythical king Apis.

of spears. Such as are Amphiaraus, lightning-speared, first in warrior's might, and first in augur's skill; next, Ætolian Tydeus, Æneus' son; third comes Eteoclus, an Argive born; Hippomedon is fourth, whom Talauus, his father, sent; the fifth is Capaneus, who boasts that he will raze and waste with fire the town of Thebes; Arcadian Parthenopæus darteth sixth upon his way, named from her who was a maid of yore, but bare a mother's pangs for him at last, Atalanta's trusty son; and last, myself, thy son,—or, if not thine, but fathered by an evil fate, at least called thine,—who lead the fearless Argive host to Thebes. We, one and all, entreat thee, father, for these children's and thine own life's sake, imploring thee to yield me up thy grievous wrath, as I start to take vengeance on my brother, who hath thrust me forth and spoiled me of my fatherland. For if from oracles comes aught of truth, those, whom thou shouldst join, they said, should have the mastery. Oh! by our fountains, by our race's gods, I pray thee, then, hearken and relent,—a beggar and an exile I, and thou an exile too; and thy abode, and mine no less, is only ours by flattering others,—partakers¹ in the self-same lot. While he who lords it in our halls,—ah, woe is me!—is waxing wanton as he flouts us both alike; but, if thou wilt but second my designs, in no long space, with no great pains, will I scatter his might to the winds. And so will I lead thee to thy home and stablish thee therein and myself as well, after casting him thence by force. Only join thy will with mine, and I may make this boast; but without thee I cannot win so much as safety.

CHO. For his sake, Ædipus, who sent this man, make such answer as befits, and send him hence again.

ÆD. Nay, ye guardians² of this land, were it not that Theseus had sent him hither to me, deeming it right that he should have an answer from my lips, of a truth he never

¹ Reading *ἔξειληχότες* with Brunck for MSS. *ἔξειληφότες*.

² Others read *δημοῦχος* with some MSS.

should have heard my voice. But now shall he have that grace ere he goes, after he hath e'en heard from me such words as will never make his life the happier ;—yes, villain, for when thou hadst that sceptred sway, which now thy brother holds in Thebes, thou didst drive me,—thine own father,—forth thyself, and didst make me citiless, with rags like these to wear, which now thou weepest to behold, now that thou art come to the same grievous plight as I. Tears avail not now ; nay, but bear it must I, all my life,¹ remembering thee as a murderer ; for thou it was that didst make me familiar with this suffering, thou that didst thrust me out ; and of thy doing it comes that, as a wanderer, I beg my daily bread of others. Had I not had these maids, the daughters I begot, to tend my wants, verily I should not now be living, for any help of thine ; but these are my preservers now ; these are they who tend my wants ; these are men, not women they, in the work of aid ; but as for you,—ye are an alien pair, no sons of mine.

Therefore is the eye of Fate upon thee, though nowise yet² as soon as it is to be, if indeed those warrior bands are moving on towards the town of Thebes. Never shalt thou raze³ that city ; nay, ere that, shalt thou fall with blood upon thy hands, and thy brother like thee. Such were the curses my soul aforetime let loose on you twain, and now I call on them to come as my allies, that ye may deign to pay your parents honour, not scorn them utterly, if ye *are* a blind man's sons, ye evil pair.⁴ These maidens did not so.

¹ Reading ἑωσπερ with Reiske. The MSS. ὡσπερ apparently would mean "whatever be my life,"—scarcely an appropriate sense.

² Reading πω. Others σου, "perhaps not yet at once."

³ Reading ἐρειψεις, the correction of Turnebus for MSS. κείνην ἐρεΐ τις, which has been explained by some, "—the town I say, for there is one who shall never call Thebes his city"; but this seems both far-fetched and an impossible meaning of the Greek words.

⁴ Others render, "and may not think it so light a thing that ye have been such sons of a blind father."

Wherefore thy suppliant plea and throne are subject to that curse, if indeed Justice, which is of old, sits at the side of Zeus, to execute the ancient laws.¹

Hence, accursed wretch, no son of mine! vile of the vilest, begone, and with thee take these curses, which I imprecate on thee! Never mayst thou, spear in hand, prevail o'er the land of thine own kin! never return to Argos in the vale, but die by a kinsman's hand and take his life who banished thee! Such is my curse; and I invoke the hated gloom of Tartarus, thy heritage from me,² to take thee hence unto its bourn; and on these goddesses I call; on Ares³ too, who hath inspired the hearts of both of you with this fell hate. And now that thou hast heard this, go,—aye, go and proclaim to the sons of Cadmus, each and all, and to thine own loyal champions too, that such are the gifts of honour Œdipus hath to his own sons dispensed!

CHO. No joy I wish thee,⁴ Polyneices, of thy journeyings heretofore, and now go hence again in haste.

POL. Ah me for my journey and my ill success! And for my comrades, woe! What an end to the march whereon we started from Argos! Woe is me! Such as I may not even utter to any of my followers, nor may I turn them back, but in silence must I meet this doom.

Daughters of Œdipus, my sisters,⁵ since ye hear your father curse me thus bitterly, by the gods I do entreat you both, if these his curses are fulfilled and ye find some means of return to your home, oh! do not ye dishonour me, but lay me in the tomb and give me funeral rites. So shall the

¹ Others render, "by ancient ordinance."

² *πατρῴον* has also been variously understood—(α) "darkness, which is father of all," (β) "where my sire lies," (γ) "gloom such as thy father knows."

³ Here, as often in Tragedy, Ares is regarded as a malignant fiend of death and destruction.

⁴ Reading *σοι* with MSS.

⁵ Others make *τοῦδ'* = *ἐμοῦ*, "Maidens, my own sisters."

praise of both of you, which now ye win of yonder man for toil in his behalf, have yet another added to it, no less great, for the service done to me.

ANT. I entreat thee, Polyneices, hearken to me in one respect!

POL. Antigone, dear sister mine, what is it? Tell me.

ANT. Turn thy host back to Argos,—and that without delay,—and destroy not thyself as well as Thebes.

POL. Nay, 'tis impossible. How could¹ I lead the same host again, once I had shown alarm?

ANT. But why, brother, needst thou be wroth again? What guerdon is thine, when thou hast razed thy native place?

POL. To be in exile is disgrace, and that I, the elder though I am, should thus be flouted by my brother.

ANT. Seest thou, then, to what a true issue thou art bringing² his prophecies, who proclaimeth death for you both, each by the other's hand.

POL. Yea, for that is his wish; but I must not give way.

ANT. Ah, woe is me! But who will dare to follow thee, on hearing what thy father hath foretold?

POL. Nay, but I will not take an evil message; a good leader's part is to tell the better news, suppress the worse.

ANT. Then, art thou thus resolved, brother?

POL. I am; so stay me not. Yea, now will I set me to tread that road, which my father and his vengeful fiends have doomed to end in misery and woe; but o'er the path

¹ Reading *ἄν* with Vauvilliers for MSS. *αὖ*. Without *ἄν* the sense would be, "how could I *possibly* lead?"

² Retaining *ἐκφέρει* of the MSS., which, if understood as 2nd per. pres. midd., does away with the need of adopting Tyrwhitt's correction, *ἐκφέρεις*, in a similar sense. Hermann understood *ἐκφέρει* of the prophecies, "rush forward to their fulfilment"; but, as Jebb points out, the other rendering is really far simpler.

of both of you may Zeus shed happiness, if, when I am dead, ye carry¹ out my wishes, since nevermore will ye be able to help me in life ! Now let me go,—and fare ye well ; for alive shall ye see me no more.

ANT. Woe is me !

POL. Mourn me not.

ANT. Who would not mourn thee, brother, hastening thus to certain death ?

POL. If die I must, then die I will.

ANT. Say not so ; hear me.

POL. Seek not to persuade me into wrong.

ANT. Most hapless, then, am I indeed, if I must be reft of thee !

POL. These things are in Fortune's hands, to be this way or that. But for you twain I implore the gods that ye may never meet with ill ; for all men know ye deserve not suffering. (*Exit* POLYNEICES.)

CHO. Lo ! I see new evils, newly sent, strokes of grievous doom withal, come from the sightless stranger,—unless it haply be Fate that is o'ertaking him.² For I cannot say that Heaven's decrees are ever vain.³ Time doth watch and watch them ever, overturning⁴ the fortunes of some, and again uplifting others on the morrow.—Thunder, hark ! Save us, Zeus !

ÆD. My children, O my children ! If there be any man near, would he might fetch most noble Theseus hither !

¹ To avoid the elision of the *iota* of the dative, Lobeck transposed and wrote *θανίντι μοι τελεῖτ'*, which is the simplest change suggested.

² Others understand "unless perchance Fate interpose," *i.e.*, to avert the danger.

³ Reading *ματᾶν* with Heimsoeth for MSS. *μάτην*.

⁴ The MSS. *ἐπεὶ* is probably corrupt ; as it stands, the text is meaningless. Hartung's *στρέφων*, adopted by Jebb, is a possible remedy. Some follow Hermann, and imagine an ellipse of a verb, such as *ἔδωκεν*, "since at one time he (*i.e.*, *χρόνος*) brings evil, and again on the morrow uplifts to prosperity,"—a doubtful expedient.

ANT. What object hast thou, father, in summoning him?

ŒD. (*as a second peal is heard*). Yon thunder-peal, the wingèd voice of Zeus, will take me hence anon to Hades. Haste and send!

CHO. Hark! once more that awful crash, that rush terrific of the bolt of Zeus! Terror thrills me to the very ends of my hair; my spirit quails; for again the lightning blazes in the sky.¹ What issue, then, doth it portend?² I am afraid, for never doth it rush forth for nought or without some result. O mighty firmament! O Zeus!

ŒD. Children, my destined end is come upon me; no longer can I turn away therefrom.

ANT. How dost thou know? From what hast thou conjectured this?

ŒD. I know it well enough. But let one go, I pray, with all speed, and bring hither the king of this land.

CHO. (*as another deafening peal is heard*). There! listen! Once more the piercing din fills all the air! Mercy, mercy, heavenly power, if thou art bringing aught upon our mother land with dark intent! Oh, may I find thee propitious,³ and may I not, through having looked upon a man accurst, somehow share with him a recompense not fraught with gain! To thee, king Zeus, I lift my voice!

ŒD. Is Theseus near? Will he find me still alive, children, and still in my right mind?

ANT. But what is this confidence thou wouldst have implanted in his mind?⁴

¹ Retaining *ὐβρανία* of the MSS.

² Blaydes, following a hint of Abresch's, reads thus: *τί μάν; ἀφήσει βέλος*. "assuredly it will launch a bolt." The text is open to suspicion.

³ Reading with Blaydes and Cobet *ἐναισίου δέ σου τύχοιμι*. The MSS. *ἐναισίου δὲ συντύχοιμι* is explained by Wunder, "may he whom I have met (*i.e.*, Œdipus) prove a righteous man"; by the Schol., "may I meet a righteous man."

⁴ Some understand, "why wouldst thou that thy reason remain steadfast?" The other interpretation is given by the Schol., meaning

ÆD. In return for kindnesses received, I would pay them¹ a full requital,—even that which I promised when I won the boon.

CHO. What ho! my son, come hither, come hither! Whether on the heights or in the hollows by the sea² thou chancest to be hallowing lord Poseidon's altar with sacrifice of oxen,—come! For yon stranger deems thee worthy of a fair requital at his hands for kindnesses received,—thee, thy city, and thy friends. Haste³ and tarry not, O king!

THE. What means this outcry once again, so loudly raised by both of you together,—a summons clearly from my folk, and no less clearly from the stranger? Was it a thunderbolt from Zeus, or haply a sudden burst of pelting hail that caused it? For one may hazard any guess, when God throws Nature into such turmoil.

ÆD. O king, I longed for thy appearing, and for thee 'tis

apparently, “what is the secret thou wouldst impress on him?” But, as Blaydes remarks, the expression is strange, and emendation may be needed.

¹ The Schol. explains *σφιν* of Theseus only, but the evidence for its ever being used as dat. sing. is so small that it may more safely be understood of his subjects as well.

² The text is exceedingly corrupt, and, as it stands, unintelligible. It runs thus in L:

*ὶὼ παῖ, βᾶθι βᾶθ', εἴτ' ἄκραν
ἐπιγύαλον ἐναλίψ*

—there being a space for about eight letters left after *ἐπιγύαλον*, which possibly contained the second alternative. Blaydes suggests *εἴτ' ἄκρ', εἴτ' ἐπι* (or *ἀνά*) *γύαλ' ἐνάλια*, and this may supply the required sense; which reading, therefore, has been provisionally followed in the translation. Jebb reads *εἴτ' ἄκρα περὶ γύαλ' ἐναλίψ*, but this involves an awkward suppression of one alternative, nor is it much nearer to the actual MS. reading, the recovery of which seems hopeless. For the numerous attempts at emendation, the student may be referred to Jebb's full appendix on the passage in his edition of this play.

³ Reading *σπεῦσον, αἴισ', ὤναξ*. the first word having been supplied by Triclinius to complete the metre.

some god that hath ordained¹ thee the good fortune of thus coming.

THE. Why, what new thing hath chanced, thou son of Laius?

ÆD. My life is trembling in the balance; and, ere I die, I would fain redeem my promises to thee and this city.

THE. What sign of thy passing hast thou, whereon to depend?

ÆD. The gods themselves are heralding the tidings to me, with perfect truth to signs ordained before.

THE. How dost thou say these things are revealed, old sir?

ÆD. By that thunder, long and loud, and by the frequent lightning's flash,² shot from the hand invincible.

THE. I believe thee; for, spite of thy many prophecies, I never find thy words untrue; tell me, then, what I must do.

ÆD. I will tell thee, son of Ægeus, of that which thou shalt hold in store for this thy city, beyond the power of age to hurt. Forthwith will I lead the way myself, without the aid of any guiding hand, to the place where I must die. Never reveal the spot to any of the sons of men,—neither where it lieth hid, nor in what region it is; that it may ever afford thee protection, in place of many a shield and the borrowed might of neighbouring folk.³ But such forbidden things as none may rashly utter, these shalt thou learn for thyself when thou art come thither alone; for I will not publish them to any of thy people, nor to mine own daughters, for all my love for them. Nay, guard them ever in thy heart, and when thou art reaching life's end, show

¹ Heath's arrangement is followed, τῆσδ' ἔθηκε τῆς ὁδοῦ for MSS. θῆκε τῆσδε.

² Reading *στράψαντα* with Pierson for MSS. *στρέψαντα*.

³ Others understand, "a defence against neighbours," *i.e.*, the Thebans; but the statement seems to be more general. The var. lect. *γειτονῶν* would mean "being close at hand."

them to thy foremost only ; let him teach his successor, and so on through all time. Thus shalt thou keep the city unharmed from the men whom Cadmus sowed ;¹ and most cities are lightly prone to insolence, even though one dwelleth circumspectly.² Yea, for the gods are late, though sure, in noting it, when a man neglecteth godliness and turns to frenzied folly. Never let that befall thee, son of Ægeus ! But there,—I seek to teach a man who knows all this.

Now let us be going yonder, nor linger³ any more, for the heavenly summons is urging me on. Come, my children, follow me, thus ; for now 'tis my turn to be seen leading you twain, in novel sort, as erst ye led your sire. Advance, and touch me not, but suffer me of myself to discover that holy grave, where I am destined to find burial in this land. This way,—and thus,—this way ! For this way is Hermes, the guide, and she who reigns below,⁴ leading me.

O light, that art but gloom to me,—once mine, I trow, in days of yore,—now for the last time I feel thee touch my frame ! For now am I on my way to hide with Hades my life's last closing scene.⁵

Blessings on thee, best of friends, and on thy land and on thy men ! And, in your fortune's hour, remember me within my tomb,—and so good luck for evermore ! (ŒDIPUS

¹ *i.e.*, the armed men, who sprang from the teeth of the serpent, which Cadmus killed when founding Thebes. These were the ancestors of the Thebans.

² *i.e.*, a city is often wantonly attacked, in spite of its peaceful habits. Others understand, "most cities are given to wanton insolence, even though one governs them well" ; therefore it is better not to let the mass into the secret.

³ Others understand, "regard the thunder," or "each other." Campbell proposes *μηδ' ἐπιστρεφόμεθα*, "turn backwards," but the vulgate is quite intelligible.

⁴ Persephone.

⁵ Musgrave's conjecture *τὴν τελευταίαν*, "am on my last journey," is specious, but unnecessary.

slowly quits the stage, followed by his daughters, THESEUS, and attendants.)

CHO. If 'tis granted me to offer reverent prayer to "the unseen goddess,"¹ and to thee, O king of nether night, Aidoneus, lord Aidoneus,—thus I pray: Painlessly, by no sore fate,² may the stranger win his way to the plain of the dead below, that bourn which hideth all,—e'en to the Stygian home. For, though once full many a sorrow came on him without a cause,³ God in His justice may again lift up his⁴ head. Ye goddesses beneath the earth,⁵ and thou huge beast invincible, that couchest,—so 'tis ever said,—upon that threshold crossed by many guests,⁶ snarling from out the cavern's mouth, unconquered sentinel at Hades' door! May he,⁷ O son⁸ of Earth and Tartarus, make room for the stranger, on his way to the plains of the dead below! To thee, to thee I call, who givest sleep that lasts for aye!

MES. Fellow-citizens, I might most shortly tell my news by saying,—Cædipus is dead. But as to what hath chanced, 'tis no brief tale I have to tell, for neither yonder was it briefly done.

CHO. And is he dead, unhappy man?

¹ Persephone.

² Reading *ἄπονα μηδ' ἐπὶ βαρναχεῖ*, Jebb's correction of L's *μήτ' ἐπιπόνῳ μήτ' ἐπὶ βαρναχεῖ*.

³ The reading here is anything but satisfactory, both *καὶ μάταν* and *ἰκνουμένων* presenting grave difficulties, but no very probable emendations have been proposed; perhaps a conjecture by Jebb, *πολλῶν γὰρ αὐτὴν τέρματ' ἂν πημάτων ἰκνούμενον*, gives the *sense* of what Sophocles wrote.

⁴ Reading *σφε* with Reiske for MSS. *σε*.

⁵ According to the Schol. the *Ἐρινύες* are meant.

⁶ Reading *ταῖσι πολυξένοις*, the joint emendation of Bergk and Musgrave for MSS. *φασὶ πολυξέστοις*.

⁷ *i. e.*, Cerberus.

⁸ Possibly the Death-god is meant.

MES. Be well assured that he hath left this life for ever.¹

CHO. How passed the sufferer hence? By a painless, heaven-sent doom?

MES. That is just the very point which merits wonderment. For thou knowest thyself, I deem, how he went from hence, since thou wert present;—no friend had he to guide him on his way, but was himself the guide to all of us. Now when he reached the threshold steep, fast rooted to the earth with steps of brass, he stopped at one of the many branching ways, near the hollowed basin, where are set the tokens, ever sure, of the covenant 'twixt Theseus and Peirithous. Midway from this² and the Thorician stone, between the hollow wilding pear and the stone-built tomb, he stopped and sate him down, then loosed his squalid dress. Next he called to his children, bidding them bring water from some spring for him to wash and pour libation. So they went, the pair of them, to the hill, which was in sight,—Demeter's hill, who makes the young plants green,—and quickly brought their father that which he had bidden; then washed and dressed him, all as usage bids. Anon, when he was satisfied with everything being done,³ and nought that he desired was any longer left unheeded, it thundered in the world below, and the maidens shuddered

¹ The words τὸν αἰὲ have given much trouble to commentators, and it is difficult to extract any satisfactory meaning from them; for to supply χρόνον, as is usually done, is a doubtful expedient, which Jebb at once rejects. It is given above, *provisionally*, as the traditional rendering, none of the conjectures being very convincing. Mekler's κείνον τὸν ἄνδρα, or Hartung's κείνον τὸν αἰὼν, may be mentioned, but can scarcely be accepted.

² Reading ἀφ' οὗ μέσου with Brunck and Musgrave for MSS. ἐφ' οὗ μέσου.

³ The traditional reading, παντὸς εἶχε δρωῶντος ἡδονήν, involves an abstract use of the active participle, which is certainly unusual, and, in this case, very harsh. The passage is possibly corrupt; to read εἶχ' ἔρωτος ("desire") would, as Jebb suggests, be a conceivable remedy.

at the sound, and they fell at their father's knees and wept, and ceased not beating on their breasts and wailing loud and long. No sooner did he hear their bitter cry, than he folded his arms around them, saying: "My children, to-day are ye left fatherless; for all that was mine is death's henceforth; no more shall ye have the bitter task of tending me,—hard it was, I know, my children; and yet a word, a single word, atones for all that sum of pain,—love, which ye have had from me surpassing any other man's; but now ye are to lose me, for all the remnant of your life henceforth."

Thus clung they each to other, sobbing and weeping the while, all three of them. But when they had ended their lament, and the sound thereof uprose no more, there was silence; when suddenly pealed forth a voice of one that summoned him, so that the hair of all did stand on end, in sudden wild affright; for a god called him, calling oft in divers ways:¹ "Ædipus, O Ædipus, why do we delay our going? Too long already has thy lingering been."

Now when he knew it was a god who summoned him, he bade king Theseus draw near him; and when he was come, he said: "Kind friend, I pray thee give thy hand to my children, the time-honoured² pledge,—and you, my daughters, give your hands to him;—and promise that thou wilt never willingly forsake them, but ever wilt do all that thou art minded, with kind intent and for their good." And Theseus, like a noble man, uttering no lament,³ promised with an oath to do the stranger's hests.

¹ Hermann and Lehrs condemn this line.

² The traditional reading, ἀρχαίαν, is, perhaps, best explained thus. Of the conjectures offered, ὀρκίαν, "with an oath," which is favoured slightly by l. 1637, is the most satisfactory.

³ A fine touch; the king will not harrow the feelings of the maidens by giving way to lamentation. The conjectures ὄκνου and ὄγκου display a curious want of taste.

At once, when he had made an end, Œdipus thus spake, feeling for his daughters with his sightless hands: "My children, ye must keep brave hearts and go from hence, nor claim to see forbidden sights or hear forbidden speech. Depart, make no delay; only let Theseus, whom it most concerns, be present to witness what happens."

So far we heard him, one and all; then, while our tears flowed thick and fast, we followed the maidens' steps; but after we had gone from him, we turned our heads ere long, but no longer could we see him anywhere; only the king we saw, holding his hand before his face to shade his eyes, as if there had appeared to him some dreadful sight, too awful to behold. A little while, and then we saw the king making obeisance to the earth and to Olympus, home of gods, at once and in the self-same prayer. But by what doom that other passed from life, no mortal man can tell, save Theseus only. 'Twas not God's fiery thunderbolt nor any tempest sweeping in that hour from off the sea, that caused his end; but either there came to him some messenger from Heaven, or Earth's foundations, where the dead have rest and sorrow is no more,¹ were opened in love to receive him. For not with tears nor in sickness and suffering was yonder man sent hence, but in wondrous wise, if ever mortal was. And if my words seem wild, I would not seek to win regard with those who think them so.

CHO. But where are the maidens, and those good friends who were their escort?

MES. They are not far away; their cries of lamentation are clear signs of their approach.

ANT. Alas, alas! Now indeed may we, poor luckless pair, bewail, on each and every count, our blood accurst, engendered in us by our sire; for whom erewhile we had to

¹ Others take *ἀλύπητον* *actively*, "without paining him." There is a var. lect. *ἀλάμπειτον*, but this is a feeble and needless conjecture.

bear that heavy toil continually, while in the closing scene the sights and sufferings we shall have to tell ¹ transcend the bounds of thought.

CHO. What news ?

ANT. We can but guess,² my friends.

CHO. Is he gone ?

ANT. Gone, as thou wouldst most desire.³ How else ? Seeing death met him not on battle-field or sea ; but some mysterious doom seized and swept him to the unseen plains. Unhappy maid !⁴ A darkness as of death hath settled on the eyes of both of us ; for how shall we support our grievous life, wandering to some distant land or on the surging sea ?

ISM.⁵ I know not. Oh that Hades, god of blood, would take my wretched life, that I might share my aged father's death ! For the life that waits me now I cannot live.

CHO. O noble pair of children, endure what comes of God,⁶ and be no more too hotly stirred ! Your case in no wise calls for blame.

ANT. So e'en of ills there is regret, it seems ! Yea, for

¹ So Hermann and Schneidewin explain the word *παροίσομεν*, and most commentators repeat their explanation. Possibly the text is unsound. Hartung conjectures *παρεύρομεν* ; Reisig *περάσομεν* ; the latter of which, however, seems scarcely to give the required sense, for it is to the past, and not to the future, that Antigone refers.

² Reading *ἔστιν μὲν εἰκάσαι* with Hermann for MSS. *οὐκ ἔστιν μὲν*.

³ Reading *ἐν πόθῳ* with Canter for *εἰ* of MSS., which is rendered, "as thou wouldst crave, hadst thou the choice."

⁴ Possibly an address to Ismene.

⁵ The arrangement of the following lines is very uncertain, and in many places the text also. Cf. Jebb *ad loc.*

⁶ Reading—

τὸ φέρον ἐκ θεοῦ φέρειν,
μηδ' ἔτ' ἄγαν φλέγεσθον·

So Jebb, after Wecklein and Bellermand, for MSS.—

τὸ φέρον ἐκ θεοῦ καλῶς
φέρειν χρῆ, μηδ' ἄγαν οὔτω . . .

that which was nowise really dear, was dear,¹—the while at least I held him also in my arms. Ah, my father beloved! thou that art clothed in nether gloom for evermore! Not even in that world below² shalt thou ever lack my love or hers.

CHO. He fared——

ANT. E'en as he wished.

CHO. How?

ANT. On stranger's soil he died, in the land of his choice; there he sleeps, in the grave's dark shadow evermore, leaving behind him no tearless lamentation. For thus with streaming eyes I mourn for thee, father, nor know I how to quench,—alas!—the bitter grief I feel for thee. Ah me!³ 'twas thy desire to die on stranger's soil; but, dying thus, I had to let thee die forlorn.

ISM. Ah, woe is me! What fate henceforth awaiteth⁴ me and thee, dear sister mine,—lone orphans as we are?

CHO. Nay, my daughters, since he hath made so blest an end, cease this sad lament; for no man is beyond the reach of ill.

ANT. Dear sister, let us hasten back.

ISM.⁵ With what object?

ANT. I am filled with a longing——

¹ Reading *καὶ γὰρ ὁ μηδαμὰ δὴ φίλον ἦν φίλον*. So Jebb and Blaydes after Brunck, for *καὶ γὰρ ὁ μηδαμῆ δὴ τὸ φίλον φίλον* of the MSS.

² Reading *οὐδὲ γ' ἐνεροῦ* with Wecklein for MSS. *οὐδὲ γέρον*, which cannot be satisfactorily explained. Blaydes adopts *οὐδὲ γὰρ ὤς*, after Linwood.

³ Reading *ᾧμοι* with Wecklein for *ὠ μὴ* of L. Those who retain *μὴ* render, "would that thou hadst not desired to die in a strange land, but hadst died alone, as thou wert, with me!"—a rendering which will scarcely commend itself. Dindorf condemns *ὠ*—*ἐχρονζεις* as an interpolation, borrowed from l. 1705 to fill up a lacuna.

⁴ Reading *ἐπαμμένει* with Hermann, and omitting before it the words *αὐθις ὦδ' ἔρημος ἄπορος*, an interpolation from l. 1735. So Dindorf, who marks a lacuna after *πότμος*, a view shared by most modern editors.

⁵ In what follows the lines are variously distributed. Jebb arranges as above.

ISM. For what ?

ANT. To see that home deep in the earth —

ISM. Whose ?

ANT. Our father's ; woe is me !

ISM. How is this lawful ? Dost thou not perceive ?

ANT. Why hast thou reproved me thus ?

ISM. This too, that —

ANT. What next ?

ISM. He had no grave, but died apart from all.

ANT. Lead me thither, and then slay me as well.

ISM. Ah me ! Unhappy girl ! Where, then, shall I henceforth lead my life of woe, friendless and helpless as I am ?

CHO. Fear not, my daughters.

ANT.¹ But whither am I to flee ?

CHO. Ere this, escape was found² —

ANT. For what ?

CHO. For the fortunes of you twain from calamity.

ANT. I know it.

CHO. What, then, is in thy mind ?³

ANT. I see no way for us to return home.

CHO. Nay, and do not seek it.

ANT. Trouble is our lot.

CHO. Ere this, its heavy hand was on you.⁴

ANT. One while in helpless sort, and otherwhiles e'en worse than that.⁵

¹ Some would assign the following utterances to Ismene rather than to Antigone.

² Reading with Hermann *ἀπέφυγε* AN. *τί* ; XO. *τὰ σφῶν . . .* for MSS. *ἀπεφεύγεται σφῶν . . .* , an emendation now widely adopted (cf. Blaydes' note *ad loc.*).

³ Reading *ὑπερνοεῖς*. So Jebb after Graser. The MSS. *ὑπερνοεῖς* could not mean either "what art thou over-anxious about?" or "what further hast thou in thy thoughts?" as it has been taken by Wunder and Schneidewin respectively.

⁴ Reading *ἐπέιχε* with Wunder for MSS. *ἐπέι*.

⁵ The sense is anything but clear, and not improbably there is some

CHO. Ah, yours has been a mighty sea of troubles !

ANT. Alas, alas ! Whither can we go, O Zeus ? To what hope yet doth Fate now urge me on ?

THE. Cease, maidens, your laments ; for where the favour of the gods below is laid up with the dead,¹ 'tis wrong to mourn ; to do so were to anger Heaven.

ANT. O son of Ægeus, we implore thee !

THE. What boon would ye obtain, my children ?

ANT. We fain would see our father's tomb with our own eyes.

THE. Nay, that may not be.²

ANT. What sayest thou, O sovereign lord of Athens ?

THE. My children, he straitly charged me that mortal foot should ne'er approach yon spot, nor voice invade his holy resting-place. If I observed this hest with care, then should I ever keep the land unharmed. I promised, then, and Heaven heard, and he that noteth all, the god of oaths, who waits on Zeus.

ANT. If this is in accordance with his wishes, then must we rest content. But send us to Thebes, that ancient town, if haply we may yet prevent our brothers' bloody doom.

corruption in the text. Perhaps the meaning is, "Before his death I was helpless enough, now I am quite overwhelmed." Blaydes reads *τάδε δ' ὑπέρφευ* for MSS. *τότέ δ' ὑπερθεν*. Wunder's *ἄπορα* for MSS. *πέρα* is an emendation now generally accepted.

¹ Jebb adopts Reisig's correction, *ξύν ἀπόκειται*, and renders, "is stored up as a common benefit," viz., to Œdipus and the Athenians ; though Reisig himself understood, "where the favour to the land (*χθόνιος*, in sense of *ἐγχώριος* ; cf. l. 948 and Ai. 202) is laid up as a public possession" (cf. the notes of Blaydes and Jebb respectively *ad loc.*). Blaydes reads *ὅσοις γὰρ χάρις ἢ χθονία ξυναποθνήσκει*, "for with all such as have a country's gratitude die with them"—an ingenious re-writing of the line !

² The words *κεῖσε μολεῖν*, which stand after *θεμιτόν* in the MSS., were first rejected as a gloss by Bothe, whose example many editors have followed.

THE. Yea, so I will ; nor must I faint in aught that I can do, as well to serve your ends, as gratify the dead who went from us but now.

CHO. Come, cease your lamentation now ; uplift no more the voice of woe ; for, come what may, these things are safe and sure.

ANTIGONE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANTIGONE.

ISMENE.

CHORUS OF AGED THEBANS.

CREON.

A WATCHER.

HÆMON.

TEIRESIAS, led in by a boy.

FIRST MESSENGER.

EURYDICE.

SECOND MESSENGER.

SCENE.—Before the royal palace at Thebes.

INTRODUCTION.

THE scene of the play is laid before the royal palace at Thebes, where Creon is now king after the death of Ædipus and his sons, Polyneices and Eteocles, who had disagreed as to their respective rights,—Eteocles claiming the sole sovereignty and refusing his brother a share ; whereupon Polyneices, who had meantime allied himself with Argos, by marrying the king's daughter, brings an army, led by himself and six other chieftains, against his native city. In the battle, which follows, the brothers fall by each other's hands, and the Argive host, losing its other leaders also, decamps in haste and fear by night.

It is on the very day succeeding these momentous events that the play opens. Creon, the new monarch, has issued an inhuman decree, that no one, on penalty of death, shall honour Polyneices, the enemy and traitor to his country, with the rites of burial. His body is to lie, where it fell, a prey for dogs and carrion birds ; Eteocles, on the other hand, receives all honour, as the champion of Thebes, who has died in her defence.

It is still early dawn, when Antigone appears before the palace in earnest conversation with her sister Ismene, whom she informs of Creon's decree, and invites her aid in setting it at defiance by burying her brother. Ismene endeavours to dissuade her from the rash attempt, pointing out that such disobedience will only entail fresh suffering for them both,—and surely they have seen enough of that in their family already ; let her remember her sex ; women must not strive with men, or subjects with their rulers ; and, lastly, the dead will pardon them under the circumstances. But Antigone rejects these timid counsels with scorn ; she feels she owes a higher duty to her dead brother

than to the self-willed tyrant ; let Ismene go her own way and consult her safety ; *she*, at any rate, has resolved to do the deed, come what may. Thus the sisters part ; Antigone filled with heroic fortitude, Ismene with weak misgivings for the issue. (ll. 1-99.)

The Chorus, composed of fifteen aged Thebans, then sing an ode of thanksgiving, commemorating the dangers from which their city has just escaped ; while at the same time they ask each other, why Creon has specially convened them now. (ll. 100-162.)

Creon, on entering, explains at some length his views of government ; he will ever honour the just and punish the unjust ; and then reiterates his decree respecting Eteocles and Polyneices. To this the Chorus give a doubting assent, more because he is their ruler than because they feel that he is right in his resolve. (ll. 163-222.)

As they are still conversing, a guard enters, with the news that some one has given burial to the corpse of Polyneices ; no man saw who did the deed, and there is nothing to lead to the detection of the doer. The man endeavours to excuse himself from all blame, and the Chorus even suggest that the gods may have had a *part* and in this mysterious burial. Not so Creon ; he is furious ; is it likely, he asks, that the gods would so honour a man, who sought to overthrow their shrines and ruin his country ? No ! there were *from* the first some in the town who murmured at his rule, and this *is* their doing ; but they shall rue it bitterly ; and so, too, he adds, with awful threats, shall the guards, unless they speedily discover *the* culprits. (ll. 223-331.)

In an ode of singular beauty and power the Chorus dwell upon the all-inventive skill of man ; nothing is too hard for him,— death only excepted ; for all else he finds out a way ; and yet his cunning as often brings him to evil as to good ; from all evil-doers Heaven keep us ! (ll. 332-375.)

The sudden entrance of the guard, with Antigone in close custody, calls forth an expression of surprise from the Chorus, which is not lessened, when Creon is accused of being the burier of the corpse. Creon interrogated in detail, how Antigone was caught, red-handed, in the act of paying funeral honours to her brother. (ll. 376-440.)

On being questioned by Creon's brother, Antigone offers no denial, and

in a speech, which will ever take immortal rank amongst all confessions of a pure and noble faith, she boldly appeals to those unwritten laws of Heaven, which are above all human ordinances. And, as for death, she scorns it ; or rather welcomes such an escape from a life of misery. (ll. 441-470.)

Naturally, the haughty, self-willed tyrant is not disposed to give way to this free-spoken girl. She shall be punished, and her sister too. Antigone makes no attempt to conciliate her enraged uncle ; let him kill her, if he will ; she has done her duty to her brother, and perhaps in the world below a different view will be taken of her deed. (ll. 471-525.)

Meantime Ismene is led in. Creon accuses her of complicity in her sister's crime ; she is willing to be thought guilty, if her sister will permit it ; but Antigone refuses to let her have any share now in the noble deed ; she hung back before, and now her best course will be to consult her own safety, as she did then. Ismene and the Chorus then appeal to Creon to spare Antigone, as the betrothed of Hæmon, his own son ; but he is obdurate, and orders the prisoners to be removed and kept in close confinement. (ll. 526-581.)

Creon's determination to doom both sisters to death leads the Chorus to reflect on the awful destiny, which has pursued the house of Labdacus ; these two children of Œdipus were its last hope, one ray as it were in the darkness,—and now they too are to die a violent death, like all their race. Truly the curse goes on for ever ; none escapes, where it has once fallen. (ll. 582-625.)

These musings are cut short by the entrance of Hæmon. With studied calmness he answers his father's questions ; in all things he is subject to his father's will ; there is nothing he desires more than his father's success. Thus he attempts to mollify the king's bitterness, listening, with due submission, to Creon's long tirade on the evils of disobedience, which he is firmly resolved to put down, at all costs, as a serious danger to the State. (ll. 626-680.)

The Chorus admit the wisdom of their monarch's remarks. Hereupon Hæmon hints to his father the danger he is running by disregarding the secret murmurings of his subjects, who resent the harsh punishment of Antigone, though they dare not openly say so. Again, his father may be mistaken in his severity ; the

wisest are sometimes wrong ; no man should be ashamed of learning from others (ll. 681-723). But neither Hæmon's skilful pleading nor the timid advice of the Chorus have any influence with Creon. What ! is he, at his age, to be dictated to by a mere stripling ?

Hæmon, having failed in his attempt to win his father by calm argument, no longer moderates his language, and hard words pass between father and son ; Creon so far loses his self-control as to threaten to kill Antigone before Hæmon's eyes ; whereupon the latter rushes from the stage, exclaiming that Creon shall see his face no more.

The Chorus express their misgivings ; but Creon disregards their warning, although he goes so far as to remit the sentence on Ismene, whose innocence has been established in the preceding scene. As for Antigone, she shall be buried alive, with just so much food as will avert pollution from the State. (ll. 724-780.)

A short choral ode on the irresistible power of Love brings into prominence the motive, which had prompted Hæmon to brave his father's anger. He may have acted wrongly, but Aphrodite is a goddess none may cope with. (ll. 781-799.)

The piteous spectacle of Antigone on her way to her living tomb, moves even these unemotional elders to tears ; but the only consolation they can offer is to remind her of the fame that will follow her after death. No other mortal has ever passed to Hades thus. It is something for a woman to share a fate, hitherto reserved for those of god-like race ; and, after all, who is to blame but herself ? Her own self-will has proved her ruin.

Thus the Chorus answer Antigone's laments ; until Creon peremptorily orders his decree to be carried out, without any further delay ; and Antigone is led away, expressing a belief that there will be a happy reunion for her with her loved ones beyond the grave, and vindicating her conduct to the last. (ll. 800-943.)

The sad fate of Antigone, now passing to her doom, reminds the Chorus of the fate of some other royal sufferers, and they recount the cruel punishments meted out to Danae, Lycurgus, and Cleopatra, who were all of royal descent. (ll. 944-987.)

As they are ending their choral chant, Teiresias, the blind prophet of Thebes, is led in by a boy. To Creon's inquiries, the prophet answers with words of solemn warning : there is danger threatening the city ; the gods will not vouchsafe their seer any answer to his auguries or burnt-sacrifice ; and it is Creon, who is to blame for this ; the gods are wroth at the pollution of their altars by carrion birds and dogs, which have torn the corpse of Polyneices and brought their prey on to hallowed ground ; let Creon relent in time ; pride goeth before destruction ; it is for his king's good the prophet speaks. (ll. 988-1032.)

At these stern words the tyrant's rage breaks out again. Is he to become as merchandise in the hands of a pack of prophets? Teiresias has been bribed by the malcontents in Thebes, and sent to frighten his master into compliance with their wishes ; but they shall never succeed ; no ! not though the eagles bear their carrion meal even to the throne of Zeus ; and let Teiresias beware how he prostitutes his art for lucre's sake. (ll. 1033-1047.)

Teiresias, in turn, warns the king to beware of evil counsel ; and at last, stung to retaliate by the unworthy accusations brought against him, he pronounces on the blinded monarch the doom which is overhanging him. "Yet a little while, and Creon shall hear the voice of lamentation in his own house for one of his own flesh and blood ; because he has deprived the dead of rites due to them, and set himself above a higher than earthly justice." (ll. 1048-1090.)

With these terrible predictions the old seer quits the stage in anger ; and the Chorus, realizing to the full the gravity of the situation, remind the king that the prophet has never proved false hitherto, and urge immediate compliance. "Let Antigone be set free at once, and burial given to the dead." Creon, too, is startled, and consents to yield ; he will go himself and undo the evil he has begun ; his heart misgives him ; he may, after all, have been in the wrong. (ll. 1091-1114.)

The Chorus, overjoyed at the prospect of a happy ending to these sad family troubles, break out in a glad hymn, commemorating the worship of the god Dionysus in his favourite city, Thebes (ll. 1115-1154) ; but their brief joy only serves to deepen the feelings of sorrow evoked by the news, which a

messenger shortly afterwards announces. He tells a tale of death ; and the living are to blame for it. Hæmon is dead, slain by his own hand. The prophet's words are already proved true (ll. 1155-1179). As the man is still answering the questions of the Chorus, Eurydice, the wife of Creon, and the mother of Hæmon, appears, having overheard the messenger's announcement. She demands to know more fully what has happened.

The messenger thereupon describes how he went with his master to bury Polyneices ; and, this done, how they sought the tomb in which Antigone was immured, only to find themselves too late. The maiden had hung herself, while Hæmon in despair had flung himself upon her body. When Creon saw the piteous sight, he called to his son to come forth ; but the boy, mad with rage and sorrow, sprang at his father with drawn sword, and, missing him, plunged the steel into his own heart, and fell in the death-agony by his betrothed. (ll. 1180-1243.)

After she has heard all, Eurydice re-enters the palace without a word. The messenger and the Chorus bode no good from this unnatural silence, and the former enters the palace to learn her intention. (ll. 1244-1256.)

He is still absent, when Creon is seen approaching with attendants carrying the corpse of Hæmon, and mourning his own infatuation. (ll. 1257-1276.)

In the midst of the father's agony, the messenger enters a second time and announces the death of Eurydice. She has stabbed herself at an altar in the palace ; and, as he is speaking, the doors of the palace open, and the corpse of the queen is disclosed, for all to see. (ll. 1277-1293.)

Before she died, adds the messenger, pointing to the corpse, she cursed her guilty husband. Creon's cup is now full. He implores some friendly hand to end his miserable life ; the guilt is all his ; he knows it now, too late ; henceforth life is but as death to him ; would that his last day were come !

The Chorus counsel resignation. There is no escape for mortal man from the woe appointed him ; and, with this chill comfort, his servants support the king from the stage, as the Chorus chant once more the solemn lesson of the play : "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (ll. 1294-1353.)

ANTIGONE.

ANT. Ismene, sister mine, by blood my own dear twin, of all the ills that date from CEdipus, dost thou know one, that¹ Zeus doth not fulfil for thee and me, whilst yet we live? Nay, nought is there of agony or bane,² no shame nor outward slight these eyes have not beheld amongst our mutual sorrows.

And now, what is this fresh decree they say yon chief of ours hath but just issued to all the burgher folk? Dost know thereof at all? Hast heard of it? or art thou not aware, that mischief of our foes' devising is coming on our friends?

ISM. To me, Antigone, hath come no news of friends, joyous or sorrowful, since the day that thou and I were reft of our two brothers, slain both of them the self-same day by double stroke; and since the Argive host hath fled this night just past, I know nought further, whether my fortunes are mending or plunging into deeper ruin.

ANT. Full well I knew it; wherefore I was for leading

¹ Reading ἄρ' οἴσθ' ὅ τι. Others, reading ὅτι, understand "knowest thou that ...," and take ὁποῖον οὐχί as equivalent to a periphrasis for "every."

² Porson's conjecture, οὐτ' ἄτης ἔχον, gives what is probably the sense of this phrase, and is adopted here for that reason. None of the numerous attempts to extract a meaning from the traditional reading οὐτ' ἄτης ἄτερ are at all satisfactory.

thee forth outside the courtyard gates, that alone thou mightest listen.

ISM. What news? Thy looks betray some troublous tidings seething in thy breast.

ANT. Aye, truly; our brothers twain,—their burial,—hath not Creon honoured one, the other treated with disdain? Eteocles, they say, he hath buried 'neath the earth with due observance¹ of right and custom, an honoured guest among the dead below; but, as for Polyneices, hapless corpse, a proclamation, so they say, to all our citizens forbids that any bury him or wail for him. "Leave him," it says, "unwept, without a tomb," a welcome prize for carrion birds, to gorge their fill, when they look down on him.

This, I hear, is what our worthy Creon hath proclaimed for thee and me,—for me, yes, *me*; and he is coming hither to proclaim it clearly to such as know not of it, nor deems he this a matter of small import; but whoso does aught of what he has forbidden, for him a public death by stoning is ordained.

There, thou hast it! and soon wilt thou be showing whether thou art bravely bred, or a poor scion of a gallant stock.

ISM. If this be so, O rash of heart, what good could I do by loosing or tightening the knot?

ANT. Bethink thee; wilt thou share my toil, and help me do the deed?

ISM. Describe the kind of risk: pray, what is thy intent?

ANT. Wilt thou help this feeble arm to lift yon corpse?

ISM. What! dost thou mean to bury him, the thing our city is forbidden?

ANT. Of course I do; he is my brother, yea, and thine,

¹ Adopting the brilliant emendation of Gerh. Müller and Professor Jebb, *σὺν δίκῃς χρήσει*, for the unintelligible *σὺν δίκῃ χρησθεῖς* of the MSS. Another conjecture is *προθείς* for *χρησθεῖς*, "after laying out for burial." Many editors, after Wunder, reject line 24 altogether.

though *thou* refuse thy aid. Never will I be found a traitress to him.

ISM. Rash girl! when Creon hath forbidden it?

ANT. Well, 'tis no affair of his to keep me from mine own.

ISM. Ah! sister mine, consider how our father died, a scorned and hated outcast, driven, by sins he had himself detected, to stab both eyes himself with self-directed blow; then she that was both mother and wife, a double title, did outrage on her life with twisted noose; and, thirdly, our brothers twain, on one day, brought to pass their common doom by one another's hands, slaying each the other, hapless pair. Now comes our turn; we two left all alone, think how we shall die, most pitiably of all, if we defy the law and go beyond what kings decree or can enforce. Nay, this should be our guiding thought: weak women were we born, not meant to fight with men; and next we are the subjects of a stronger power, to hearken alike herein, aye, and in things yet harder than these. So I shall yield obedience to the powers that be, craving forgiveness of the dead, since I am forced to this; for meddling overmuch shows senselessness.

ANT. I will not bid thee do so; nor, if hereafter thou shouldst feel the wish, should I welcome aid of thine. Nay, play the part thou thinkest best; but I will bury him; 'twere good for me to die in doing that. I shall be laid to rest with him, my loving heart with his, my sin a saintly act; 'tis longer I must please the dead than those who still are here; for *there* shall I find a rest for aye. For thee, if so thou wilt, show thy contempt for that, which God hath honoured.

ISM. Dishonour that! not I; but defy my fellow-citizens I cannot; 'tis not my nature.

ANT. Make that thy excuse, but I will go at once to heap a tomb above a brother very dear to me.

ISM. Ah me, poor sister! How I fear on thy account!

ANT. Fear not for me; set thy own fortunes straight.

ISM. Well, then, at least declare not this thy scheme to anyone ; hide it in secret, and I will do the like.*

ANT. Oh, denounce it ! Thy silence will make me hate thee far more, if thou proclaim this not to one and all.

ISM. A hot heart thine for a chill emprise !

ANT. Nay, I know that I please those, who have the greatest claim on me for this.

ISM. Yes, if thou shouldst have the power as well ; but 'tis impossible, thy wish.

ANT. Well, well ; whene'er I can no more, I'll cease at once.

ISM. Better to leave the impossible untried to start with.

ANT. Say that, and I shall hate thee, and hateful wilt thou ever be to the dead, and justly. Leave me and the crooked counsels I harbour, to suffer this terrible fate ; nought that I shall suffer will be so bad as dying in disgrace.

ISM. Well, go thy way, if thou art thus resolved ; yet be assured, that though thy going is unwise, thou art to thy dear ones truly dear.¹ (*Exeunt ANTIGONE and ISMENE in different directions.*)

CHO. Ray of sunlight, fairer beam than ever shone before on Thebes, the town of seven gates, at last hast thou appeared, O eye of golden day, risen over Doice's streams, driving in headlong rout with hastier rein the warrior with the white shield,² who came forth from Argos in full array. Forth against our land he set, because of the wrangling quarrels of Polyneices ; shrill as an eagle screaming, he swooped into the land across our borders, covered with pinion snowy white, and, with him, hosts of men in mail, with plumèd helmets upon their heads.

Above our roofs he stayed his course ; with murderous spears he fenced our seven portals round about, agape for

¹ Others render "a true friend to thy friends," *i.e.* to Polyneices ; but it is more pointed, if understood as a parting assurance of Ismene's unchanged affection.

² White was the Argive colour, their round shields being painted white.

blood; then went his way or ever he had gorged his jaws with blood of ours, or flaming brands of pine had seized upon our coronal of towers; so loud, so grim the battle-din that rose about his back, a hard tussle for him, who was pitted against the dragon.¹

For Zeus doth hate exceedingly the vaunts of swelling lips, and soon as he espied them drawing nigh in mighty flood, with proud defiant pomp of clanking gold, he brandished his levin-bolt and smote him² who was just hastening to raise the shout of victory upon our very battlements.

One swing, and on the earth he fell,—the earth that beat him back again; the torch was in his hand; he who, a moment gone, rioting in mad onset, was belching blasts of most tempestuous hate against us. But this matter went otherwise;³ while upon others the mighty god of war, dealing his crushing buffets, was meting out to each his doom, a sturdy champion for us.

For seven chiefs at seven gates, ranged against an equal number, left to Zeus, who routs the foe, the tribute of their brazen harness, all save two,—that hapless pair, sons of the same sire and mother, who set against each other their two victorious spears, and have alike a share in mutual death.

But since Victory, great and glorious, is come with joy responsive to the joy of chariot-loving Thebes, turn we forthwith from these our recent wars and cause forgetfulness thereof, and let us visit every temple of the gods with dances lasting all night, and may the Bacchic god, who makes the Theban land to reel, be our leader.

¹ The *δράκων* is Thebes, as the *αἰετός* is Argos.

² Capaneus, an Argive leader, struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus for his impiety, as he was just scaling the walls of Thebes.

³ εἶχε δ' ἄλλα τὰ μὲν, ἄλλα δ' ἐπ' ἄλλοις. κ.τ.λ. So Erfurdt, whom Jebb follows. Others read, εἶχε δ' ἄλλα μὲν ἄλλα τὰ δ' ἐπ' ἄλλοις, "things went differently in different parts, and again on others"...

But lo! where Creon comes, the son of Menœceus, sovereign of the land, newly¹ set over us by Heaven's new dispensations; what counsel, pray, is he revolving, that he hath thus proposed a special session of the elders, sending us notice of it by general proclamation?

CRE. Sirs, Heaven hath safely righted the ship of our state again, after tossing it on stormy billows; and I have sent for you hither by messengers,—you of all my subjects apart,—first, because I knew that ye ever had a loyal regard for the sceptred power of Laius; then again, when Œdipus was guiding our city's course aright, and after his ruin, I found you still firm and constant in your feelings towards the children of that line.² Now, since they have perished in one day by twofold doom,—polluted each by brother's blood, dealing blow for blow,—'tis I who henceforth hold all sceptred sway, by virtue of the nearness of my kinship to the dead.

Now to really know the soul, the thoughts, and judgment of any man is impossible, till he hath proved himself on the touchstone of office and law-giving. For to my mind, whoso cleaveth not to the best counsels, when a whole city is in his control, but through some fear keepeth his words locked up, is and ever has been the sorriest of knaves; and whoso thinketh a friend is to take his country's place and rank before her, him I make of no account. For I,—so help me Zeus, whose eye is ever over all!—I would not hold my peace, if I saw ruin threatening the citizens in the place of safety, nor ever deem the country's foe a friend of mine, knowing, as I do, that it is she who keeps us safe, and that we make us friends indeed, only when she carries us on even keel.

¹ Some word equivalent to ἄρχων in meaning and scansion seems to have dropped out of the text before νεοχμός.

² κείνων παῖδας seems to embrace the whole race of Laius, viz. Œdipus as well as his sons Eteocles and Polyneices.

Such are my laws for increasing this city's greatness ; and of a piece with these is the proclamation I have now made to the citizens respecting the sons of Œdipus : " Bury Eteocles," I said, " and o'er his grave pay all those holy rites, which go down to heroes after death ; for he died in battle for this city, first in all valiancy of arms. But as for his brother,—that is, Polyneices,—who returned from exile and would have utterly destroyed with fire the land of his fathers and the gods of his race,—who would have drunk of the blood of his kin, and have led the rest of us away as slaves, let no one honour him with a grave or mourn for him, but leave him unburied, his corpse a prey to dogs and kites, outraged thus for all to see." So ran the proclamation to this city.

So am I minded ; and never, by any deed of mine, shall knaves take honoured rank before the righteous ; but whoso is well disposed to this city shall have honour of me alike in life and death.

CHO. Such is thy pleasure, Creon, son of Meneceus, as regards¹ the foe and friend of Thebes ; doubtless it is in thy power to have any law thou wilt, both respecting the dead and all of us who still survive.

CRE. Take heed, then, that ye look to my commands.

CHO. On some younger back impose this burden.

CRE. Well, but I have provided men to watch yon corpse.

CHO. Pray, then, what further orders wouldst thou now be giving ?

CRE. That ye give not in to those who seek to disobey herein.

CHO. There is none so foolish as to fall in love with death.

¹ Jebb adopts Dindorf's simple correction *καὶ* for *καί*. Others would displace *Κρέον* as a gloss and substitute an infin., e.g. *παθεῖν*. It is perhaps enough to regard the sentence merely as a bold construction *κατὰ σύνεσιν*, and make no alteration.

CRE. Aye, truly, that will be their wage ; still, gain hath oft ere now been men's ruin from the hopes it raises.

WAT. I will not say, my king, that I come out of breath from haste, nimbly stepping out. No ; I had thoughts that often made me stop, and oft upon the way I turned me round to beat retreat ; for my heart kept up a ceaseless talk with me, " Poor wretch, why seek a goal, where punishment awaits thee ? " " What ! loitering again, thou sorry knave ? " " If Creon learns this from another, wilt thou not rue it, prithee ? "

Thus I turned the matter over and went on my way with slow reluctant steps ;¹ and thus my journey, short as it was, grew long. At last, however, this thought prevailed,—to come hither and tell thee ; and though there be nought in my story, yet will I tell it ; for I come with this hope tightly grasped, that I shall suffer nought but destiny.

CRE. What is it causes thee this despondency ?

WAT. First I wish to tell thee my share in the matter : I did not do the deed nor did I see who did ; so I cannot fairly come to any harm.

CRE. A right good aim thou art taking, and cleverly dost thou fence thyself off from the matter on every side ; thou art clearly the bringer of some strange news.

WAT. I am, indeed : dangers cause a man to hesitate long.

CRE. Come, tell thy tale at last, and then get thee gone.

WAT. Well then, this is what I have to tell thee. Some one hath lately buried yonder corpse and gone his way, after sprinkling thirsty dust upon the skin and performing all the needful rites.

CRE. What dost thou say ? What man was he, who dared this deed ?

¹ Reading *σχολῶ βραδύς* with the MSS., which is more forcible than any of the conjectures, *e.g.* *σπουδῶ βραδύς* (Seyffert), " with leisurely speed," or the Schol's variant *σχολῶ ταχύς*.

WAT. I know not ; there was no stroke of pick yonder, no earth thrown up by mattock, but the ground was hard and dry, no break therein nor any mark of chariot-wheels ; nay, he, who did the deed, was one who left no trace. And when the first day-watcher showed it to us, amazement seized on all to their distress. For the corpse had disappeared from sight ; not buried in a tomb, 'tis true, but over it was a thin layer of dust, as one might strew, who would avoid pollution. No signs were there to view of any savage beast or dog having approached or torn him. Then was there a muttering of evil words amongst us, guard reviling guard ; and there would have been blows at last, nor was there any to prevent it ; for every one in turn was the doer, without any being proved so, but each shrunk from the knowledge of the deed.¹ And we were ready even to take red-hot iron in our hands, to walk through fire, and to swear by the gods that we had not done it nor were privy to any man's plan or deed. At last, when nothing came of our inquiry, one spake whose words made all of us bend our heads to the ground in terror, for we could not answer him, nor, if we did his hest, saw we our way to a happy issue. What he said was this : this thing must be reported to thee, not hidden. And this advice prevailed,—I being the luckless wretch condemned by lot to receive this stroke of luck. Unwillingly am I here before unwilling hearers,—that I know ; for none welcomes a messenger of evil tidings.

CHO. Long, O king, have I heard the voice within me debating, whether this deed is haply of Heaven's own doing.

CRE. Cease, ere thou e'en fill me with rage by thy words, lest thou be found a fool with thy old age. For thou sayest what is intolerable, in saying that gods take thought

¹ ἔφευγε. There may be an allusion to the technical sense, "pleaded in defence that he knew not of it," as Jebb explains it, but this seems less likely in the mouth of an uneducated fellow like the φύλαξ.

for yonder corpse. Were they bent on burying him, doing him special honour as a benefactor,—a man that came to fire their columned fanes, their treasures, and their land, and scatter law and order to the winds? or dost thou see gods honouring the wicked? It is not so. Nay, but long ere this even, there were fellows in the town muttering thus at me in discontent,¹ shaking their heads in secret, nor kept they their necks beneath the yoke, as was right they should, in such wise as to bear with me.² 'Tis thanks to them, I know full well, that these men have been led astray by bribery to do this deed. For no evil like money has ever grown current amongst mankind; it is this that causes the sack of towns; this that makes men leave their homes; this that schools so well men's honest hearts and makes them swerve to set themselves to deeds of shame; and it hath shown men how to deal in acts of villainy, and to know all godlessness.

Now, as many as have done this deed for pay, have worked out their own certain doom sooner or later. If Zeus, that is, still wins his reverence from me, be well assured of this,—and on my oath I tell it thee;—unless ye find the actual author of this burial and display him before mine eyes, death alone shall not be punishment enough for you, but first shall ye be hung up alive, till ye have revealed this outrage, that henceforth ye may seek your plunder with the knowledge, whence to get your gain, and may learn that it is wrong to love lucre from every source. Yea, for thou wilt see more men ruined than saved by their ill-gotten gains.

WAT. Wilt thou let me say a word, or am I to turn and go e'en thus?

CRE. Canst thou not see, that, as it is, thy words vex me?

¹ Joining *ταῦτα* with *ἐρρόθουν*; otherwise with *μόλις φέροντες*, "chafing at this decree."

² Or, "so that I should be content."

WAT. Is it in thine ears or in thy heart thou feelest the sting?

CRE. Why dost thou define where I am pained?

WAT. It is the culprit, who vexes thy heart; I, thine ears.

CRE. Oh! it is all too clear, that thou wert born to prate.¹

WAT. At any rate I never did this deed.

CRE. And what is more thou hast betrayed thy life for a price.

WAT. Alas! 'Tis surely monstrous for a man, who *must* have fancies, to have false fancies too.

CRE. Refine then on those "fancies;" but unless ye show me the culprits, ye shall confess that traitors' gains work woe.² [Exit CREON.

WAT. Most certainly may he be found! But whether he is caught or not—chance will see to that—thou ne'er wilt see me venturing here again; for even now I have been preserved beyond my thoughts or expectation; wherefore I owe the gods much thanks. [Exit WATCHER.

CHO. Many wondrous things there be and none more wonderful than man; his the art that goeth e'en across the foam-flecked sea before the stormy south, making his way, deep in the trough of hungry billows; and Earth, the highest of the gods, that wasteth not nor waxeth faint, he wears out for his use, turning up the soil with teams of horses,³ as the ploughs go to and fro, year in, year out. And in the meshes of his nets he snares and takes the flocks of blithesome birds, the tribes of savage beasts, and ocean's brood that swims the sea, with man's exceeding subtlety; and he has

¹ For *λάλημα* some, following a hint of the Schol, read *ἄλημα*, "a clever rogue," but this suits Creon's utter contempt for the man less well.

² Reading *δειλά*; but *δεινά* is found in L, the best MS., and may be defended as "those clever gains of yours," in an ironical sense.

³ *ἰππείῳ γένει* is understood by Jebb and Campbell as "the offspring of horses," *i.e.* mules, but their reasons are not convincing.

means to master the beast of the wilds, whose way is on the hills ; yea, and he tameth the horse of shaggy mane, putting a yoke upon his neck,¹ and the bull that roams the heights untired.

Speech too hath he taught himself, and thought, whose course is as the wind's, and all that prompts to lead a social life ;² the way likewise to shun the nipping frost beneath the open sky, cruel to face without a roof, and the lash of the driving rain ; for all he hath resource ; nought that is to be finds him ever void thereof ; from death alone shall he secure no escape ; but he hath contrived him means of rescue from perplexing sicknesses. Possessed of a certain cunning in the inventiveness of his art, beyond all hope he reaches, now a good, and now an evil goal ; when he honours³ the laws of the land and Heaven's justice,⁴ which he swears to obey, high in his state he stands ; while he, who doth consort with sin, to humour some bold whim, is left without a city. May he, who doth⁵ these things, ne'er sit beside my hearth nor share my thoughts !

(ANTIGONE *is led in by the watcher.*) Lo ! a strange and wondrous sight ; I look at it and doubt ; how can I gain-say that this is the maid Antigone, when I know 'tis she ?

Hapless child of hapless sire, e'en of Œdipus ! what means this ? It cannot surely be, that *thou* didst disobey

¹ ὀχμάζεται ἀμφὶ λόφον ζυγῶν is the conjectural reading adopted by Jebb after Schöne and Donaldson for the MS. reading ἔξεται ἀμφιλοφον ζυγόν, which is unmetrical. Schütz's conjecture ἐφέζεται would also satisfy metre and sense.

² Or, "the tempers of civic life."

³ Reiske's conjecture γεραίρων is regarded by Jebb as a certain correction of MS., παρείρων, which is explained as "weaving the laws into his life's web," a bold metaphor to say the least of it. Other conjectures are παραιρῶν, which gives a very harsh meaning, τ' αἰείρων, γὰρ αἰρων, etc.

⁴ Or, "justice he has sworn by the gods to observe."

⁵ Reading ἔρδει with L, *not* ἔρδοι, which is an unnecessary correction.

the king's decrees, and that they have caught thee in thy folly and are bringing thee hither?

WAT. This is she, the doer of the deed; we caught her burying him. But where is Creon?

CHO. See him retracing his steps from the palace in good time.

CRE. What news? With what event is my appearance timed so well?

WAT. There is nought, O king, that men should swear they will not do; for second thoughts give their resolve the lie. Why, I could have vowed it would be long enough, ere I came hither again, thanks to those threats of thine, whose fury just now burst on me; but the joy, that goes outside all hope, and far beyond it, in no wise resembleth any other pleasure in greatness, and so I have returned, though I straitly swore I never would, and I bring this maiden with me, who was caught¹ honouring the dead. There was no casting of lots this time; no! this stroke of luck is mine, and no man's else. And now, my liege, take her thyself, question her, and test her well, as thou wilt; but as for me, I have a right to be free and quit of this trouble.

CRE. What! thou bringest this girl? How didst thou take her, and whence?

WAT. It was she, who was burying yon corpse. Thou knowest all.

CRE. Dost thou really understand and rightly express thy message?

WAT. Yea, for I saw this maiden burying the body, to which thou didst forbid burial. Are my words clear and certain?

CRE. How was she seen, and, when detected, caught?

WAT. Thus and thus it came to pass. As soon as we arrived there, under the ban of those dire threats of thine,

¹ The reading *καθηρέθη* rather than MS. *καθευρέθη*, which is apparently a solecism in classical Attic, has been followed by Jebb.

we swept away all the dust, which covered the dead, and, after we had carefully laid bare the clammy corpse, we sat us down to watch from the hill-top, to windward, taking good care that the stench therefrom should not reach us,—each man with wakeful zeal and evil chiding words rousing his fellow, if any should neglect¹ this task. Things went so awhile, even until the sun's bright orb was stationed in mid heaven, and the heat was scorching us; and then, on a sudden, a whirlwind caught up from the ground a squall of dust, which saddened heaven's face, and filled the plain, working havoc with all the leafy woods upon it, and the broad firmament was choked withal; but we shut our eyes, and so endured the heaven-sent plague.

And, when it was over at last, the maid was seen, and she wailed aloud, as it had been the piercing scream of a bird in her agony, what time she finds the covert of the nest empty, robbed of her young; so she, too, when she saw the dead man bare, broke out in wailing cries, invoking bitter curses on the doers of the deed. And straightway she brings in her hands the thirsty dust, and then from well-wrought ewer of bronze, held high, she crowns the corpse with threefold offerings poured. At once, on seeing this, we rushed and made her our prize all undismayed; and then we started to upbraid her with her past and present conduct; but she set herself to deny nought, causing me both² joy and grief. For most joyous though it be to escape from trouble oneself, yet is it grievous to bring one's friends thereto. But all these things are naturally less worth my winning than my own safety.

CRE. (*turning to ANTIGONE*). Thou there,—thou who art

¹ Reading *ἀκηδήσοι*, the conjecture of Bonitz for MSS. *ἀφειδήσοι*, a word which does not mean “be careless of, neglect,” but “be lavish of.”

² Dindorf's correction *ἄμ'* for MS. *ἀλλ'* is considered by Jebb certain. Campbell and others, retaining *ἀλλ'*, are forced to take *καθίστατο* twice.

bending thy face to the ground, dost thou confess or utterly deny this deed?

ANT. I confess I did it; I deny it not.

CRE. (*to the WATCHER*). Thou mayst get thee gone whereso thou wilt, cleared of a heavy charge, and free; (*turning to ANTIGONE*) but as for thee, now tell me shortly—no long speeches—didst thou know,¹ there was a proclamation against doing this?

ANT. I knew it; of course I did; it was known to all.

CRE. And thou wast really bold enough to overstep that ordinance?

ANT. Yea, for I never heard that it was Zeus, who made that proclamation, nor is it that Justice, whose dwelling is with gods below, which ordained such² laws amongst mankind; nor deemed I those decrees of thine of such great power, that mortal man should be able to go beyond the unwritten and unswerving laws of Heaven; for these, I trow, are not to-day's or yesterday's decrees. No! they live on from everlasting, and no man knoweth the date of their appearing. I was not going to answer at Heaven's bar for their transgression, from fear of any *man's* proud will. That I was doomed to death I knew full well—how should I not? e'en though thou hadst issued no decree; and if I am to die before the appointed time, I count that gain. For whoso liveth in the thick of ills, as I do, doth surely gain by death. And so for me to meet this doom is grief of no account; but if dogs had mangled³ the corpse of my own

¹ Reading *ᾗδησθα κηρυχθέντα* with Cobet, an obvious improvement on *ᾗδης τὰ*, which some editors retain, in spite of the very doubtful form *ᾗδης* in classical Attic.

² Jebb follows the brilliant emendation of Valckenaer, *τοιούσδ' . . . ὤρισεν*, for the Vulgate, *οἱ τούσδ' . . . ὤρισαν*. If the latter be retained, *οὐδ'* must couple *Δίκη* with *Ζεὺς*, while *οἱ* must refer to both of these powers.

³ *ᾗσχυναν κύνες*, the conjecture of Semitelos, is adopted in Jebb's text for the *ἰσχόμην* or *ἡνσχόμην* usually read, with *νέκυν* following in the

mother's son, as it lay unburied, that indeed had caused me grief, but for this I grieve not.¹ And if perchance I seem to thee to be acting foolishly herein, it may e'en be from Folly's self that I incur a charge of folly.

CHO. Untamed the maiden shows she is, the offspring of an untamed sire; she hath not learnt to bend to suffering.

CRE. Know this, that wills, which are too stubborn, are abased the most; and thou wilt see the stiffest iron, tempered by fire to utmost stubbornness, most often snapped in pieces; and I have known of restive steeds tamed by a tiny curb; for he may not have high thoughts, who is his neighbours' slave. This girl, e'en then, had learnt the whole art of insolence, when she o'erstepped the laws set forth by me; and, after doing that, behold her second insult—boasting of this and laughing to have done it.

Of a truth, now I am no man, but this maid is, if this victory² is to rest with her unchallenged. No! whether she is my sister's child or nearer in blood³ to me than any who worship Zeus in my own home, neither she nor her sister shall escape the worst of dooms; for truly I count that other equally guilty in this burying for the plotting of it.⁴ Now summon her; I saw her but now in the palace raving and out of her wits; for the mind of those, who are

sense of "had endured," "allowed;" but this is not the meaning of *ἔσχόμην*, and the form *ἠνσχόμην* is impossible in Attic.

¹ Ll. 465-468 are rejected, perhaps on insufficient grounds, by some editors; but apart from the probably corrupt *ἠνσχόμην* or *ἔσχόμην*, satisfactorily emended by Semitelos, there is no very great difficulty, as Jebb has conclusively shown.

² Or, "this authority" which she has usurped. *πίσεται* has also been conjectured, "if this sovereign power of mine is to yield to her."

³ Reading *ὄμαιμονεστέρα*. If *ὄμαιμονεστέρας* is read, translate "child of one nearer in blood to me," merely a rhetorical hyperbole.

⁴ *βουλεῦσαι* is here epeexegetic inf., but it might be dependent on *ἐπαιτιῶμαι*, "I accuse her of having had an equal share in plotting," joining *ἴσον βουλεῦσαι*.

scheming nought but villainy in secret, is oft detected, ere the time, in its stealthy fraud. I hate such folk, 'tis true; but this I hate as well, when one being caught in crime, then seeks to gloss it over.

ANT. Wouldst thou do more than take and kill me?

CRE. For me, I want no more; with that I have my all.

ANT. Then why delay? I find no pleasure in thy words, —God grant I never may!—and so, what I hold, is naturally as distasteful to thee. And yet, whence could I have won a fairer *fame* at least, than by giving my own brother burial? All these would say this pleased them, unless fear were closing tight their lips. Yea, the despot's power, amongst its many blessings, has this as well, it is free to say and do, what it pleases.

CRE. That is *thy* view, and thine only amongst all these citizens of Cadmus.

ANT. 'Tis their view too; but they have fawning, cringing words for thee.

CRE. Art thou not ashamed of holding different views from them?

ANT. No, for there is no disgrace in reverencing one's kith and kin.

CRE. Was not he a brother, too, who fell upon the other side?

ANT. A brother, yes; one mother ours, the self-same sire.

CRE. How is it then thou art honouring a service, that dishonours him?

ANT. That will not be the verdict of the dead man in his grave.

CRE. Indeed it will, if thou honourest him only as much as the ungodly.

ANT. No, for it was no slave of his, but his brother, that fell.

CRE. Aye, wasting this land, while that other stood up to protect it.

ANT. No matter; these are the laws desired by Hades.

CRE. Well, but the good desires not like¹ law with the wicked, as his portion.

ANT. Who knows, if, in the world below, this is not righteousness?

CRE. A foe is ne'er a friend; no! not e'en in death.

ANT. My nature is to share in love, but not in hate.

CRE. Then seek the world below and love those there, if love thou must; for, while I live, no woman shall rule me.

CHO. Behold Ismene yonder before the gates, shedding² tears of sisterly affection; and a cloud upon her brow mars the beauty of her flushing face, dewing with tears her lovely cheek.

CRE. (*as ISMENE is led in*). Thou, who, like a viper, didst lurk within my house, draining my life-blood unseen, and I knew not that I was rearing the pair of you to be my curse and rise as rebels 'gainst my throne, come, tell me at once, wilt thou too confess thy share in this burial, or swear thou didst not know thereof?

ISM. I did the deed,—if she, that is, assents;—I take my share and bear my burden of the blame.

ANT. Nay, that will justice not allow thee, for thou hadst no wish to do it, nor did I admit thee to my counsels.

ISM. Well, but in this distress of thine I am not ashamed to make myself the partner of thy troublous voyage.

ANT. Hades and the dead are witnesses, whose the deed was; a friend who shows her love in words is not a friend I prize.

¹ Reading ἴσους, as suggested by Nauck and adopted by Jebb. Those who retain the MS. ἴσος explain, "the good is not equal to the bad as to his deserts," *i.e.* he deserves better things.

² δάκρυ' εἰβομένη, the correction of Triclinius, is the reading followed.

ISM. O sister, count me not too mean to share thy death and hallow the dead man's grave.

ANT. Share not thou my death, nor claim as thine that in which thou hadst no hand ; enough that I shall die.

ISM. What charm has life for me of thee bereft ?

ANT. Ask Creon ; he is thy one thought.

ISM. Why distress me thus, all to no purpose ?

ANT. Truly it pains to mock thee, if indeed I mock.¹

ISM. What service can I yet do thee, now at any rate ?

ANT. Save thyself ; I grudge thee not a safe escape.

ISM. Ah, woe is me ! and am I then to miss thy fate ?

ANT. Yes, thy choice was for life, mine for death.

ISM. Nay ! not according to the words I left unsaid.²

ANT. Some thought thy judgment good, others mine.

ISM. And yet the sin is alike for both of us.

ANT. Fear not ; thou livest still, but my life hath long been dead, that I might serve the dead.

CRE. As for these maidens twain,—one, methinks, hath lately shown her folly, the other from the day of her birth.

ISM. True, O King ; for the unfortunate ne'er keep e'en the wits that were theirs at birth, but let them stray.

CRE. *Thou* didst, when thou cholest to share their sinful deeds with sinners.

ISM. What life was left me, all alone, without her ?

CRE. "Her" indeed ! nay, name her not ; she lives no more.

ISM. What ! wilt thou slay thy own son's bride ?

¹ Heath's conjecture, *εἰ γελῶ γ'*, for *εἰ γελῶτ'*, is adopted by Jebb as being more in keeping with the spirit of Antigone's words. *εἰ γέλωτ' ἔν σοι γελῶ*, "though I do laugh at thee" (Campbell) seems to be a needlessly cruel taunt.

² *i.e.* in my heart I thought otherwise. Another proposed rendering is, "But not without my having spoken," *i.e.* in protest ; but this seems very weak and pointless.

CRE. There are others, surely, that may bear his children?

ISM. But never such a union of hearts as was theirs.

CRE. I like not wicked wives for sons of mine.

ANT.¹ O Hæmon, my beloved! how thy father slights thee!

CRE. Thou art too tedious,—thou and thy marriage.

CHO.² Wilt thou really take her from thine own son?

CRE. It is Hades, who will end me this match.

CHO. Her death, then, is decreed, it seems.

CRE. Aye, by thee as well as me. (*Turning to his attendants.*) Delay no longer, sirrahs, but take them within! Henceforth must they be women and not range at will; for even the bold are fain to fly, when they see the death-god at last approach their life. (*ISMENE and ANTIGONE are led off by CREON'S attendants.*)

CHO. Happy are they, whose life tastes not of trouble. For all, whose house is shaken by the gods, for them no kind of curse is wanting, as it creeps on from generation to generation; even as when the swell comes coursing o'er the darkling deep, sped by stormy blasts, that blow across the sea from Thrace, it rolls the swart sand from the depths, and the bluff headlands moan and roar in the storm.³

From of old I see the troubles of the house of Labdacus falling on the troubles of its dead, and generation freeth not generation, but one of the gods is hurling them down, and there is no release. For now that gleam of hope in the

¹ Most editors, since Boeckh, follow the Aldine edition in assigning this line to Antigone, though the MSS. give it to Ismene, and such a change adds considerable point and pathos.

² This line and l. 576 are with good reason assigned to the chorus rather than to Ismene.

³ Reading *δυσάνεμοι* with Bergk. Others read *δυσάνεμον* as an epithet of *θίνα*.

halls of Œdipus, which was spread ¹ over its last root, is, in its turn, mowed down before the murderous blade ² of the gods below,—aye, by folly of speech and wild frenzy of heart.

O Zeus, what trespass, done by man, can check thy might? Sleep, that bringeth age to all,³ and the gods' unwearied months ne'er conquer it; but thou dwellest in the radiant brightness of Olympus, its never-aging ⁴ lord.

Both for the days, that soon will be, and for the far off future, e'en as for the past, this law will hold: "in no wise does the life of mortals reach its full measure, free from calamity."⁵

Yea, for Hope, that roams afar, though to many a man it proves a boon, yet to many is it a snare fed by vain desires; and it stealeth on a man, and he knoweth nought of it, till he scorch ⁶ his foot in the fire's heat.

¹ Jebb adopts a suggestion of Hermann's, ὁ τέτατο, rather than ὅπερ-έτέτατο, which was also proposed by the same critic.

² Reading κοπίς, a probable emendation of Jortin for κόνις, which is said to mean, "the dust of death of the gods below is levelling it"—a strange phrase surely.

³ I have preferred to translate the traditional παντογήρως of the MSS. not from any idea that it is the right reading, but because nothing satisfactory has been yet offered. Jebb conjectures πάντ' ἀγρεύων, "the all-ensnaring," and there are many similar emendations.

⁴ Reading ἀγήρως χρόνῳ.

⁵ This passage is corrupt, but how far it is very difficult to say. Any translation must therefore be but tentative. I have read as follows: οὐδέν ἔρπει |θνατῶν βίωτος παντελής (?πάμπολυς), which, I believe, gives the required sense. Jebb adopts Heath's πάμπολύ γ' for MSS. πάμπολις, and translates, "Nothing that is vast enters into mortal life without a curse." Campbell, reading ἔρπων with Boeckh, and retaining πάμπολις, has suggested, "coming to the life of mortals as a law of every city, in no way withdrawing from calamity," as a possible meaning. Lange conjectured παντελής as an adverb; and Hartung, adopting this, reads οὐδέν ἔρπειν |θνατῶν βίωτον παντελής.

⁶ προσαύση. The grammarians on this passage explain this word "to move to," "put in;" but the metaphor is probably from a man walking carelessly over ashes, under which the fire is still smouldering.

With wisdom some one once uttered a famous saying :
 “ That which is ill seems good some day to him, whose wits
 God leads to mischief ; and very short is the time he fareth
 out of trouble’s reach.”

Lo ! Hæmon yonder, the last of all thy children. Is it in
 grief he comes for the fate of Antigone, the bride he was to
 wed,—in sore anguish for his cheated hopes of marriage ?

CRE. We shall soon know better than any prophet can
 tell us.

My son, art thou come hither to rave ¹ against thy father
 on hearing the sentence, that shall be accomplished on thy
 plighted bride ? or have I still thy love, whatever I may do ?

HÆ. Father, thine I am ; and thou dost guide me aright
 with wise counsels for my good, and I shall follow them.
 For I will never count ² any marriage a greater prize to win
 than thy good guidance.

CRE. Such, my son, should be thy dearest wish,—to give
 thy father’s will the foremost place in all. Yea, this is the
 burden of men’s prayers, to beget obedient children for their
 heirs, that these may avenge them on their foe to his hurt,
 and honour their friends as much as e’er their fathers did.

But whoso begets unprofitable children, what wouldst thou
 say of him but that he hath begotten troubles for himself and
 for his foes much merriment ? Oh ! never then, my son, for
 woman’s sake cast out good sense ³ at pleasure’s call ; believe
 me, such embraces soon grow cold, whene’er an evil wife
 shares a man’s bed and dwells with him. For what wound
 would rankle more than an evil friend ? Nay, let this

¹ The MSS. reading *λυσσαίνων*, though a solecism, is not an unlikely
 word for Creon in his excited utterances. There is a variant *θυμαινων*.

² Reading Musgrave’s correction, *ἀξιώσεται*, for MSS. *ἀξίως ἔσται*, a
 very plausible correction adopted by Jebb.

³ Reading *φρένας γ’*, the conjecture of Triclinius to complete the
 metre. If the *γε* is taken as emphasizing the whole sentence rather
 than *φρένας* alone, there need be no serious objection to it as a mere
 stop-gap.

maiden go, with loathing and as an enemy, to wed a husband in the halls of Hades. For since I have caught her, and her alone of all the citizens in open disobedience, I will not prove myself a liar to the state;—no! I will slay her. Wherefore let her plaintively appeal to Zeus, the kinsmen's god; for if indeed I am to nurse rebellion amongst my own kith and kin, most surely shall I do so with strangers.

He, who is honest in what concerns his home, will prove his justice also in the State; but whoso transgresseth either, wresting the laws or thinking to command those who are in power, can win no praise from me. Nay, but whomso a city setteth up, he is the man to obey, both in small things and in just, as well as in their opposites; and I should feel confident that this obedient man would be a good ruler no less than a good and willing subject, and in battle's stress would keep his post, a comrade staunch and true to have beside one.

But there is no greater evil than lawlessness. 'Tis this that ruins states, this that brings houses to ruin; this that breaks up allied¹ hosts and throws them into flight; whereas, of those whose lives are ordered aright, 'tis obedience preserves the greater number. And so we must defend what is well ordered,² and in no wise be worsted by a woman; for better it were, if it needs must come, to yield our office to a man; so should we escape being called the slaves of women.

CHO. To us thy words appear to have the ring of wisdom, unless we are the dupes of our years.

HÆ. Father, 'tis the gods who implant in man his reason, the best of all things that he hath. I could not say,—and may I never learn the art!—wherein thou speakest not

¹ The conjecture of Reiske and Bothe, *συμμάχων δορός*, is followed. Those who read *σὺν μάχῃ δορός*, render "aiding the battle of the spear," which gives small point.

² Or, "those who order things aright."

aright; howbeit there might also come a good thought to another.¹ In any case my nature prompts me to keep close watch on thy behalf on all men say or do or find to blame. For thy glance strikes terror into a citizen's heart, when words are spoken² which thou wouldst not be pleased to hear; but I can hear their secret whispers, the laments of Thebes o'er this maiden, "dying," as they say, "most shamefully for deeds of fairest fame, and meriting her doom far less than ever woman yet; seeing she would not leave her own brother, when he had fallen on the bloody field, without burial, to be torn by ravening dogs or any carrion bird; doth she not then deserve the choicest honour for her prize?"

So the dark rumour spreads in silence. Now to me, father, there is no more precious possession than thy prosperity. For what better ornament can children have than the fair fame of a prosperous father, or what greater gift can children confer on their sire? then carry not within thy breast one only mode of thought, convinced that thy way of speaking, and none other, is the right one. For whoso deems himself the one wise man, or claims such eloquence and wit as no one else possesses,—men like this, if once exposed, are found mere emptiness.

Nay, but 'tis no disgrace for a man, e'en though he be somewhat wise, to learn many things, and show not too much stiffness. Thou seest how those trees, that bend their heads beside the swollen wintry stream, save each

¹ So Schneidewin. Donaldson and others understand, "yet for another it might be fitting;" but would Hæmon, who wishes to conciliate his father, be likely to make this thrust at him?

² *λόγοις τοιούτοις*. This dative is by no means easy to explain satisfactorily, and has given rise to endless conjecture. Nauck would reject the verse altogether. Dindorf and others suggest the loss of one or more verses after l. 690; while Autenrieth would place it before l. 690, and connect it immediately with the preceding verse. Perhaps the dative is best regarded as causal, lit. "on account of such words."

their branches, while those that strain against it perish root and branch. And, in like manner, he who keepeth the sheet of his ship too taut, without slackening it at all, upsets his craft and voyageth thenceforth with benches upside down. Oh! cease from wrath;¹ admit a change. For if, too, from my younger brain proceedeth aught of sense, methinks it were the best by far, that man should be born with a store of knowledge in all things; but if the scale incline not so—and oft it doth not—'tis good to learn also from those who counsel well.

CHO. My liege, it is right for thee to learn of him, if he speaketh aught in season, and for thee (*to HÆMON*) in turn of thy father; for there hath been good speaking on both sides.

CRE. What! shall I at my age, then, be taught to think by a boy like him?

HÆ. Nothing that is not right; and if I *am* young, thou shouldst look not to my years so much as to my deeds.

CRE. Is it an achievement, then, to honour the friends of disorder?

HÆ. I would never bid any one honour the wicked.

CRE. Is not that the kind of disease, by which this girl is attacked?

HÆ. Every voice in this city of Thebes says not.

CRE. Shall the city tell me how I am to rule?

HÆ. There now! how very like a youth thou hast spoken!

CRE. Am I² to rule this land to please another rather than myself?

¹ Reading *εἶκε θυμοῦ*, which has considerable MSS. authority. Others, retaining *θυμῷ* of L, render, "relent in your mind," or "give place to wrath"; or, placing a comma after *εἶκε*, connect *θυμῷ* with what follows, "yield: let thy wrath also change," a rather harsh asyndeton, unless indeed *διδούς* is admitted.

² Reading *με* for *γε* with Dobree.

HÆ. Yes, for that is not a city, which belongs to a single man.

CRE. Is not the city accounted the ruler's?

HÆ. A fine ruler thou wouldst be—alone in a desert.

CRE. It seems we have here the woman's ally.

HÆ. If thou'rt a woman, yes; for truly all my care is for thee.

CRE. Unnatural wretch, wrangling with thy father!

HÆ. Because I see thee sinning against justice.

CRE. I sinning, because I regard my own authority?

HÆ. Nay, thou dost not so, when thou tramplest on the honours of the gods.

CRE. Degraded nature, lower than a woman!

HÆ. At least, thou wilt never find me too weak to resist disgrace.

CRE. All thou hast said has been for that girl's sake, at any rate.

HÆ. And for thee and me and the gods below.

CRE. Her thou shalt never marry in this world.

HÆ. Then will she die, and, dying, cause another's death.

CRE. Dost go the length of even threatening thus in thy boldness?

HÆ. Where is the threat in speaking against idle designs?

CRE. To thy cost shalt thou teach me wisdom, being void of all wisdom thyself.

HÆ. If thou wert not my father, I would have questioned thy wisdom.

CRE. Seek not thou to wheedle me—thou that art a woman's slave.

HÆ. Is thy wish then to have thy say, and, after that, hear nought?

CRE. Indeed! and is it so? Well, be assured of this; by Olympus yonder, thou shalt not revile me in addition to thy reproaches without ruing it!

(*To his servants.*) Lead forth that hateful creature, that

she may be slain forthwith in his presence, before his very eyes, aye, at her lover's side.

HÆ. At *my* side, no! Never think that! Neither shall she die beside me, nor shalt thou ever set eyes upon my face henceforth, that so thou mayest consort with such of thy friends as will have thee and play the madman¹ there.

[*Exit* HÆMON.

CHO. Yon man, my liege, is gone, sped by anger on his way; the mind at his age is violent in the moment of its grief.

CRE. Let him go, and do or think more than man may! At least he shall not save those maidens twain from their doom.

CHO. But art thou really minded to slay the pair of them?

CRE. No, not her who had no hand in the deed; rightly urged indeed.

CHO. And by what death dost thou mean then to slay Antigone?

CRE. I will lead her to some spot untrodden by step of man, and there will I bury her alive in a rock-hewn chamber, setting before her just food enough for expiation, that the whole city may escape pollution. And there, if she call on her Hades, the only god she honours, craving not to die, maybe she will gain her prayer; ² else will she learn, at this late hour at least, that it is labour thrown away to reverence the dead.

[*Exit* CREON.

CHO. O Love unconquered in the fray, Love, that fallest on men's goods,³ who keepest thy vigil by night on the

¹ The Schol. also recognizes a reading, *μίνης*, for which there is some slight MSS. authority.

² Or, taking *τὸ μὴ θανεῖν* after *τεύξεται*, "will obtain release from death."

³ *ὄς ἐν κτήμασι πίπτεις*. I have adopted the most usual rendering of this strange phrase, the genuineness of which has been doubted by many critics. The following are some of the attempts to explain it (α) "who fallest on wealth," *i.e.* to its destruction; (β) "who by attacking en-

maiden's tender cheeks; to and fro o'er the sea thou roamest, and amid the huts on the country-side; none can 'scape thee, either of deathless gods or mortal men;¹ and he who harbours thee goes mad.

'Tis thou that dost wrest the thoughts of the just into the ways of injustice to their hurt; thou that hast stirred up this strife amongst kinsmen; for love's desire, beaming brightly from the fair bride's eyes, prevails,² throned side by side in power with mighty laws;³ for the goddess Aphrodite mocks man with resistless might.

But now too I myself am carried away to rebel by what I see; no longer can I check my streaming tears at the sight of Antigone, approaching thus that bridal bed where all must sleep.

ANT. Behold me, ye citizens of my fatherland, making that last journey, looking my last on the sun-god's light, which I shall see no more; but Death, who has a bed for all,⁴ is leading me alive to the shore of Acheron, denied all share in marriage-songs, whom no wedding⁵ hymn hath ever graced, to wed with Acheron instead.

slavest," "attackest thy slaves," κτήμασι proleptic. Conjectures are λήμασι and ἔν τ' ἀνδράσι (Dindorf), σώμασι (Blaydes), δώμασι (Meineke), and a host of others. (Cf. Blaydes note *ad loc.* in his edition.)

¹ After ἀμερίων most MSS. have ἐπ', which is taken to mean "in the case of." Jebb, questioning this usage, reads σέ γ' with Nauck and Blaydes.

² *i.e.* The love with which Antigone inspires Hæmon prevails over all feelings of duty to the State or obedience to his father.

³ I have followed Schneidewin's interpretation of these very obscure, possibly corrupt, words, "The charm of love is an assessor of the mighty laws" (inasmuch as together with the moral laws love also exercises a mighty influence over the deeds of men). Blaydes reads ρικᾶ . . . τὸν μεγάλων πάρεδρον ἐν ἀρχαῖς θεσμῶν, "conquers the assessor of great enactments" (*i.e.* the magistrate or legislator), ἐν ἀρχαῖς being regarded by him and Dindorf as a gloss, which indeed it appears to be. Cf. Blaydes, note *ad loc.*

⁴ Perhaps ὁ πάγκοινος should be read, as Blaydes suggests.

⁵ Reading ἐπινύμφειος with Dindorf.

CHO. With glory, then, and meed of praise art thou departing to yon deep chamber of the dead, stricken not by wasting sickness, nor doomed to earn the wages of the sword,¹ but, of thine own free will, shalt thou go down alive to Death,—the only mortal maid that ever hath.

ANT. I have heard, 'tis true, of the most piteous death of that stranger maid of Phrygia, the daughter of Tantalus,² on the heights of Sipylus, round whom the rock, like straining ivy, grew, and mastered her; and as she slowly wastes away—so runs the tale,—nor rain³ nor snow is ever wanting to her, while tears drop from her streaming eyes and bathe her neck;⁴ so Fate is laying me to rest, most like to her.

CHO. But she was a goddess, goddess-born, while we are mortals and of mortal birth. And yet for a perishing maid⁵ 'tis high honour e'en⁶ to have it said, that she has shared the lot of the god-like, in life, and afterwards in death.⁷

ANT. Ah me, I am mocked! By the gods of our fathers, why taunt me ere I go,⁸ while yet I see the light? O my city, O ye citizens of Thebes with all your wealth! Ah, founts of Dirce and thou hallowed soil of Thebes, the city of

¹ *i.e.* The fate of those who draw the sword—the death it deals.

² Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, married Amphion, King of Thebes. Having boasted of her numerous family, and taunted Leto with having two children only, Apollo and Artemis, the children in question, slew all her sons and daughters. Niobe herself was turned into stone on Mount Sipylus, whither she had fled, but even then her tears still flowed.

³ Reading *ὄμβροι* with Musgrave. If MSS. *ὄμβρω* is retained, translate, “the snow ne'er leaves her as she flows down with rain.”

⁴ The words *ὄφρύσι* and *δειράδας* are perhaps intentionally vague, as they may apply either to the human form or to the brow and ridges of a mountain.

⁵ Reading *φθιμένην*, which is favoured by the feminines following.

⁶ Reading *μέγα κάκοῦσαι* with Seyffert.

⁷ This line is rejected by many editors as being pointless and obscure, yet others have defended it.

⁸ Reading *οἰχομένην* with Wunder.

many a chariot, you at least I have to witness for me, how all unwept by friends and by what laws I go to the high-heaped cairn¹ of my strange tomb; ah woe for me! that find no dwelling here with men or there below, none with the living or the dead.

CHO. My child, thou hast had a heavy fall against the towering throne of Justice, in thy headlong career to daring's utmost bounds. Maybe thou art paying the price of an ordeal² thy father bequeathed.

ANT. The bitterest thought I have thou touchest there,—the thrice-told tale of sorrow for my sire and for the fate of all of us, the glorious race of Labdacus. Alas for the curse of a mother's marriage-bed;—a hapless mother sleeping with the son she bore,—and him my sire! Poor maiden I, what parents gave me birth! To them I pass, accursed, unwed, to dwell with them e'en thus. Ah, brother mine! a luckless match³ thou madest; thy death has robbed me of my life.

CHO. To do a reverent act is reverence in a sense;⁴ but he, who has the charge of power, can in no wise see that power transgressed; self-will hath proved thy bane.

ANT. Without a tear, without a friend, without the marriage-song they lead me forth in heaviness, on this journey that awaits me. No more may I behold yon sacred orb, that lights the world; ah me! And not a friend be-moans my fate; it draws no tears.

¹ Reading *ἔρμα* with Hermann. Jebb prefers *ἔργμα*, "a fence," and so possibly "prison."

² Blydes conjectures *πατρῶαν . . . ἄταν* for MSS. *πατριῶν . . . ἄθλον*, but perhaps the vulgate is sound. Donaldson's *ἐκτελείς* for *ἐκτίνεις* would give an easier meaning.

³ Polyneices had married the daughter of Adrastus, King of Argos, and had then marched against his native city Thebes, only to be slain, and by his death involve his sister in the same calamity.

⁴ *i.e.* to have buried a brother was a reverent act, but only partially so, for it led to a breach of obedience to the king's edict.

CRE. (*to his servants*). Know ye not that no man would ever cease his dirges and laments before dying, if he might utter them? Lead her hence at once! and, shutting her up in the vaulted tomb, as I have commanded, leave her there alone, with none to help; whether it be her wish¹ to die or to live entombed in such a home; for we are guiltless as concerns this girl; but come what may, she shall lose all fellowship with those on earth.

ANT. O tomb, O bridal bower, O deep-dug dwelling, my ceaseless warder now, whither I go to those of my kin, those many that are gone from hence, whom Persephone hath welcomed among the dead! Now, last of all, and far more miserably than all, shall I go down to her, ere my term of life is o'er. Yet have I a good hope at heart, that, once there, my coming will please my sire, and be a joy to thee, O mother, and to thee, too, brother mine; for I with mine own hand did wash and deck you after death, and on your tombs I poured drink-offerings; and now, O Polyneices, this is my reward for laying out thy corpse. [² And yet I honoured thee rightly, in the judgment of the wise. Had I been a mother of children, or if my husband had been a mouldering corpse, I would never have defied the citizens and undertaken this task. What law, then, constrains me to say this? Suppose my husband dead, I might have had another, and a child by some other man, if I had lost the first; but, with my father and mother both dead and buried, there can be no brother henceforth born. Such was the law, then, whereby I honoured thee above all, only to seem

¹ Reading $\chi\rho\tilde{\eta} = \chi\rho\tilde{\eta}'\zeta\epsilon\iota$ with Dindorf.

² The passage from l. 904-920 is famous for the amount of criticism it has called forth. Is it the work of Sophocles or an inferior imitator? Both views find numerous exponents. Dindorf rejects from l. 900-928; Lehrs, Wecklein, and Nauck from l. 904-920, and so Jebb; while Boeckh, Bellermann, and Seyffert endeavour to show the genuineness of these verses.

to Creon a sinner herein, and strangely reckless withal, O brother mine. And now is he leading me away, close captive thus, unwed, without the marriage hymn, reft of all share in wedded joys, or the nurture of babes; but thus deserted by my friends, I pass alive to the deep-dug chambers of the dead, a maiden cursed by fate.]

Against what ordinance of heaven have I transgressed? Why need I, poor wretch, look to the gods henceforth? Whom should I call to champion me? since the only fruit of my piety is to be held impious. But if, indeed, these things are fair in Heaven's sight, I will confess I sinned,—after my punishment; but if the sin is theirs, may they suffer no sorer doom¹ than they are e'en measuring out to me, against all justice.

CHO. Still o'er this maiden's soul the self-same tempests sweep, possessing her.

CRE. Wherefore to those, who are leading her hence, shall there be cause to rue this, because of their slowness.

ANT. Ah me! that word came very nigh to death.

CRE. I can no wise console thee into hoping that this doom is not to be confirmed e'en thus.

ANT. O city of my fathers, in the land of Thebes! Ye gods, my ancestors! they lead me hence at once, and that without delay. Look on me, ye that bear sway in Thebes,—the last surviving daughter of a princely line;² behold my treatment, and those who inflict it, for the reverence I paid to piety. (*ANTIGONE is hurried away by CREON'S servants.*)

CHO. Fair Danae,³ too, endured to leave the heaven-sent

¹ *i.e.* neither more nor less.

² Reading βασιλειδᾶν, the correction of Winckelmann and Seyffert for MSS. βασιλίδᾶ. Antigone purposely ignores Ismene as one who deserves not to be regarded as a true child of the Labdacidæ.

³ Danae, the daughter of Acrisius, King of Argos, was kept a close prisoner, because the oracle of Delphi had foretold that Acrisius was to be killed by her son.

light and dwell in a chamber fenced with brass ; and hidden in her tomb-like bower was she imprisoned ; yet she, like thee,¹ my daughter, came of an honoured line, and hers it was to find a treasure-house for the golden rain, which Zeus had quickened.

But strange is the power of Fate, whate'er it be ; nought can escape it ; not wealth² nor warrior's might, not fenced tower nor black sea-beaten ships.

And Dryas' son,³ so quick to wrath, the king of the Edonians, was brought beneath the yoke, by reason of his mocking temper, pent in rocky prison-house by Dionysus. Thus his fearful maniac rage, about to burst, foams itself away.⁴ Too late he learnt to know the god, when in mad fits he would assail him with words of mockery ; for he sought to check the women, god-inspired, and to quench the Bacchic flame ; and he angered the Muses, whose joy is in the flute.

And, by the waters⁵ of the double sea, that flows through the rocks Cyanean,⁶ are the shores of Bosphorus and Thracian Salmydessus, foe to strangers ;⁷ where Ares, whose home is near the town, saw a blinding wound, a blow accursed,

¹ Reading *καίτοι και* with Hermann.

² Reading *ὄλβος* with Erfurdt for MSS. *ὄμβρος*.

³ Lycurgus opposed the worship of Dionysus in Thrace, but the god drove him mad, and his subjects confined him in a cave on Mount Pangæus by the god's advice.

⁴ *i.e.* in this confinement. Others render, "Thus there flows from madness a dire excess."

⁵ For *πελάγειων* of MSS. Jebb conjectures *πελάγει*, which is here followed. Wieseler conjectured *σπιλάδων*, Meineke *τεναγίων* ; but the case is the main difficulty. Those who retain the genitive are forced to translate somewhat doubtfully, "extending from the dark rocks are"...

⁶ The *Κυάνειαι πέτραι* or *Συμπληγάδες* were two small islands at the entrance from the Euxine to the Bosphorus.

⁷ Boeckh added *ἄξενος* after *Θρηγκῶν* to complete the metre. Schütz, *δύσχιμος*.

dealt by a savage wife¹ to the two sons of Phineus, plunging in darkness the orbs of their eyes, that cry for vengeance, smitten² by her murderous hands, armed with the shuttle's point.

And, as they wasted away in misery, they mourned for their piteous fate, being born of a mother unblest in her marriage;³ yet she in her lineage went back to the old Erechtheidæ, and was reared in caverns far away amid her father's blasts—a daughter of the North-wind she—fleet as courser o'er the steep hill-top, a child of the gods; still even upon her, my child, the eternal Fates stretched out their hand.

TEI. (*led in by a boy*). My lords of Thebes, we have shared our journey and are come,—one pair of eyes to serve us twain; for this is how the blind must go, with the aid of a guide.

CRE. What news now, old Teiresias?

TEI. I will tell thee, and do thou obey the seer.

CRE. Well, at any rate, I never swerved from thy counsel before.

TEI. The reason thou didst steer⁴ this city's barque aright.

CRE. I can witness to thy services from experience.

TEI. Beware! Thou standest once again upon the razor-edge of fate.

CRE. What now? How I shudder at these words of thine!

¹ Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas, was married to Phineus, King of Salmydessus, who afterwards repudiated her for Idothea. Cleopatra was imprisoned, and her two sons brutally blinded by Idothea.

² Lachmann's conjecture ἀραχθέντων for MSS. ἀραχθῆν ἐγχείων is followed.

³ *i.e.* because repudiated. Join ματρὸς with γονάν.

⁴ τήνδ' ἐναυκλήρεις. So Jebb after Valckenaer. This reading is preferable; for Teiresias having come to remonstrate with Creon, would scarcely begin by telling him that he is still guiding the State aright. Others retain MSS. τήνδε ναυκληρεῖς.

TEI. Thou shalt hear the signs my art can give, and learn therefrom. Sitting in my old seat to watch the birds,—my place of resort for every wingèd thing,—I heard among them cries I knew not, the scream of birds in direful rage, which none might understand ;¹ and I knew that they were rending one another with their talons in murderous fight, for the whirr of wings told that plainly enough. At once, in fear, I made trial of burnt-offerings at the blazing altar ; but the fire-god would not shine from my sacrifices ; instead thereof a foul clammy moisture kept oozing from the thigh-bones on to the embers, smoking and sputtering ; and the gall was scattered in the air, and the thighs fell away and were bared of their layers of fat.

Thus, as I learnt from this boy, the oracles I sought from baffled rites had failed ; for he is a guide to me, as I to others. And this sickness of the State is owing to thy purpose. For our altars and our hearths are tainted, one and all, by birds and dogs with carrion from yon hapless corpse, the son of Œdipus. And so it is that the gods no longer accept from us the prayers we raise at sacrifice, nor the flame of thigh-bones ; and no bird uttereth shrill cries, which may be interpreted ; for they are gorged with the fatness of a dead man's blood.

Consider these things, then, my son. To err is the common lot of all ; but, the error made, he is no longer void of wit or happiness, who finds a cure, when he hath fallen into trouble, and becomes not stubborn. Self-will, be sure, incurs the charge of brute stupidity. Nay, but relent towards the dead ; stab not a fallen foe ; what valour is it to kill the slain a second time ? Good were the thoughts of my heart to thee, and good are now my words ; and most sweet it is to learn of one who speaketh well, if he speak to thy gain.

¹ For *βεβαρβαρωμένῃ* Wecklein conjectured *βεβαρβαρωμένως*, but the change is unnecessary.

CRE. Old man, ye all aim at me, like archers at a mark ; nor do I even escape the machinations of your seers ; but by the whole tribe of them ¹ I have long been bought and so'd like merchant's wares. Go, drive your bargains ; traffic, if ye will, in your amber from Sardis, your gold from India ; but ye shall not bury yonder corpse ; no ! not though the eagles of Zeus shall rend him and bear the carrion to the Father's throne ; not even so will I, from fear of this pollution, ever permit his burial ; for well I know that none of men hath power to bring pollution on the gods. But even the cleverest of the sons of men, O aged Teiresias, have shameful falls, when, for the sake of gain, they give a specious turn to shameful words.

TEI. Alas ! Is there a man who knows, or any that understandeth—

CRE. Understandeth what ? What is this all-embracing question ?

TEI. —how far the best of all men's gains good counsel is ?

CRE. And thoughtlessness, I trow, their chiefest bane.

TEI. Yet that is the disease, which thou hast caught.

CRE. I have no wish to bandy evil words with my seer.

TEI. The very thing thou dost, in saying I am no true prophet.

CRE. Aye, for your whole race of seers loves lucre.

TEI. And your tyrant's brood is fond of sordid gains.

CRE. Knowest thou that whatever thou sayest is said of those who are thy chiefs ?

TEI. I know it ; for it is through me thou keepest this city safe.

CRE. A wise seer thou, but a lover of wickedness.

¹ τῶν δ' ὑπαὶ γένους, the reading of the MSS. is followed. Others read τῶν as a relative without δ'. Hermann, τῶν δ' ὑπ' ἐγγενῶν, "and by my kinsmen," a view which has found many advocates, each of whom offers some emendation of his own on the same lines.

TEI. Thou wilt rouse me to tell the secrets locked within my heart.

CRE. Unlock them; only speak not with a view to gain.

TEI. And so, indeed, I think I shall ere long, as far as concerneth thee.¹

CRE. Be sure, thou shalt not drive a bargain with my heart.

TEI. Well, know then of a truth that thou shalt not see unto their end many more of the sun's swift revolutions,² ere thou shalt thyself make recompense with one of thine own flesh and blood, dead for dead; because thou hast plunged one from the world above down to the realms below, and³ hast sent a living soul to dwell within the tomb, to its dishonouring; while thou art keeping here on earth a corpse belonging to the gods below,⁴ robbed of its portion in death, blest by no funeral gifts or hallowed rites.

In these⁵ thou hast no part nor have the gods above; but herein hast thou done them violence. For this there lie in wait for thee destroying fiends, that dog the steps of crime, the avengers of Hades and the gods,—that thou mayest be caught in the self-same mischief.

And now reflect, if I was bribed to say these things. Yet

¹ *i.e.* if you go on provoking me, I shall speak, and what I say will not be for gain—as far as you are concerned. Teiresias repeats the words of Creon with grim irony. Others make the line interrogative, “Do I really seem to be now speaking thus in what concerns you?” A third view is, “Indeed I seem to be doing so already as far as you are concerned.”

² *τρόχους* (paroxytone), “revolutions.” So Erfurdt for MSS. *τροχούς* (oxytone) “wheels.” Winckelmann conjectured *ἡλιον τελεῖν*, an easier but not necessary reading.

³ Bothe adopts the reading *κατοικίσας* (aor. part.), and omits *τ'* after *ψυχὴν*.

⁴ Others join *τῶν κάτωθεν θεῶν* with *ἄμοιρον*, “without his share in the gods below.”

⁵ *i.e.* in the dead. Others understand, “in acts like these.”

a little while,¹ and the wailing of men and women in thy house shall prove their truth. And all the cities are in wild commotion, filled with hate of thee,—all to whose mangled sons wild beasts and dogs, or some winged bird maybe, bearing the polluting smell to sacred hearth and home, have paid their burial rites.² Such are the shafts I let fly at thee, like an archer, in my wrath to pierce thy heart, for thou vexest me,—shafts that shall not fail, whose smart thou shalt not 'scape.

Now, boy, lead me home, that this man may vent his rage on younger men, and may learn to moderate his speech, and to carry wiser thoughts within his heart than he now doth. (*Exit TEIRESIAS with his youthful guide.*)

CHO. Yon man is gone, my liege, after uttering dread prophecies; and well I know, that, since the hair that crowns this head of mine hath turned from black to white, he never yet hath uttered falsehood towards the city.

CRE. Myself I know it too, and I am troubled in spirit; for to yield is terrible, and yet to stand at bay and smite my pride with ruin appears as terrible.³

¹ It is more forcible to take these words as parenthetical than to make them the subject of *φανεί* with *κωκήματα* as object.

² *καθήγγισαν* of the MSS. means strictly, "hallowed by giving proper burial to them," the corpse being regarded as a pollution to Heaven as long as it lay unburied. There is a var. lect. *καθήγισαν*, "devoted to the gods below by funeral rites." Either word might be used with a grim irony of what had actually happened to the unburied corpses. Dindorf and Wunder get rid of a difficult passage by rejecting ll. 1080-1083.

³ *ἄτη πατάξαι θυμὸν ἐν δεινῷ πάρα*. So MSS. The sense is tolerably certain, but the Greek is strange. Many corrections are offered, but none are very tempting. Blydes suggests *ἄτη πατάξαι ἄμαντὸν αὐτοῦ δεινοῦ πέρα*, "to smite myself with a curse is, on the other hand, worse than terrible." Musgrave had also proposed *πέρα*. To understand *ἐν δεινῷ πάρα*, "presents itself to me in a terrible form," *i.e.* is a terrible alternative, is very harsh, though it is difficult to see what else it could mean in this passage, if it is genuine.

CHO. Son of Menœceus, there needs good counsel for thy choice.¹

CRE. What, then, must I do? Tell me; I will hearken.

CHO. Go and set the maiden free from her chamber in the ground, and bury the corpse that lies yonder.

CRE. Is this really thy advice? wouldst have² me yield?

CHO. Yea, O king, and as soon as may be; for swift mischief, sped by gods, cuts short the foolish-minded.

CRE. Ah me! it costs a struggle; yet I resign what my heart was set on, and will do so; for I must not wage a hopeless war against necessity.

CHO. Go then and do so; entrust not this to others.

CRE. Even as I am, will I go. On, on, my servants, both those that are here and those that are not! take axes in your hands, and start to the place ye can see. For, since my views have veered this way, I will be there to loose her myself, even as I bound her.

Yea, I have my fears; 'tis best, maybe, throughout our life to keep the established laws. (*Exit CREON with his servants.*)

CHO. O thou of many names,³ glory of a Theban maid, begotten of Zeus, the mighty thunderer! O thou who keepest watch and ward o'er famous Italy,⁴ and rulest in

¹ It is doubtful whether λαβεῖν or Κρέον should be read here; the best MS. L has λαβεῖν, which is therefore followed.

² Jebb conjectures δοκεῖ for MSS. δοκεῖς, "does it seem good to you?" pointing out that δοκεῖς could only mean, "art thou minded to yield?"—a question Creon could only have put to the Chorus, if they had hitherto completely identified themselves with his counsels, which was not the case.

³ Dionysus, the son of Zeus and Semele.

⁴ Some have preferred to read Ἰκαρίαν, the name of an Attic deme; but the mention of Italy, the home of so many Greek colonists, in an ode commemorating the wide-spread worship of the god, is by no means out of place; and perhaps Ἰταλίαν, the old reading, may be right.

the dells of Eleusinian Deo,¹ to which all pilgrims throng !
O Bacchus, who dwellest in Thebes, the mother city of thy votaries, beside Ismenus' liquid tide,² on the tilth where the fierce dragon's teeth were sown !

Above the rock with double crest,³ amid the glare of fire-lit smoke dost thou appear, where is the haunt of Nymphs Corycian, thy followers, and there the stream of Castaly. Forth on thy way they send thee,—the slopes of Nysa's⁴ hills, with ivy clad, and the strand that is green with clustering grapes,—amid the glad chanting of strains divine, a visitant to Theban streets.

Thebes, of all cities, thou honourest first, as did thy mother, whom the lightning slew ;⁵ and now, when all the folk of Thebes are holden by a sore complaint, O come with healing foot over the slopes of Parnassus or across the moaning firth !⁶

O thou that ledest choirs of stars with their fiery breath ;⁷ lord of the voices of the night ;⁸ true son of Zeus ; appear, O prince,⁹ with the Thyiads in thy train, who wildly

¹ *i.e.* Demeter.

² Jebb omits ω before *Βακχεῦ* with Hermann, reads *βαιετῶν* for *βαίων* with Dindorf, and conjectures *ὕγρον . . . ῥεῖθρον τ'*.

³ The *Φαιδριάδες*, two very striking cliffs above Delphi, under the shadow of Parnassus. It was popularly believed that fires could be seen in rapid motion on the mountain by night—the torches of the Bacchanals as they danced with Dionysus.

⁴ Nysa in Eubœa.

⁵ Semele prayed Zeus to visit her as he appeared to Hera. He complied, and she perished in his lightnings, her babe Dionysus being miraculously preserved by the god.

⁶ The Euripus between Eubœa and Bœotia.

⁷ Reading *ἰὼ πῦρ πνειόντων χοράγ' ἄστρων, νυχίων . . .* Brunck altered *πνειόντων* into the epic form to heal the metre ; and this is the simplest change proposed.

⁸ *i.e.* the cries of his votaries in their revels by night.

⁹ Reading *προφάνηθ' ὠναξ* with Bergk for *προφάνηθι, Ναξίαις* of L. It is true, Naxos was associated with the worship of Dionysus, but there

dance the livelong night, in honour of thee, their master Iacchus!

MES. O ye who have your dwelling by the palace of Cadmus and Amphion, there is no kind of human life that I would ever praise or blame in its present state.¹ For Fortune exalts and Fortune brings down the scale from day to day, alike for the prosperous and the wretched, and none can prophesy to mortals of their present state. Creon, for instance, was once a man to envy, as I thought; for he had saved this land of Cadmus from its foes, and was ruling the realm with sole and undivided sway, a prosperous king with noble offspring. And now all this is lost; for when a man has let his pleasures go, I count him not a living man; but as a corpse endued with breath I hold him.² Aye, hoard great stores of wealth in thy house, if thou wilt, and live with all a monarch's show; still, if gladness hold aloof therefrom, I would not pay the shadow of a breath of smoke to any man for all the rest, compared with joy.

CHO. What new sorrow now, affecting our rulers, art thou come to tell?

MES. There's death amongst them; and the living are to blame for it.

CHO. And who is the slayer, who the slain? Tell me.

MES. Hæmon is dead; his blood is on a kinsman's head.

would be no point in calling his followers "Naxian," where Thebes, Parnassus, and Eubœa are specially mentioned as his haunts.

¹ Or, "as fixed."

² Line 1167 was first supplied from Athenæus, who twice quotes ll. 1165-1171 in the same words, in the edition of Turnebus (Paris, 1553). L has τὰς γὰρ ἡδονὰς | ὅταν προδῶσιν ἀνδρὸς οὐ τίθημι' ἐγώ which may be taken to mean, "when men forfeit their pleasures, I do not count that the part of a man." Blaydes, to avoid ἀνδρες followed by τοῦτον—no great difficulty surely—emends ὅταν, προδῶ τις, ἀνδρ' ἔτ' . . . ; while Seyffert reads, καὶ γὰρ ἡδοναὶ | ὅταν προδῶσιν ἀνδρός, "when a man's pleasures fail."

CHO. Fell he by his father's hand or by his own?

MES. By his own and none other, wroth with his father for the murder.¹

CHO. O thou seer, how truly hast thou brought thy word to pass, it seems!

MES. Since things are even thus, it rests with you to decide for what remains.

CHO. Lo! I see unhappy Eurydice, the wife of Creon, close to us; she hath heard about her son, or it may be chance that brings her here from the palace.

EUR. Fellow-townfolk, one and all, I heard what ye said, as I was on my way forth to the door to address my prayers to the goddess Pallas. And I was just loosing the bolts of the gate, to open it,² when there smote on my ear the message of a sorrow, all my own. Terror-struck I sunk backwards into my handmaids' arms, and lost all consciousness.

But tell me once more, what the tidings were; for it will not be as one new to sorrow that I shall hear them.

MES. Beloved mistress, I will speak, eye-witness as I was, omitting not one word of the truth. For why should I seek to soothe thee, in a case where I shall afterwards be proved a liar? The truth is always the safe course. I had gone with thy lord to guide him to the far end of the plain, where lay the corpse of Polyneices, unpitied still and torn by dogs. Then, when we had prayed to her who haunts the roads,³ and to Pluto, to stay their anger and be gracious, we washed

¹ *i.e.* of Antigone.

² Taking *ἀνασπαστοῦ* proleptically, "so that it might be opened." Others render, "loosing the bars of the gate which were drawn back," supposing the case of the adjective to be due to hypallage. A third view seems possible: the doors of the ancients, in some cases at any rate, opened outwards. Could not then a door be said to be pulled back or pulled to, when closed from the inside?

³ *i.e.* the goddess Hecate.

yon corpse with holy washing, and set to burn the little there was left, in folds of branches freshly plucked; and, after we had heaped a towering mound of his own dear soil above him, we started next to enter the stone-paved vault, Death's bridal-chamber for the maid. While still far from it, some one heard a voice of loud wailing about the chamber all unhonoured, and he came and informed his master, Creon; and, as the king drew nearer yet and nearer, vague sounds of piteous crying rang about him; then, with a moan, he uttered words of deep distress: "Ah, woe is me! and am I a prophet? Am I advancing on a way more fraught with grief than any in the past? It is my son's voice greets my ear. O haste, my servants, draw nearer, and when ye are at the tomb, enter the opening in the mound, whence the stones have been torn,¹ to the very mouth thereof, and look well if 'tis Hæmon, whose voice I hear, or if I am Heaven's dupe."

So, earnestly we set to look, at the bidding of our lord, now faint with fear; and in the furthest corner of the tomb we saw the maiden hanging by the neck, in a noose of thread drawn from her own drapery; while Hæmon had thrown himself beside her, his arms about her waist, and was wailing the ruin of his marriage with her that was dead, and his father's deeds, and his luckless bride. Now when our master saw him, he gave one moan of sorrow, and, rushing in, called loudly to him with a voice of woe: "Unhappy son, what a deed is thine! What was thy intent? What sad mischance hath been thy ruin? Come forth, my child, I do implore in suppliant tone!"

But his son glared round on him with savage eyes, a look of loathing on his face,² and with never a word of answer,

¹ *Or*, taking *λιθοσπαδῆ* proleptically after *δύντες*, "tear away the stones and enter."

² So the Scholiast, and his view has been generally followed. Musgrave, however, whom Jebb follows, understands *προσώπῳ* of Creon's

drew his hilted sword, but missed his father, as he sped forth in flight. Then that luckless youth, angered with himself, in a moment plunged the blade deep into his side, leaning on it amain; and, while the life was yet within him, he clasped the maiden in his drooping arms, and, gasping hard, he spurts a sudden jet of crimson drops on to her pallid cheek. So there he lies, dead, with his arms around the dead. In Hades' halls, at any rate,¹ hath he found the marriage rites completed, luckless lover,—a witness he to all mankind, that heedlessness is by far the greatest evil laid on man. (*EURYDICE hurries from the stage.*)

CHO. What wouldst thou infer from this? Our queen hath turned and gone without a word, or good or bad.

MES. Like thee I am amazed; but I nourish a hope that she will not deign to lament in public on the news of her son's sad fate, but beneath her own roof and in her chamber will impose upon her maidens the mourning of her private grief; for she is not so unversed in wisdom as to act amiss.

CHO. I know not; but to me, at least, excessive silence seems as dangerous a state as wailing much and all in vain.

MES. Well, I will go within the palace and learn the worst, whether she is indeed hiding some stifled scheme in the secret chamber of her angry heart. Yes, thou art right; excess of silence may bode mischief too. (*The MESSENGER enters the palace.*)

CHO. Behold, the king himself is here, bearing in his arms a token all too plain in meaning, the blind act—if I may say it—of no stranger's hand, but of his own misdoing.

CRE. (*entering with attendants, who help to carry in* face; but surely Sophocles did not intend to say that Hæmon spat in his father's face!

¹ Reading ἐν γ' Ἀΐδου—Heath's conjecture for ἐν Ἀΐδου of MSS. Blaydes prefers εἰς with Vauvilliers.

HÆMON's *corpse*). Woe for the sins of my misguided soul, stubborn, deadly! O ye who behold the slain and slayer, both of kindred blood, woe for the sorrow my scheming has caused! Ah me, my son! thou art dead and gone from hence;—alack the day!—cut off untimely in thy youth, by my ill-counsels, not thy own.

CHO. Alas! too late, it seems, thou beholdest the right!

CRE. Ah! woe is me! to my sorrow have I learnt to know it; so then, yes! then, it seems, it was a god, whose heavy hand smote me on the head and flung me on to savage ways, upsetting—ah me!—my joy, to trample on it. Alas, for mortals' toilsome toils!

SEC. MES. My liege, thou seemest to have come hither, as one who carries sorrows in his hand and still hath store thereof; some we see thee bearing in thine arms, and others thou must soon behold in thy home.

CRE. What can be worse? What phase of evil is left?

MES. The queen is dead, true mother of yon corpse,—slain, poor lady, by blows but lately given.

CRE. O bourn of Hades past appeasing, why, oh! why, then, ruin me? O herald of heavy woe to me, what is thy message? Alas! thou hast slain anew one that was already dead. What sayest thou? What new tidings for me now?¹—ah woe is me!—is my queen's violent end to be added to the tale of slaughter?

CHO. (*as the corpse of EURYDICE is disclosed to view*). Thou canst see; for 'tis no longer hidden.

CRE. Ah me! here is another, a second woe for me to see, poor wretch! What doom is yet awaiting me, I wonder? I am but just lifting my son in my arms,—ah woe is me!—and now I behold yon corpse before me! Alas, alas! unhappy mother! woe for thee, my son!

¹ The reading is extremely doubtful. L gives *τί φής, ὦ παῖ· τίνα λέγεις μοι νέον λόγον*; which is here followed with the omission of *ὦ παῖ*. Others omit *λόγον* and retain *ὦ παῖ*.

MES. There on the altar-steps, with the sharp sword sheathed in her,¹ she drooped her darkling eyes, after she had made her moan for the noble fate² of Megareus, who died erewhile, and then for the death of this her son; invoking, lastly, all bad luck on thee, the murderer of her children.

CRE. Ah me! ah me! for very fear I shudder. Why doth no one stab me, striking home with two-edged sword? O wretch that I am, my being blent in one with grief!

MES. Aye, truly, thou wert accused by her, who lies here dead, as the guilty cause of both their violent ends.

CRE. And by what kind of murderous doom found she release?

MES. With her own hand she stabbed herself, right to the heart, when she heard of her son's most piteous fate yonder.

CRE. Ah woe is me! these sins can ne'er be shifted on to other shoulders, to leave me clear of guilt. For it was I, yes, I that slew thee, woe is me! yes, I; I own it true. Oh, lead me hence, my servants, with all speed,³ lead me away, whose existence now is no more than nothingness!

CHO. There's good in thy advice, if there can be good in ill; for present ills are best, as they are briefest.

CRE. Let it come, let it come! Oh, may it appear to my joy, that fairest⁴ of all fates, which brings the day that ends my life, the first and best of fates! Let it come, let it come, that I may no more see another dawn.

CHO. This is in the future; there still remains a some-

¹ The conjecture of Arndt is followed, ἡδ' ὀξυθήκτω βωμία περι ξίφει, for MSS. ἡ δ' ὀξύθηκτος ἡδε βωμία περίξ, which has been taken to mean, "but she, who lieth there fallen about the altar, goaded to despair" . . ., a weak, if not impossible rendering.

² Reading λάχος with Bothe for MSS. λέχος.

³ Reading τάχιστ' with Erfurdt instead of τάχος.

⁴ Jebb adopts in his text the conjecture of Pallis, ἔχων for ἐμῶν

thing here for us to do ; the future well may rest with those whom it concerns.¹

CRE. All my wishes have I in that prayer.

CHO. Then cease to pray ; for there is no release for mortal man from his appointed lot of woe.

CRE. Oh, lead me hence ; I am no use ; I have slain² thee, O my son, unwittingly, and thee too lying there ;³ ah, woe is me ! And I know not to which to look, whereon to lean ;⁴ for all that was in my grasp is gone awry ; while a fate, with which I may not cope, hath now leapt down upon my head. (CREON *is led away.*)

CHO. Wisdom is by far the most important thing in happiness ; and towards the gods our reverence must never fail. But great words of overweening men requite them with blows as great, and teach them wisdom in old age.

¹ *i.e.* the gods.

² Reading *κατέκανον* with Wilhelm Schneider.

³ Reading *σέ τ' αὐ τάνδ'* with Seidler for MSS. *σέ τ' αὐτάν.*

⁴ Reading *οὐδ' ἔχω | πρὸς πρότερον ἴδω, πᾶ κλιθῶ* for which L has *ῥπα πρὸς πρότερον ἴδω' πᾶ καὶ θω*. Seidler first omitted *ῥπα*, which is merely a gloss probably on *πᾶ*, and Musgrave conjectured *κλιθῶ* for *καὶ θῶ*, while some of the later MSS. gave *πότερον*.

ELECTRA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ORESTES.

PYLADES (Mute).

ÆGISTHUS.

AGED ATTENDANT.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS OF MYCENÆ.

SCENE.—Before the royal palace at Mycenæ.

INTRODUCTION.

THE scene of the play is Mycenæ, before the palace of the Pelopidæ, and the time early morning. "Already the sun shines bright and wakes the matin songs of birds." Orestes and Pylades enter with an old and confidential servant, and a conversation ensues between Orestes and the aged retainer as to the best means of carrying out the duty imposed upon them of purging the royal house at Mycenæ of its pollution. The plan eventually agreed upon is that the old man shall first enter the house and report the death of Orestes, and seize the occasion to learn how matters stand. To lend colour to these tidings, a story is to be invented, with circumstantial details, telling how Orestes was killed by a fall from his chariot at the Pythian games. After a short interval, Orestes and Pylades are to enter bearing a funeral urn, purporting to contain the ashes of the dead youth. Meantime Apollo's first command must be obeyed, and due honours paid to the tomb of Agamemnon. (ll. 1-85.)

As they leave the stage to carry their scheme into effect, Electra appears alone from the palace, and chants a mournful dirge on the treacherous fate that overtook her father, and the unending sorrow that has been her lot since then, and evermore must be; ending with an impassioned appeal to all the powers of vengeance to come and help her by sending Orestes home. (ll. 86-120.)

The Chorus, consisting of maidens of Mycenæ, make their entrance at this point, and endeavour to comfort her violent grief. "Tears will not bring Agamemnon to life again." "Perhaps not," rejoins Electra; "but to weep best suits my mood; and

goddesses have wept their losses too." "Nor art thou the only sufferer; Orestes and Chrysothemis have equal cause for grief." "Orestes, yes—for whom I wait this weary while, ever wasted with my tears; for he is ever coming, yet he never comes." "Courage, daughter; Zeus is lord in Heaven still; Time is a god who smooths rough ways; Orestes has not forgotten,—no! nor the god who rules by Acheron's wave." "Hope is dead within me; friendless and oppressed I lead a weary life, with the hideous memory of that awful day ever before me. God grant the murderers such another doom!" "At least refrain from making thy lot worse by open rebellion, and rash utterances." "Seek not to comfort me; I will never cease to vent my griefs; how can I forget the dead?" "Well, we will cease if our words offend." (ll. 121-253.) "I am ashamed," answers Electra, "of appearing too impatient; but consider my position,—forced to live with my father's murderers, dependent on them even for daily bread, compelled to witness my mother's indecent joy, and to see the usurper on my father's throne, to listen daily to my mother's bitter upbraidings, to hear her curse and wish me dead because I saved Orestes,—though there is little hope of his ever returning." (ll. 254-309.)

The Chorus next proceed to question Electra as to the chances of Orestes returning, and she replies that his coming never goes beyond promises. "Courage," say the Chorus, "he is noble and will not fail thee." (ll. 310-327.)

The entrance of Chrysothemis cuts short further conversation. Her attitude to Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra is in marked contrast to her sister's. She begins by chiding Electra for showing her resentment so openly; why can she not hide her feelings and wait her opportunity? This advice calls forth from Electra an indignant rejoinder. What is the use of Chrysothemis pretending she hates Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra in her heart, when all the time she is living in comfort and luxury at their expense? No, she is only repeating her mother's precepts,—apt pupil enough, no doubt! Chrysothemis replies that she is used to her sister's querulous complaints, and can very well pass them over; but she warns her, that her continual rebellion has led her oppressors to form plans for ending these exhibitions of temper. They intend to imprison her in a sunless dungeon for

the rest of her days. "Well," rejoins Electra, "I care not how soon it comes ; but whither art thou bound with those funeral offerings?" "To our father's tomb, at the bidding of our mother." "And why?" "She had a vision in the night : our father appeared and planted his sceptre on the hearth, and from it there grew a fruitful bough which overshadowed the whole land of Mycenæ." "Throw away those gifts ; it is not right to offer them at the tomb, and take, instead, the tresses of our hair, with this poor girdle, and pray to our father's spirit that Orestes may come and trample on his foes, that so hereafter we may offer costlier gifts." (ll. 328-465.)

Chrysothemis, consenting, goes forth on her mission, and the Chorus proceed to analyze the dream of Clytæmnestra. It is clearly, they hold, an omen of approaching retribution. Justice will come ere long ; the avenging spirit of the murdered man is abroad ; soon will it spring from its ambush on the guilty pair, and they shall quake to see it come. Alas for the ancestral curse upon the house, ever since Pelops slew Myrtilus by treachery ! Never from that day has bloodshed ceased. (ll. 466-515.) At this point Clytæmnestra enters, and, rebuking Electra for being abroad in spite of strict orders to the contrary, proceeds to justify her own conduct. "True, I slew thy father, but he brought it on himself by slaying Iphigenia, my daughter. What right had he to take her life ? It was for Menelaus, I suppose !"

Electra, having obtained permission to speak, examines her mother's specious defence critically, and shows how utterly feeble it is. In the first place, Agamemnon was constrained by the wrath of Latona to sacrifice his child in the place of the stag he had inadvertently killed ; otherwise the fleet could never have sailed from Aulis to Troy ; thus he was forced to do the thing he loathed on public grounds. Even were it otherwise, what pretext would this give a wife to murder her husband ? If any, why then Clytæmnestra should die on the same showing. Lastly, what excuse can there be for the wife of the murdered man living with the murderer, and treating her children with such barbarity ? And as for the faults of the daughter,—from whom were they inherited ? Clytæmnestra should be proud of a child who takes after herself !

“Am I to heed a mere child like her,—so shameless too?”
“Shameless, yes, and I blush for it, but shameful deeds will teach the like.”

With a parting threat, Clytæmnestra proceeds to the sacrifice which she has come forth to offer. “May Phœbus avert the women of the dream, if it be bad, but bring it to pass, if sent for any good! Whatever I dare not say in the presence of this malignant maid, thou, Lyceian god, wilt understand, for all is open to the sons of Zeus.” (ll. 516-659.)

Scarcely has the queen finished her prayer to Phœbus, when a messenger enters. It is the old retainer disguised; he is inquiring for the house of Ægisthus, and, on identifying Clytæmnestra, at once announces that he has been sent by Phanoteus of Phocis to bring news of the death of Orestes. The sudden shock almost overpowers Electra, but Clytæmnestra eagerly bids the messenger tell the whole story; which he then proceeds to do. Orestes had come to the Pythian games, and, after winning numerous prizes, he entered for the chariot-race with nine others. At first all went well, and Orestes showed marked skill in the way he handled his horses, but, in seeking to take advantage of an accident which befell two other competitors, he drove too near the turning-post, and was upset. Before he could be disentangled from the broken car and tangled reins, his body was battered out of shape, and life was fled. With pity the Phocians collected his remains and burnt them on a pyre, and now chosen men are on the way from Phocis, carrying his ashes in an urn. For a moment, a mother's feelings prevail with Clytæmnestra. “One cannot learn to hate the child one bore.” But it is only a passing weakness; why should she feel any sorrow for the death of so unnatural a son? Not so, the messenger's news is good; henceforth there is nought to fear; the only possible avenger is cut off; all will be peace and calm for the future.

In strong contrast is Electra's passionate grief; for her, all hope is swept away, and she must live to hear her mother's brutal taunts. Nothing is now before her but the life of a slave in the house of murderers,—but no! nevermore will she cross their threshold, but will lie before their doors and waste away in tears, or let them kill her if they will. Such are Electra's

agonized laments, as Clytæmnestra passes within the palace to reward the supposed messenger for his welcome news. (ll. 660-822.)

The cold-blooded remarks of Clytæmnestra elicit a cry of horror and indignation from the Chorus. "Where can be thy lightnings, Zeus? Canst thou, O Sun-god, see and never heed?" Electra's grief is inconsolable, and the cold comfort offered by the Chorus only increases her anguish. "Why tell me of Amphiaraus? If he was done to death by a treacherous wife, yet he found an avenger in his son; but such can Agamemnon never find." "To all men death must come." "And must it come in such a piteous fashion,—to be trampled to death by horses' hooves, far from friends in a stranger's land?" (ll. 823-870.)

Chrysothemis suddenly enters, radiant with joy, and out of breath. "Orestes is returned," she cries. Electra is incredulous. "Why mock our grief? what proof hast thou?" Chrysothemis then relates how she had gone to the tomb of their father, and had found there traces of fresh libations, wreaths of flowers, and a lock of hair freshly cut. Who can have done this but Orestes? Neither Electra or herself had made the offering, and it certainly was not Clytæmnestra's work. No, it must have been Orestes who came and did it.

"Alas for thy folly; Orestes is dead, I tell thee," replies the inconsolable Electra, who cannot believe otherwise after the circumstantial story of the messenger from Phocis. What Chrysothemis found must have been placed there by some sympathizer. One chance is left, and Chrysothemis must loyally assist. It is this: "We sisters must take the life of the murderer Ægisthus; certain it is that, unless we do so, he will keep us unwedded all our lives, for he has more sense than to run the risk of letting us raise up avengers of his crime. Yea, and it is our clear duty to the dead; and all the world will bear us witness in the days to come."

"Sheer madness!" answers Chrysothemis. "Art thou blind? Remember thou art but a woman; success is impossible; they are strong and we are weak; we shall only land ourselves in still worse plight. Be advised, sister; refrain thine anger, and never think to battle with the strong."

The Chorus support these arguments, but Electra scornfully rejects such counsel. She is not surprised at her sister's refusal ; it was only what she had expected ; well, she must carry through the deed herself. Chrysothemis makes one more attempt to bend her purpose, but, finding it in vain, leaves her with the words, "By and by thou wilt approve the truth of what I say." (ll. 871-1057.)

The Chorus, almost as much shocked by the calculating prudence of Chrysothemis as by the savage exultation of Clytæmnestra, chant an ode expressive of their feelings. "Why do not men learn piety and affection from the birds of the air? These are ever true to their natural instincts. Ah, but there will come a day of reckoning ! Oh that echo would carry the tale to the dead Atreidæ ! The sisters are at variance, and Electra is left to breast the storm alone. Would she might triumph o'er the double curse ! For she hath chosen the better part,—duty before self-interest." (ll. 1058-1097.)

Orestes and Pylades now enter, with attendants bearing an urn, supposed to contain the ashes of Orestes. They announce that they are come from Phocis with news for Ægisthus from Strophius. Electra feels that what she has already heard is now to be confirmed, and begs them to deliver their message. They show the urn, and, at Electra's request, hand it over to her, whereupon she breaks out into a most pathetic lament over her lost brother.

"So this is all that is left me now of him I loved the best of men ! Ah, how different were the hopes with which I sent thee out ! Would I had died or ever I let thee go ! Alas, for all my nursing long ago ! This, then, is the end ; all I loved are dead ; alone and friendless am I left ; would I might share my brother's grave !" (ll. 1098-1170.)

"Remember, Electra, we are all mortal," urge the Chorus. Orestes meantime has been scarcely able to restrain himself, and he now breaks into expressions of grief at Electra's piteous plight ; she is surprised that any one should notice her sufferings. "Thou art the first that ever pitied me." "Yes, for I am the first that ever felt thy grief." "Canst be some unknown kinsman?" "Set down that urn, and I will tell thee all." "Do not force me to do this." "Do as I bid thee, and thou wilt not do amiss."

Electra remains still suspicious, until Orestes bids her look at a signet-ring he carries ; she knows him then, and with one happy cry of recognition throws herself into his arms. (ll. 1171-1224.)

Her joy is now as great as her previous grief had been intense, and she would fain indulge it, but Orestes reminds her that the danger is still to be faced, and silence is the safer policy ; at the same time he warns her not to let her happy face betray her joy to Clytæmnestra. After some demur, Electra consents to follow her brother's counsel, and tells him not to be afraid that she will betray their secret. "The tears of gladness will still be wet upon my cheek, and my ancient hate of her sticks deep."

The Chorus warn them of approaching footsteps, and at this moment the old retainer, who, till now, has personated a messenger from Phocis, reappears. He chides them for talking so much and endangering the safety of their plans, and bids them enter the palace at once and set about the work in hand. All is ready, and, with prompt action, success is assured. (ll. 1225-1345.)

Electra, surprised at the outspoken tone of this aged servitor, inquires of Orestes who he is ; and from his answer learns that he is the same trusty retainer, into whose hands she had herself committed Orestes, when a babe, at the time of Agamemnon's murder. This is a second joyful surprise, but the old man will not permit any lengthy expressions of joy. "Time enough to talk it over, when our present work is done." Orestes and Pylades then enter the palace, followed by Electra, after she has offered up a prayer to Apollo for their success. (ll. 1346-1383.)

The Chorus, now strung to an intense pitch of excitement, chant a short ode. "The avenger is moving onward to his goal ; the swift hounds are already beneath the roof, and the dream of my heart cannot now be long delayed."

Electra again comes forth, announcing that the deed is now being done, and, even as she speaks, the cries of Clytæmnestra are heard within, while, a moment later, Orestes comes forth with blood-stained hands, and tells of her death.

Ægisthus is now seen approaching from a suburb of the city, and Orestes and Pylades re-enter the palace. (ll. 1384-1436.)

The Chorus advise Electra to speak Ægisthus fair, and so

lead him on to his doom ; which advice she follows, when Ægisthus enters and asks where the Phocian strangers are.

“Within,” replies Electra. “Do they indeed report Orestes dead?” “More than that, they bring clear proof.” “Can I see it?” “Certainly.” (ll. 1437-1457.)

The interior of the palace is then disclosed by a mechanical stage-contrivance, and a covered corpse is seen, with Orestes standing near. Ægisthus, after invoking Zeus, orders the face-cloth to be removed, but Orestes gravely bids him lift it himself. Ægisthus, with no suspicion of the hideous truth, draws it aside and recognizes the features of Clytæmnestra. He is at first utterly bewildered, but, as the truth flashes across his mind, he endeavours to obtain a hearing. Orestes, however, cuts him short, and sternly orders him to enter the house, that he may die on the self-same spot where Agamemnon bled. Ægisthus, with one final taunt, obeys, and, as he goes to meet his doom, the Chorus sum the story up in these few closing words, “O seed of Atreus, how hast thou emerged at last in freedom’s light, after thy long struggle, crowned by the effort of to-day !” (ll. 1458-1510.)

NOTE.—For the translation of the “Electra,” the text followed has been that of Professor Jebb’s edition of the play in the “Catena Classicorum” ; any variations from it will be found noticed in footnotes.

The volume containing the “Electra” in the Professor’s larger edition, now issuing from the Cambridge University Press, had not yet appeared when this translation was being prepared ; otherwise the same text would have been used throughout the seven plays.

ELECTRA.

AGED ATT. Son of Agamemnon, leader of the host ere-while at Troy, now mayst thou behold, from nigh at hand, sights thou hast ever longed to see. This is old Argos, for which thou wouldst yearn,—hallowed precinct of her whom the gadfly tormented, the daughter of Inachus ;¹ there, Orestes, is the place of gathering, called from the wolf-slaying god Lycean ;² and there, upon the left, is Hera's famous temple ; from where we stand, deem that thou art looking on Mycenæ,³ the city stored with gold ; and yonder stands the house of the Pelopidæ, rife with death,—whence, in days gone by, after the slaying of thy sire, I bore thee safe away, from thine own dear sister's hands received, and have brought thee up till now, even to man's estate, to be the avenger of thy father's murder.

Now therefore, Orestes, and Pylades, thou best of friends, ye must decide in haste what 'tis best to do ; for already we see the sun shine bright, waking into clearness matin songs

¹ Io, transformed into a cow by Hera out of jealousy, and then tormented as described.

² The Lyceum stood on one side of the *ἀγορά* at Argos. Legend connected Apollo with the word *λύκος*, "wolf" ; later philology has endeavoured to find a connection between *Λύκειος* and the root of *λευκός*, *i.e.*, "god of light."

³ Whether Sophocles uses Argos and Mycenæ indifferently, or the first name for the district, and the second for the town, is surely not important ; he writes as a poet, not as a geographer.

of birds, and dark night with its stars¹ is past. Wherefore do ye twain confer, ere any one go forth on his way from the house ; for, where we stand,² it suits no more to shrink,—’tis time to act.

ORE. O best-beloved of all who serve me, how clear I see are the proofs thou givest of thy loyalty to us ! Yea, just as a well-bred horse, in spite of years, loseth not his spirit in danger’s hour, but pricketh up his ear, so thou dost both exhort us and art thyself among the first to follow. Wherefore I will show thee what is planned, and do thou lend a ready ear to my words, correcting me, wherever I miss the mark.

Now, when I came to the Pythian oracle, to learn how I might win revenge for my sire³ from his murderers, Phœbus made answer to me on such wise, as thou shalt anon be told ; alone, unhelped of armèd men, my hand was to strike the righteous blow, stealing its chance by guile. Since, then, we have heard so clear an oracle, go thou, whene’er the proper season leads thee in, and learn all that is happening in yon house, that so thou mayst bring us certain tidings. No fear of their recognizing thee, thanks to thy years and the long lapse of time, nor will they suspect thee with those silvered locks.⁴ Make use of such a tale as

¹ Regarding *ἀστρων εὐφρόνη* as poetical for *νύξ ἀστερίεσσα*. Paley objects to this, and renders, “is wanting in stars,” “has lost its stars,” *i. e.*, the stars have disappeared, as dawn draws on, though it may still be called dark. This genitive after *ἐκλείπω*, however, needs support.

If ll. 20, 21 be retained as genuine, Jebb’s emendation of the MSS. *ὡς ἐνταῦθ’ ἐμὲν* is perhaps as likely as any ; it is as follows :

*ὡς, ἴν’ ἔσταμεν.
οὐκ ἔστ’ ἔτ’ ὀκνεῖν . . .*

or Nauck’s *ὡς καθίσταμεν*. Paley inclines to think that the lines are interpolated, and that the speech ended, *ὥστ’ οὐκ ἔτ’ ὀκνεῖν κ. τ. λ.*

³ Reading *πατρί* with L, but there is good authority for *πατρός*, which Paley adopts.

⁴ Such seems to be the meaning of *ἡνθισμένον*, though the Schol.

this,—that thou art a stranger of Phocis, come from the hero Phanoteus, who is the greatest friend and ally they possess.

Next tell them, with an oath, this further news,¹ that Orestes is dead,—victim of Fate's constraining force,—flung from his whirling car at the Pythian games. Thus let the story run.

We, meantime, after first crowning my father's tomb, as Phœbus bade, with drink-offerings and our fair severed tresses, will then return once more, bearing uplifted in our hands an urn with sides of bronze,—whereof, I trow, thou also wottest, hidden in the bushes,—that so we may trick them with words, bringing² them the welcome news that my body is now no more, but burnt with fire and charred to cinders. For what is there to grieve me here, when, dead in name, I have in fact been saved and won renown withal? No word, I trow, is ill, which carries gain with it. Oft, ere now, have I seen an idle rumour killing e'en the wise; when lo! in spite of it, they come back home and straightway have more honour paid them. E'en so I feel full sure, that, thanks to rumour thus set forth, alive I still shall flash upon my foes, bright as a star.

O land of my fathers, and gods of my country, receive me with favour here upon my way! And thou no less, ancestral home! For I come to purge thee, in all justice, with Heaven to speed me on my way. And send me not away dishonoured from this land, but make me ruler³ of its wealth, and champion of my home!

interpreted it as "adorned, decked out," referring perhaps to the dress adopted by such as brought good news.

¹ It seems simpler to take *προστιθείς* thus than to understand ὄρκον after it, a redundancy in any case.

² Reading *φέρωμεν* after *ἴξομεν*. Others read *φέροιμεν* after *κεκρυμμένον*.

³ Liddell and Scott render *ἀρχέπλουτος*, "enjoying ancient wealth," as if synonymous with *ἀρχαίόπλουτος*, which is surely impossible.

Thus far my tale ; be now thy care, old friend, to go and heed thy task. And forth we twain will fare, for 'tis the proper time, and that doth chiefly guide his every act for man.

ELE. (*from within*). Ah me ! ah me !

AGED ATT. Hark ! my son, from within the doors methought I heard some handmaid moaning low.

ORE. Is it our poor Electra ? Wouldst have us wait here and listen to her wailing ?

AGED ATT. Nay, nay ! Let us attempt nothing before we have done what Loxias bade and made a start with that, pouring libations to thy sire ; for this puts victory in our power and success in all we do. (*Exeunt omnes.*)

ELE. (*coming forth from the palace, alone and in mourning garb*). O holy light, and air coequal with the earth,¹ how many a mournful dirge of mine, how many a blow, struck full on bleeding bosom, hast thou heard, what time the shades of night are past ! And as for nightly vigils, my wretched couch in this unhappy house is witness, long ere now, how sorely I bewail my hapless sire, whom bloody Ares spared to make his guest² on foreign soil ; but my own mother and Ægisthus, sharer of her couch, cleft his head with murderous axe, as woodmen cleave an oak. And no pity for these things, father, bursts from any lips save mine,—for this thy foul and piteous death. But I will never cease, be sure, from piteous laments and tears, so long as I behold the twinkling of the radiant stars and see this light of day ; but, like the nightingale, that slew her young,⁴

¹ *i.e.*, occupying the same extent in space.

² *i.e.*, whom the god of destruction spared on the battle-field, only for a worse fate at home.

³ Reading *αἰκῶς*, which is recorded by the Schol., and is infinitely preferable to the vulgate *ἀδικῶς*.

⁴ Itys was murdered by his mother, who was afterwards turned into a nightingale.

I will utter my complaint, with piercing cries, for all to hear, before the doors of this my father's home.

O house of Hades and Persephone, O Hermes of the underworld, and thou, O awful Curse, and you, dread children of the gods, ye vengeful fiends, whose eye is on unrighteous deaths and on those who are robbed of their wedded rights,¹—come, help, and avenge our father's murder, and send my brother to mine aid! For alone can I no more outweigh the heavy counterpoise of sorrow.

CHO. Ah, Electra, child of mother most ill-starred, what means this ceaseless lamentation,—this pining evermore for Agamemnon, trapped so long ago in most unholy wise, tricked by thy mother's treachery, by cowardly hands betrayed? Death to him whose scheme it was!—if I may utter such a prayer.

ELE. Maidens of noble parentage, to soothe my pain are ye come. I know what ye will say; I understand; no word thereof escapes me; but I will not give up this lamentation for my sire's sad fate. Ah, ye that give me grace for grace in friendship's every mood, leave me thus to frantic grief,—for pity's sake, I pray!

CHO. Nay, thou wilt ne'er raise up thy sire by tears and prayers² from Hades' lake, which all must cross. But thou, with weeping evermore, by following grief that hath no end, beyond the bounds of sober sense, art wasting utterly; therein is no release from trouble. Then, tell me, why so bent on woe?

ELE. Fool who forgets the piteous loss of parents! For me, that plaintive bird, the messenger of Zeus,³ that mourns,

¹ l. 114 is generally regarded as spurious; it is certainly not necessary.

² Reading *ἄνταις*, Hermann's conjecture for the unmetrical *λιταῖσιν* of MSS.

³ The mother of Itys became either a nightingale or a swallow, for the legends vary. Here the swallow, as the harbinger of spring, seems

in agony of grief, for Itys, Itys, evermore, suits well my mood. Hail to thee, Niobe, lady of sorrow! goddess I count thee,—thou that in thy tomb of rock¹ still weepest,—woe is thee!

CHO. Not to thee alone of mortal race hath sorrow come, my child, though in respect thereof thou outdoest those within, whose birth and blood are one with thine,—Chrysothemis, to wit, and Iphianassa, who yet live,—yea, and him who sorrows o'er his young life spent in hiding,² happy in that Mycenæ's glorious land shall one day welcome home her noble son, sped hither by the grace of Zeus, her own Orestes!

ELE. Yea, 'tis for him I wait untiringly, ever dragging on my way, childless and unwed, ah me!—the tears aye wet upon my cheeks, with this my endless load of woe; but he forgets alike his wrongs³ and what he has been told. For of all the tidings brought to me, which cometh not in vain? He feels a yearning evermore, but, spite of that, he deigns not to appear.

CHO. Take heart, my child, take heart! Zeus is still supreme on high, who sees and governs all; commit to him thine all too grievous wrath, and be not too much angered with thy foes nor yet forget them. Time is a gentle god. Neither Agamemnon's son, who dwells at Crisa,⁴ where the

meant, though elsewhere the nightingale accords better with the context.

¹ After the slaying of her children by Apollo and Artemis, Niobe fled to Mount Sipylus, where she was turned into stone, but none the less her tears still flowed.

² Others follow Hermann and Ellendt in regarding ἀχίωv as genitive plural, "his young life hid from sorrow," but this ill suits the context, and is directly opposed to the Schol.

³ The Schol. takes a different view, "the kind treatment he has had from me."

⁴ Orestes had been placed in the care of Strophius at Crisa in Phocis.

oxen browse beside the sea, is all unmindful¹ of thee, nor yet the god who rules by Acheron.

ELE. Nay, but ere this my life's best part is gone, in utter hopelessness ; no more can I hold out ; lone orphan² now I waste away, with no fond arm to champion me ; but, like some alien, held in no account, I lodge beneath my father's roof, clad in this unseemly garb, and take my place at scant board.

CHO. Piteous the cry at his return, piteous, as he lay reclined,³ what time the axe of biting bronze swooped full upon thy father's head ! 'Twas guile that schemed, and lust that slew, engendering from union dire a direful form,⁴—whoe'er it was that did this deed, a god or one of mortal race.

ELE. O day, beyond all other days, most hateful in thine advent to mine eyes ! O night ! O fearful anguish of that hideous feast,—that ghastly death my father saw dealt out to him by both of them, even by those whose treachery hath spoiled my life and ruined me. May the great god of Olympus requite them with suffering of their own, and may they ne'er enjoy their pomp, after such vile deeds !

CHO. Beware of saying more. Hast not the sense to see the cause of thy unseemly fall to this thy present state of woes self-sought ? Thou hast gotten thee full many a grief beyond thy lot by evermore conceiving strife in thy desponding heart ; but strife, which leads to conflict with the strong, is not to be begun.

¹ Others render, "unable to return." Blaydes and Burges conjecture *ἀνεπίστροφος*, a word found in the grammarians.

² *i.e.*, Agamemnon is dead, and Clytæmnestra is no mother to me henceforth.

³ Agamemnon was murdered treacherously at a feast by Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra, according to the story which Sophocles follows, though, according to Æschylus, in the bath.

⁴ The crime is said to have given birth to a demon-form, that did the deed in the guise of Clytæmnestra. (Paley.)

ELE. A dire constraint,—ah! dire indeed,—was mine. Full well I know—it 'scapes me not,—my mood.¹ But, while the horror lasts, I will not check these rash complaints, so long as life is mine. For who, kind friends, ah! who,—if sound the views he holds,—would ever find thy present words accord with them?² Leave me, leave me to myself, ye comforters! Unending shall these woes be called, nor will I ever cease from pain, taking no count of these mournful strains.

CHO. Nay then, 'tis in all kindness, as loyal mother might her child, that I warn thee not to add new woe to old.

ELE. And what bound now is there to my distress?³ Come, tell me, how can it be well to be remiss about the deed? What human heart conceives such thoughts? Ne'er may I find honour there, nor, when I fall on happy days,

¹ *i.e.*, I know my conduct provokes worse treatment, but I cannot be still, so long as the dire cause for protesting remains,—viz., my mother's unnatural wickedness.

² *i.e.*, no right-minded person would approve of the advice thou givest me. This seems to be the sense intended, but the passage is obscure and difficult, and none of the traditional renderings satisfactory. Thus Wunder, quoted by Paley, follows the Schol. in treating *τίμι* as equivalent to *παρὰ τίνος*, "For who is there, who indeed thinks aright, from whom I might hear a suitable word?" (*i.e.*, any word of consolation really likely to afford me any comfort). This view is surely untenable, even if suitable to the context, which is open to question. Jebb renders, "Else (*i.e.*, if I ceased to mourn) in whose sight could I enjoy a seemly fame?" This version, though explaining *τίμι*, introduces an unusual meaning of *πρόσφορον*. Linwood makes *τίμι* dependent on *πρόσφορον*, and, though the construction of the sentence thus becomes very harsh, it may perhaps be defended. The Schol.'s paraphrase is, *παρὰ τίνος γὰρ ἀκούσομαι τὰ προσφέροντα ἢ παρ' ὑμῶν τῶν συνοίκων*.

³ *i.e.*, surely I cannot aggravate my misery by anything I do now! But the Schol. gives a different sense, "unmeasured suffering needs unmeasured grief,"—an answer to the remonstrances of the Chorus.

may I live on in ease therewith, if I restrain the flight of shrill lament, to rob my sire of honour due ! For if, being dead, poor wretch, he is to lie there in the ground,¹ a thing of nought henceforth, while they escape the payment of their debt, e'en blood for blood,—regard for man and reverence for the gods will pass completely from our world.

CHO. Daughter, in thy interests no less than mine I came ; but, if I speak amiss, have thou thy way, for I will follow in thy wake.

ELE. I am ashamed, ladies, if by reason of my many complaints ye think me too impatient. Yet pardon me ; 'tis hard constraint that forces me to this. How could any woman, nobly born, do otherwise, seeing such troubles in her father's house, as I see night and day, waxing ever, never waning ? First, as touching her² that bare me, all hath turned to direst hate for me ; next, in mine own house I have with me the murderers of my sire ; and 'tis by them that I am ruled ; on them alike depends my getting or my going short. Then think what days I pass, oft as I see Ægisthus seated on my father's throne, wearing the very robes he wore, and pouring libations at the hearth whereat he slew him ; or, when I see their crowning insolence, our murderer in my father's bed with my misguided mother,—if mother I must call her, mated with this wretch ; so hardened as to live with her vile paramour, without a fear of any vengeful fiend ; nay, but as though exulting in her deeds, she hath found out³ the very day on which it was she slew my sire by guile, ordaining a festival thereon and offering

¹ Many editors read γᾶ (nom.), "mere dust," but Jebb questions this use and reads γᾶ (dat.).

² τὰ μητρὸς, either "my mother's character and conduct" (Paley), or "my relations towards my mother" (Campbell).

³ Paley and Blaydes prefer Meineke's τηροῦσα, "by way of keeping that day," to MSS. ἐψοῦσα, objecting that such a day would need no searching out.

sacrifice of sheep, each month, to the saving gods. All this these luckless eyes behold within the house, and so I weep and waste away, bewailing to myself alone the piteous feast that bears my father's name; for I may not even give my soul its fill of weeping. For then this woman with her noble tongue breaks out in loud reviling thus: "Thou object of the gods' abhorrence, art thou the only girl whose sire is dead? Is there no other mourner in the world save thee? Curses on thee! May those nether powers ne'er rid thee of thy present griefs!" Thus she insults me; save when she hears one say that Orestes soon will come. Then, standing near, she calls to me in frantic tones: "'Tis thou I have to thank for this! Is not this thy work, seeing thou didst steal Orestes from my hands and convey him safe away? Yet be very sure that thou shalt pay a fitting penalty." Such words she shrieks at me, and with her, stationed at her side, is her noble bridegroom, urging the same abuse,—that abject coward, that utter bane, who makes his wars with women's help! And I, the while, unhappy maid, still wait and waste, until Orestes come and put an end to these my woes. For he, delaying evermore to act, hath wrecked all hopes I have and had.¹ Wherefore, friends, in such sore plight I find no room for moderation or respect; nay, needs must one in evil case e'en take to evil ways.

CHO. Come, tell me now,—is Ægisthus near, while we converse, or is he gone from home?

ELE. Be sure of that. Think not I should venture forth, if he were near. He is now in the fields.

CHO. Verily I² shall have more courage in conversing with thee, if this is so.

¹ *i.e.*, the hope of his return which I still cherish, and the hope of happier days which I have ceased to hold. Or the expression may mean "all alike."

² There seems no reason to make the sentence interrogative, as Dindorf does.

ELE. Ask on, quite sure he is not here;¹ what is thy pleasure?

CHO. Why, then, my question is,—what news of thy brother? is he coming, or delays he still? That is what I fain would know.

ELE. He *says* he comes, out, spite thereof, his words are all without result.

CHO. A man, with serious work to do, is wont to hesitate.

ELE. And yet 'twas not by doing so that I saved him!

CHO. Be of good cheer; such noble stock as his stands by its friends.

ELE. I trust him,—else had I not lived so long.

CHO. No more now, for I see thy sister Chrysothemis, whose parentage and thine are one bearing in her hands from the house an offering to the tomb. such as custom pays the dead.

CHR. Sister, what is this thou art saying here outside the doors, having come forth once more? Wilt thou not learn in all this while not to indulge thy idle rage to no purpose? Yet thus much do I know, that I am grieved myself at what is here,—so much that, could I find the strength, I would show them how I feel towards them. But now amid the storm I hold it best to sail close-reefed, instead of dreaming on the while and doing them no harm. And I would that thou too wouldst enter on just such another² course. True, justice is not as I urge, but as thou judgest; still, if I am to live free, I must obey my masters in all.

ELE. Strange, indeed, that thou, the daughter of such a sire, hast forgotten him, but thinkest of her that brought thee forth! Yes, all these warnings I hear from thee are dictated by her; thou sayest nothing of thyself. Come then, choose

¹ Jebb punctuates after *ιστόρει*, an undoubted improvement on the old punctuation.

² Reading *ἄλλα*, instead of *ἀλλά*, which some attempt to defend.

thee one of these,—either to be unwise, or, being wise, to lose all memory of thy friends,—thou who sayest now, that, couldst thou find the strength, thou wouldst show thy hate for them; and yet, when I am trying all I can to avenge our father, thou helpest not,—nay, dost seek to turn aside those efforts. Besides the shame, is not such conduct fraught with cowardice? For teach me,—or else learn from me,—what gain were mine, if I should cease from these laments? Have I not life? A wretched one, I know, but good enough for me. And I vex them, giving honour to the dead thereby,—if any grace can reach that other world. But thy hatred, I trow, is only in word, while in deed thou consortest with thy father's murderers. To them will I never bow myself,—no! not though one should offer me such gifts as make thee now so proud! Be thine the sumptuous table spread, thine the all-abounding life! For me,—be this my only food,—not to pain myself!¹ Honour like thine I covet not; nor yet wouldst thou, if only thou wert wise. 'Twas open to thee once to have this name, “daughter of a peerless sire”; but now be called thy mother's child. For thus will thy baseness be shown far and wide, thy falseness to thy murdered sire and those most dear to thee.

CHO. Say not aught in wrath, I pray; for there is gain in what each saith, if thou wouldst learn to act like her, and she again like thee.

CHR. Ladies, I am growing used to what she saith, nor had I ever mentioned this, unless I had heard of signal mischief threatening her, which will stay her from this long-drawn grief.

¹ *i.e.*, by yielding to my father's murderers and doing violence thus to my better feelings. Campbell reads *λυποῦν*, “such maintenance alone as will not cause me pain,” *i.e.*, by having to comply with their commands. But the above explanation, which is the Schol.'s, is intelligible enough, and any conjecture like Schneidewin's *μη λήγειν γόων* unnecessary.

ELE. Come tell me, pray, this fearful news. If thou wilt tell me worse than this, no more will I gainsay thee.¹

CHR. Well, I will tell thee all I know myself. They purpose, if thou wilt not cease from these laments, to send thee to some place where thou wilt never see the light of day, but, in a chamber underground, far from the world above, wilt sing of sorrow all thy life. Wherefore be advised, and blame me not hereafter, when in trouble. Now is the time to be wise.

ELE. And are they really purposed to treat me thus?

CHR. Indeed they are, so soon as Ægisthus cometh home.

ELE. If that is all, may he return forthwith!

CHR. Unhappy girl! What prayer hast thou just uttered?

ELE. That he may come, if he has any thought of this.

CHR. For thee to suffer—what? Where can thy senses be?

ELE. To escape from you as far as may be.

CHR. And hast no thought of life,—the life thou hast?

ELE. A fine life mine, most admirable!

CHR. Well, it might be, if only thou wouldst learn good sense.

ELE. Seek not to teach me treachery to friends.

CHR. Nay, this I teach thee not, but submission to the strong.

ELE. Go thou and flatter thus; 'tis not my way.

CHR. At least 'twere well not to fall from want of counsel.

ELE. If fall I must, it shall be as my father's avenger.

CHR. Our father, I know, can pardon this.²

ELE. 'Tis the way with traitors to approve such counsels.

CHR. Wilt thou not hearken and agree with me?

ELE. Not I. May I never be so void of sense!

¹ *i.e.*, if there were anything worse to tell, I might listen to thy counsel; but that is impossible.

² *i.e.*, my advice to thee to be more compliant and conceal thy hatred.

CHR. Why, then, I will away upon my mission.

ELE. Whither art thou going? For whom are these offerings thou bearest?

CHR. My mother sends me to pour libations at our father's tomb.

ELE. What? At the tomb of her most hated foe?

CHR. Whom her own hand slew,—that is what thou fain wouldst say.

ELE. Which of her friends persuaded her? Whose idea was this?

CHR. 'Twas prompted by some terror of the night,—so I believe.

ELE. Gods of my fathers, help me now,—*now*, at any rate!

CHR. Art thou encouraged by her fear?

ELE. Tell me the vision; I might answer then.

CHR. Nay, I only know enough to speak in brief.

ELE. Tell me that, at any rate. A little word hath often marred or made a man ere now.

CHR. 'Tis said she saw our sire, once more, face to face, back in the light of day; and lo! he took the sceptre which once he had wielded himself, but Ægisthus now, and planted it upon the hearth, and from it grew a branch fruit-laden, wherewith Mycenæ's land was all o'ershadowed. Such is the story I heard from the lips of one that was by, what time she was telling her dream to the Sun-god.¹ More than this I know not, save that I am sent by her because of this alarm. Then, by the gods of our race, I pray thee hearken to me, and fall not through folly; for, if thou spurn me now, thou wilt seek me hereafter, bringing thy sorrow with thee.

ELE. Dear sister mine, let nought of this that thou bearest

¹ Evil dreams were told to the elements, in order to rid the mind of the omen,—to the Sun in particular, as a god of purification. The same custom is more fully described at the beginning of the *Iph. Taur.* of Euripides.

in thy hands be laid by thee upon the tomb ; for laws, both human and divine, alike forbid thy offering funeral gifts or pouring libations of this loathed woman's sending to our father's spirit. Nay, cast them to the winds, or hide them in some deep-dug pit, where none of them shall e'er come nigh his resting-place ; but let them be as treasures for herself, stored safe below, against the day she dies ! To begin with, had she not been the most hardened of all women born, never would she have sent these offerings of her hate to be poured on the tomb of the man she slew. Dost think the dead man in his grave is like to receive these gifts with any friendly thought for her who slew and mangled him¹ with all dishonour as her foe, and, for ablution,² wiped the bloodstains on his head ? Canst thou suppose that what thou carriest there will free her from blood-guiltiness ? It cannot be. Nay, fling these things away ; and rather cut some tresses of the hair upon thy head, and give them unto him, with this poor gift,—and yet mine all,—from me, his hapless child, this lock of unkempt³ hair, and this my girdle unadorned. Then, falling at his tomb, pray that he may come from out the grave in gracious mood, to champion us against

¹ The murdered person was mutilated either to propitiate the gods below, or else to deprive him of power to avenge himself on his murderers. Cf. for the ceremonies observed by the murderer, Apoll. Rhodius, iv. 47 *sqq.*

² *i. e.*, to purge herself of guilt ; his blood is, by this symbolical act, upon his own head. Some have rendered, “and by way of funeral ablution, he received the stains upon his head,” which, even if possible Greek, seems far less good. Paley renders ἐπὶ λουτροῖσιν, “at the washing of the body.”

³ The meaning and origin of the word ἀλιπαρῆ are alike obscure. The Schol.'s paraphrase is ἀχμηράν. Hermann explains, “unfit to be offered by a suppliant.” Wunder follows Brunck in reading τῆνδε λιπαρῆ τρίχα, “this suppliant lock,” but such a meaning is not defensible. Paley regards ll. 451, 452, as interpolated by some grammarian who did not understand the elliptical formula ἀλλ' ὅμως ; omitting them, he would read τε for δὲ after αἰτοῦ.

our foes, and that his son Orestes may live to trample on his enemies with might victorious, that so henceforth we may deck his tomb with richer hands than make these offerings now. Indeed, indeed, I think 'twas e'en some care of his that sent these fearsome dreams to trouble her. Still, sister, do thus much to help thyself and me and him we love the first and best, the father of us both, who lies in Hades' halls.

CHO. The maiden counsels piously ; and thou, dear child, wilt do these things, if thou art well advised.

CHR. I will ; for 'tis senseless for two folk to be wrangling about right,¹ instead of hastening on its doing. But, if I undertake this deed, keep silence, I implore ye, friends ; for, should my mother learn hereof, bitter, I trow, shall I find this venture yet.

CHO. Unless I am a foolish seer, of wisdom void, Justice, that prophetic power,² is soon to come, winning her righteous victories by might ; yea, a little while, and she will visit them, my child. My heart beats high at the news of this cheering dream. For he, thy sire, the lord of Hellas, forgetteth never ; no ! nor the ancient two-edged axe of beaten bronze, which slew him with foulest outrage.

Forth from the dread ambush, where she lurks, shall come the bronze-shod vengeful fiend, with many a hand, with many a foot. For there hath fallen on those it never should an eager lust for a blood-stained marriage,—a bed and bridal both accursed. For this their crime most sure am I³ that

¹ Others render, "what is right admits of no argument for two to dispute about it."

² The dream of Clytæmnestra, as foreboding the coming of Justice, is apparently regarded as a presage of Justice. Blaydes conjectures *πρόφαντος*, "foreshown," viz., by the dream—a meaning which Jebb seems to find in *πρόμαντις*, "who has cast her shadow before."

³ The Greek of this passage (ll. 495-497) is strange and difficult to explain, and Paley is perhaps right in regarding the text as unsound. Wunder would read *μοι θράσος* for *τοι μ' ἔχει*, comparing l. 479 in the strophe. (Cf. Paley's note, *ad loc.*)

never,—so help us!—will murderer and accomplice see a warning sign approach them to their joy. Else have men no seer's skill in direful dreams or voice of god, unless this vision of the night shall find a happy issue.

Ah, troublous driving of Pelops¹ in days of yore, what gloom thou broughtest on this land! For since Myrtilus, o'er whom the billows closed, sank to his rest, hurled from his golden car by fell outrageous act, to utter doom,—never, from that day to this, hath grievous outrage left this house.²

CLY. Once more, it seems then, thou art ranging at will, Ægisthus being away, who ever kept thee from bringing shame upon thy friends, by standing at the doors at any rate; but, now that he is absent, thou payest no heed to me; and yet full oft hast thou proclaimed to many an ear how arrogant and how unjust I am in my commands,³ insulting thee and thine. Mine is not the insult truly, but for the many evil words I hear from thee I pay thee back in kind. Thy father, to wit,—thy one pretence for evermore,—was slain by me. By me? I know it well; deny it, no, I cannot. 'Twas Justice took him off, not I alone; whom 'twas thy duty to have helped, hadst thou been rightly minded; for this father of thine, whom thou art for ever mourning, he alone of all Hellenes was cruel enough to give thy sister as a sacrifice to gods; though he, her sire, begetting her, felt no such pangs as I endured who gave her birth.

Come, tell me now the reason why he sacrificed her,—for

¹ The chariot-race between Pelops and CEnomaus for the hand of Hippodamia. Legend says that Pelops bribed Myrtilus, the charioteer of CEnomaus, to secure the breakdown of his master's chariot, and then, to avoid payment, threw him into the sea. The reasons alleged for the death of Myrtilus are differently given by different authors,—some saying that he had offered rudeness to Hippodamia.

² Reading οἶκον. Paley and others read οἶκον, thus making ἐλιπεν intransitive.

³ Others place no stop at ἀρχω, and render "start insulting," i.e., without provocation.

whose sake¹ was it? Wilt tell me for the Argives? But they had no right to slay a child of mine. 'Twas for his brother's sake, forsooth,—for Menelaus,—that he slew mine own. Well, was he to pay me then no recompense for this? Had not Menelaus two children,² who should have rather died than mine, seeing they were his,—and hers for whose sake that expedition sailed? Or had Hades peradventure a desire to feast on babes of mine in preference to hers? Or had this most abandoned sire lost all affection for my offspring, while feeling it for that of Menelaus?³ A senseless father then was here and ill-advised! So at least think I, though I differ there from thee; and so would she say, my murdered child, could she but speak. Wherefore my heart misgives me not for that which has been done, and if I seem to thee to think amiss, be just in thy judgment ere thou blamest thy neighbours.⁴

ELE. Thou canst not say, this time at least, that I began the quarrel, and that these are merely thy retorts to me; nay, give me leave, and I will put the dead man's case aright, aye, and my sister's too.

CLY. *My* leave thou hast; hadst thou always thus addressed me, thy words had never vexed mine ear.

ELE. Well, hear me then; thou dost admit the slaying of my sire; what word more shameful could there be than this, no matter whether justly slain or not? Yet will I tell

¹ The Schol. took *τίνων* for a verb, "in revenge," and so several editors regard it.

² Hermione, and, according to Hesiod, a son Nicostratus.

³ The Schol. records a var. lect. *Μενελέω*, *i.e.*, "while Menelaus retained it."

⁴ The Greek admits of more than one meaning, according to the punctuation. Some place a comma after *σχοῦσα*, "think amiss in the just resolve I have taken," but this was not recognized by the Schol., who gives the sense as, "blame others (*i.e.*, me) when thou hast good reasons for it" (*i.e.*, not before). In the other alternative, *τοὺς πῆλας* would seem to be a euphemism for "thy father or thyself."

thee this: 'twas not Justice made thee take his life; no! thou wast drawn on by a villain's persuasion, and with him thou now consortest. Next, ask the huntress Artemis what sin called forth that punishment at Aulis, when she withheld the many winds;¹ or rather I will tell, for learn from her thou mayst not. One day my father at his sport—so I have heard—roused by his footfall from its lair a dappled antlered deer, in a grove of the goddess, and, with some loud vaunt anent its slaying, shot and hit it.² And so it was, Latona's child was wroth with him and held the Achæans back, till he, her sire, should offer his own daughter's life in quittance for the beast. 'Twas thus that she was sacrificed; else was no release for the host homeward or to Troy. Wherefore at last he offered her, reluctantly, through sore constraint, and not to pleasure Menelaus. And, say it really was a wish to help his brother which dictated this,—for I will also state thy view,—shouldst *thou* have slain him for this cause? By what law, pray? Look to it, when laying down this law for men, that thou art not ordaining³ sorrow and repentance for thyself. For if we take a life for life, thou wilt be the first to die, were justice only done thee. Nay, see to it, that thou art not advancing an unreal pretext. For tell me, if thou wilt, the reason why, at this moment, thou art stooping to the deepest shame, mating with the blood-stained wretch who helped thee slay my sire erewhile, and bearing him children, while that pure issue of thy first pure marriage is kept cast out by thee. How can I approve such things? Or wilt thou say

¹ *i.e.*, all of the many winds which might have been expected, any of which would have released the fleet. Campbell, "kept those many winds at Aulis," *i.e.*, blowing in that direction; but the other rendering is more natural.

² Such seems to be the natural meaning, but others understand, "he chanced to let fall some word of boasting on account of slaying it."

³ Reading both here and below in l. 584 *τιθης*, *not* *τιθης*, the first expressing *certainty*, the second mere *probability*. (Cf. Jebb's note.)

that this as well is retribution for thy daughter? 'Tis foully done, although thou say it. For wedding foes for a daughter's sake is no fair thing. But there!—I may not even counsel thee, for thy tongue is ever busy telling how I abuse my mother,—less a mother to me than a mistress I count thee, seeing I live a life of woe, for ever face to face with all the scorns that flow from thee and him who lives with thee. Meantime that other now abroad, scarce from thy hands escaped, drags out a wretched life, my poor Orestes, whom thou full oft hast made a cause of blame to me, saying that I am rearing him to take vengeance upon thee; and so I would, be well assured, were it but in my power; as far as that goes then, proclaim me to the world, whate'er thou wilt,¹ undutiful, loud-tongued, dead to all sense of shame. For if I show some natural skill in such-like things, it might perhaps be said I do thy nature credit.²

CHO. I see her breathing fury; but, whether she has right upon her side,³ that, I see, she heeds no more.

CLY. And what heed should I pay to such as her, seeing she heapeth such insults on her own mother,—at her age⁴ too? Seems it not that she would go to any length without shame?

ELE. Nay, rest assured, I *am* ashamed of this, although to thee I seem not so, and perceive that my conduct is ill-timed and ill-befitting me. Yea, 'tis thy enmity and thy acts that force me to this against my will. By shameful deeds the like are taught.

¹ Reading *εἶτε χοῦς* with Wunder and Dindorf for MSS. *εἶτε χοῖ*.

² *i.e.*, after all, I am only taking after thee.

³ Reading *ὄν δικη*, for which Blaydes and Paley conjecture *σοὶ δικη*. Whether *πνέουσιν* refers to Electra or Clytæmnestra is not quite clear; Paley thinks to the latter.

⁴ *i.e.*, when she ought to know better; or perhaps rather, "mere child as she is."

CLY. Shameless creature! Verily I and my sayings and doings give thee too much to talk about.

ELE. Thine this talk, not mine; 'tis thou who dost the deeds, and these find words themselves.

CLY. Now by our lady Artemis, thou shalt not get quit of this boldness, what time Ægisthus comes.

ELE. There now! thou art flying into a rage, after giving me full leave to say what I would; thou canst not even listen.

CLY. Wilt thou not even let me sacrifice in peace,¹ when I left *thee* free to say thy all?

ELE. Let thee,—yes; go sacrifice, I say; and chide me not for what I say, for I will say no more.

CLY. Uplift my offering of all fruits, thou who standest by to serve me, that I may raise a prayer to yonder king² to rid me of these my fears. Hear now my words of veiled import, Phœbus, thou protecting god; for in no friend's presence do I speak, nor must I unfold all to the light, with this maiden standing by, for fear she use her spite and rumour many-tongued to spread a false tale to the whole city. Yet hear me thus,³ for thus too will I speak. The visions I have seen this night in doubtful⁴ dreams, grant them fulfilment, King Lyceian, if their appearing boded good; if ill, let them go back upon my foes. And suffer none to cast me out by guileful means from wealth at present mine, if haply there be those who plot such things;

¹ *i.e.*, observing that complete silence which is implied by a religious εὐφηνμία. Jebb renders, "with hushed clamour," *i.e.*, in silence, but the phrase has no exact English equivalent.

² *i.e.*, to the Sun, often identified with Phœbus as a purifying and omen-averting deity.

³ *i.e.*, reading my inner meaning, for with a double meaning must I speak.

⁴ The Schol. gives another explanation, *i.e.*, "two dreams"; according to Æschylus (Choeph. 500 *sqq.*) Clytæmnestra dreamt she had given birth to a snake and suckled it.

but let me ever live, as now, a life secure, still mistress of the Atreidæ's house and of this sceptred sway, and, dwelling with the self-same friends as now, and with those of my children who bear me no ill-will and cause me no sore pain, lead happy days.

Hear me, Lyceian Apollo, in gracious mood, and grant these prayers to all of us e'en as I desire. And for the rest, e'en though I say it not, thou, being a god, knowest it all full well, I trow; for sons of Zeus will needs see all.

AGED ATT. (*disguised as a messenger*). Good ladies, pray you, let me clearly learn if this is the house of Ægisthus the king?

CHO. It is, good sir. Thou hast guessed of thyself aright.

AGED ATT. And am I right in guessing that this lady is his wife? Her looks proclaim her royal.

CHO. Assuredly; she whom thou beholdest here.

AGED ATT. All hail, O queen! I come with glad tidings for thee,—and for Ægisthus too,—from a friend.

CLY. I welcome thy word, and first would fain be told who sent thee hither?

AGED ATT. Phanoteus of Phocis, with important news.

CLY. What news, sir? Explain. Sent by a friend, thy tidings are good, I am sure.

AGED ATT. Orestes is dead; in that short word I sum up all.

ELE. Ah, woe is me! Undone this day!

CLY. Thy news, sirrah, thy news! Hearken not to her.

AGED ATT. I say again as I said before, Orestes is dead.

ELE. Undone, ah me! and dead henceforth!

CLY. See thou to thyself; but thou, sir, speak the truth, and tell me how he died.

AGED ATT. I will tell thee all, for to that end was I sent. 'Twas thus: he had come to the famous contest, chief ornament of Hellas, to contend in the Delphic games, and wher he heard the herald proclaiming aloud the foot-race, which

was first to be decided, he entered the lists, a bright young life, admired by all those gathered there; and, having made start and finish one,¹ forth he came with victory's honours thick upon him. And to make a long story short, I know not how to tell the victor feats of such a man. But² one thing learn; in all races o'er the double course proclaimed by the judges,—e'en all that use ordains,³—in each of these he bore away the prize, and happy was he thought,—an Argive styled, by name Orestes, son of Agamemnon, that in days of yore gathered the famous host from Hellas.

So went it, as I tell; but, when some god doth bar the way, not even a strong man shall escape. There came another day, with trial of racing charioteers at sunrise, and his with many another team had entered for the prize. One was an Achæan, one from Sparta, two were Libyans, drivers of

¹ Those who accept this line as genuine generally adopt Musgrave's τῷ ἀφέσει for MSS. τῷ φύσει, but Paley is perhaps right in doubting its genuineness, and in questioning this use of ἀφεις for βαλβίς, "the start."

Jebb interprets, "having brought the race back to the point from which it started, by completing the double course of the δίαυλος." The difficulty of the expression has led to such strange renderings as the following:—(α) "when he had accomplished the course in a manner befitting his noble stature" (τῷ φύσει) (Wunder); (β) "having made the finish simultaneous with the start," *i.e.*, he ran so fast that start and finish were not to be distinguished (Brunck).

² This whole passage, ll. 690-695, is bracketed by Paley as spurious, not without ample reason (*cf.* his note *ad loc.*).

³ Editors adopt Porson's ἄθλ' ἄπερ νομίζεται for the unmetrical and unmeaning πένταθλ' ἄ of the MSS., which might have crept in from a marginal gloss. Nauck, rejecting l. 691, would read δρόμων for τούτων in l. 692, but the whole passage has the appearance of a clumsy interpolation. Paley suggests that the original text might have been:

εἰσῆλθε λαμπρός, πᾶσι τοῖς ἐκεῖ σέβας,
νίκης τ' ἔχων ἐξῆλθε πάντιμον γέρας.
καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τοιαῦθ' . . .

i.e., omitting l. 686 and ll. 688-695, and inserting τε in l. 687.

yokèd teams ; fifth amongst them came Orestes, with steeds from Thessaly ; sixth came one from Ætolia, with chestnut colts ; the seventh was a Magnesian ; the eighth an Ænian by race, with white horses ; a ninth from Athens, god-built town ; a Bœotian as well, making ten chariots in all. And, having taken stand when¹ the judges appointed had cast lots and stationed the chariots, they started at the brazen trumpet's note ; at once the drivers shouted to their steeds and shook the reins in their hands ; and all the course was filled with noise of rattling² cars, while dust went up in clouds. Packed close together, no man spared the goad, that so³ he might pass the axles and snorting steeds of the rest ; for, all the while, their backs and rolling wheels were bespattered with foam from the breath of the horses behind. Now Orestes, keeping close in to the pillar at the end,⁴ would ever graze his nave, giving the trace horse on the right his head, while reining in the inside steed.⁵ At first the chariots all ran straight and steady, until the Ænian's hard-mouthed colts ran away with him, and, just upon the turn,⁶ as they were finishing the sixth and starting on the seventh round, dashed headlong against a Libyan car. Whereupon, from one mischance, each crashed into his fellow and collapsed, and Crisa's plain was thick with chariot-wrecks. But he of Athens, clever charioteer, was ware thereof ; so he drew to one side and held in⁷ his steeds, letting the wave of horses

¹ Perhaps ὄρ' (ὄρε) for MSS. ὄθ' (ὄθι) is the simplest emendation.

² Others "welded," but "rattling" seems defensible, although against strict analogy.

³ Jebb prefers Linwood's rendering, "whenever anyone showed in front of . . ."

⁴ *i.e.*, the pillar round which the turn was made.

⁵ Four horses were harnessed abreast ; the two in the middle under the yoke ; the two outside in traces.

⁶ So Paley. Campbell understands, "swerving" ; while L. and S. quote Hermann, and render "anew," Lat. *denuo*.

⁷ A metaphor from riding out a storm at sea after taking in sail.

surging in mid course go by. Now Orestes was driving last, keeping his horses behind, trusting to the finish; but when he saw the Athenian alone left in, with one shrill cry full in his horses' ears he pursued him at a gallop, and the twain were driving neck to neck, first one, and then the other, showing a head in front of the chariots.¹ Safely he steered his course through all the other rounds, unhappy youth, his car and he alike erect; till, loosening² the left rein as the horse was coming round, he struck the edge of the pillar without knowing it, thereby splintering the axle-box in the middle, and forth from the car he slipped and was entangled in the shapely reins; and, as he fell upon the ground, away dashed the horses into the midst of the course. But when the crowd saw him fallen from his chariot,³ loudly they wailed the youth,—so sad a fate o'ertaking such high merit; for now was he dashed to earth, then feet uppermost towards the sky, until the drivers, scarce checking his horses' career, loosed him, but so mangled that none of his friends could have recognized his poor body. So they burnt him straight-way on a pyre, and chosen men of Phocis are bringing his mighty body hither in a tiny urn of bronze,—only poor ashes now,⁴—that he may find a tomb in the land of his fathers.

Such my tidings now to thee, piteous truly in the telling, but to those who saw, as we did, the most grievous sight these eyes have ever seen.

¹ The drivers lean forward in their chariots, and, as each in turn leads, his head shows in front.

² Whereas (cf. ll. 721, 722) he should have drawn in this rein and given the right-hand horse his head.

³ *ἀντιυγες*, strictly the rails or handles used in mounting. The chariot was open behind.

⁴ Paley without much reason questions the genuineness of l. 758, nor is there any necessity for Madvig's conjecture *δειλαίαν σποδόν*, the genitive being quite intelligible, "a body consisting of or reduced to ashes."

CHO. Alas, alas! It seems their race is all cut off from my old masters, root and branch.

CLY. O Zeus, what can I say, that this is blessed news to me or dread and yet my gain? 'Tis pain and grief to save my life by sorrows of mine own!

AGED ATT. Why so faint of heart, lady, at this news?

CLY. A wondrous thing is motherhood; one cannot come to hate one's babes, however ill-entreated.

AGED ATT. In vain then have I come, it seems.

CLY. In vain, no! How shouldst thou say "in vain"? If thou art come to me with sure proofs of his death,—of his who drew his life from mine, but left my breast and nursing care and became an alien far from home, never setting eyes on me since the day he left this land; but, charging me with his father's murder, threatened a dire revenge; and so it was that sleep ne'er closed my eyes with kindly hand by night or day, but evermore the threatening¹ hour kept me living like one doomed. But now, being rid to-day of all fear from him and her,—for she, as dwelling with me, was the greater plague, draining my very life-blood evermore,—yes, now, maybe, shall I pass my days in peace, for all her threats can do.

ELE. Ah, woe is me! Yea, now may I cry "Woe" for thy sad fate, Orestes, since she, thy mother, mocks thy present plight. Is it not well?

CLY. With thee not so; with him, being as he is, 'tis well.

ELE. Hearken, O Nemesis² of him but lately dead!

CLY. She hath heard whom she should, and ordered all aright.

¹ *i.e.*, the immediate future; the time just ahead; which is perhaps to be regarded as standing over her like a threatening tyrant, ready to hale her away to death.

² The goddess of Retribution, who checks presumption, and sometimes, as here, is invoked to punish extraordinary crimes, being sent by the spirit of the dead.

ELE. Mock on ; 'tis now thy fortune's hour.

CLY. Thou and Orestes, then, shall not stop me here.

ELE. Far from stopping *thee*, 'tis we who are stopped.

CLY. Much guerdon, sirrah, would thy coming merit, if thou couldst stop ¹ her noisy tongue.

AGED ATT. So will I go my way, if this is well.

CLY. Nay, nay ! Such treatment were not worthy of me or of the friend who sent thee. Nay, go within ; and leave her here outside to tell out her woes and those of her friends. (*Exit CLYTÆMNESTRA, followed by the AGED ATTENDANT.*)

ELE. Think ye not she weeps and wails in direst grief, unhappy mother, for her son thus lost, as one who suffers grievous pain ? Not she ! but with a laugh she goes her way. Ah, woe is me ! How hast thou undone me by thy death, beloved Orestes ! For thou art gone and from my heart hast plucked the only hopes I still had left, that thou wouldst one day come alive to avenge thy father and my hapless self. But now where can I go ? I am alone, bereft of thee and of my sire. Henceforth must I become a slave again amongst those whom most I hate, my father's murderers. Is not mine a goodly lot ? Nay, but nevermore will I enter the house with them,² but will lay me down³ here at the gate and waste away my friendless life. Wherefore let any of those within slay me, if weary of my presence ; for if he slay, that were a boon ; but if I live, 'tis pain ; life is not a thing I crave.⁴

¹ Reading *πάσαις* with Wunder for MSS. *ἐπανσας*, which would mean "if thou hadst stopped,"—a reading preferred by Paley.

² Reading *ξύνοικος εἶσεμ'* with Hermann for MSS. *ξύνοικος ἔσομ'*.

³ Others render "giving myself up to despair," or "having given over all care for myself."

⁴ It is worth mentioning that Paley regards ll. 817-822 as a probable interpolation, taking exception to numerous expressions in them.

CHO. Where can be the bolts of Zeus, where the Sun-god with his light, if they see these things and hide them, all unmoved?

ELE. Woe, woe, alas !

CHO. Daughter, why weepest thou ?

ELE. Alas !

CHO. Refrain from all high words.

ELE. Thou wilt be my death.

CHO. How ?

ELE. By hinting hopes of those that, beyond all doubt, have passed to Hades' halls, thou wilt trample on me yet the more, wasted with sorrow as I am.

CHO. Nay, King Amphiaraus, I know, passed from men's sight by reason of women's golden snares,¹ and now beneath the earth——

ELE. Ah me, alas !

CHO. He reigns in fulness of his power.²

ELE. Alas !

CHO. Alas, indeed ! For his murderous wife——

ELE. Was slain.

CHO. She was.

ELE. Yes, yes, I know ; for there appeared an avenger³ for the mournful dead ; but I have none henceforth ; for he who still was left, is snatched away and gone.

CHO. Hapless maid in hapless plight !

ELE. I too know this, yea, know it all too well, in my life

¹ Amphiaraus was persuaded, against his better judgment, by his wife Eriphyle to join the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, she having been bribed by Polyneices with Harmonia's necklace. The story was that Amphiaraus was swallowed by the earth, which opened when he was hard pressed by a Theban warrior.

² According to the Schol., "reigns over all the spirits,"—an impossible rendering surely.

³ Alcmaeon, son of Amphiaraus and Eriphyle, slew his mother for her treachery.

of dire and dismal sorrow, that gathers grief through all the months.¹

CHO. We saw the cause of thy laments.²

ELE. No more then strive to lead me off, where——

CHO. What meanest thou?

ELE. I find no more support in hopes of him, my brother sprung from the same high stock with me.

CHO. Death is the common lot of all.

ELE. What, are all doomed to meet it, as he did,—poor boy!—dragged by shapely reins amid the hooves of racing steeds?

CHO. That outrage none foresaw.³

ELE. No indeed,—if, without my tending care, in alien soil——

CHO. Alas!

ELE. He lies entombed,—burial and tears of mine alike denied.

CHR. (*entering excitedly*). 'Tis joy, dear sister, speeds my steps, regardless of proprieties in my haste to arrive. For I bring glad news and respite from the woes which thou, ere this, hast felt and mourned.

ELE. Whence shouldst *thou* find help for these my woes, for which no cure may anywhere be seen?

CHR. Orestes hath returned to us,—hear it from my lips and know,—in visible presence, as thine eyes behold me now.

ELE. Art mad, unhappy girl,—or dost mock my sorrows and thine own?

¹ Reading :

πανσύρτω παμμήνην δεινῶν
στρυγνῶν τ' ἀχέων αἰῶνι.

The MSS. insert πολλῶν before δεινῶν ; but the text is very doubtful in any case.

² Reading ἀθρήνεις for ἄθροεῖς, which is unmetrical.

³ Others render “passing thought,” “inconceivable” ; but the Schol.’s paraphrase ἀπροόρατος ὁ θάνατος favours the above version.

CHR. Nay, by the hearth of our fathers, 'tis not in mockery I say this ; but as really returned to us ¹ I speak of him.

ELE. Alas, poor heart ! And from whom didst hear this tale, to believe it all too fondly thus ?

CHR. I saw for myself and no one else ; clear proofs enough for me to credit what I tell.

ELE. What proof, poor sister, hast thou seen ? What sight, pray, lit this fatal ² glow in thee ?

CHR. Now hear me, I entreat ; that, having learnt my tale, henceforth thou mayst call me wise or fool.

ELE. Then speak, if speaking gives thee any joy.

CHR. I will, and all I saw will tell. On coming to our father's grave, the ancestral tomb, I saw libations of milk fresh-poured from the top of the mound, and the grave wreathed round with all the flowers that blow. And, seeing it, I marvelled much, and looked about, for fear there might be some one near me, hard at hand. But, when I saw that all the place was quiet, I drew nearer to the tomb, and there on the edge of the mound ³ was a fresh-cut lock of hair ; no sooner did my sorrowing eyes behold it, than on my soul there burst the old familiar form, ⁴—lo ! 'twas a sign from Orestes, from him whom more than all I loved ! And I took and held it in my hands, avoiding all ill-omened words, while tears of gladness straightway filled mine eyes.

¹ Dindorf and Wunder adopt a curious variant $\nu\tilde{\omega}$ *i.e.* νόει, but this is equally improbable and unnecessary.

² *i.e.*, as doomed to end in bitter disappointment. There is no reason to adopt Bergk's conjecture,—ingenious as it is,—ἀνηφαιστει, “a fire not of Hephæstus,” *i.e.*, a fire of the soul.

³ Others render “on the furthest side of the tomb,” *i.e.*, furthest from the city,—a somewhat strained meaning.

⁴ This intransitive use of ἐμπαίειν has no classical parallel, but it is less awkward, perhaps, than to regard ὄμμα as the subject, τι as the object, “the familiar sight (of his hair) causes an idea to strike me,” as proposed by Paley.

And now, as then, full well I know that this fair offering came from none but him. For whom doth this concern save thee and me? 'Twas not my doing, that I know; no, nor thine;—how could it be? Seeing thou canst not even leave this roof to pray, without ruing it. Was it our mother then? Nay, 'tis not her wont or wish to do such things; nor, if she had, should we have failed to see;¹ but from Orestes come these offerings at the tomb.² Take heart, dear sister mine; the same fortune is not ever constant to the self-same lives. Ours, ere this, did scowl on us; but to-day, maybe, will prove the beginning of many a brighter scene.

ELE. Alas for thy folly! How I pity thee, this long while past!

CHR. What meanest thou? Do not my tidings point to joy?

ELE. Thou knowest not whither or into what fancies thou driftest.

CHR. How is it I know not what mine eyes have seen so clear?

ELE. He is dead, unhappy girl; thy hopes of safety from him are gone; look not any more to him.

CHR. Ah, woe is me! From whose lips heardst thou this?

ELE. From one that stood by, when he met his doom.

CHR. And where is this eye-witness? Amazement steals upon me.

ELE. Within, a welcome guest, causing our mother no distress.

CHR. Ah me, unhappy that I am! Whose then can those many offerings at our father's tomb have been?

¹ Reading *ἐλάνθαν' ἄν* with Brunck and Dindorf, though many retain MSS. *ἐλάνθανεν*, rendering "was she likely to escape notice."

² Reading *τάπιτύμβια* with Wunder and Dindorf for MSS. *τάπιτίμια*, which could hardly mean "gifts in honour of the dead," as Suidas explains it, but "penalties."

ELE. Memorials, belike, of the dead Orestes, which some one hath laid there,—so I take it.

CHR. Ah luckless maid ! And I was hastening so joyously with my great news, not knowing, it seems, our desperate plight ; but now, at my coming, I find the old troubles and others besides.

ELE. 'Tis even thus with thee ; but if thou hearken to me, thou wilt lift the burden of this present woe from us.

CHR. What, am I to make the dead arise ?

ELE. I said not so ;¹ such folly dwelleth not in me.

CHR. What then dost thou bid me do that I can undertake ?

ELE. To do and dare whate'er I may advise.

CHR. Well, if there be any use therein, I will not refuse.

ELE. Look to it, nought succeeds without toil.

CHR. I see ; in all my strength admits, my help is thine.

ELE. Hearken then to the scheme I have formed. Thou knowest, I trow, as well as I, that we have now no friends to side with us ; Hades has reft us of all ; he hath them now, and we are left, two lonely maids. Now I, so long as I had news that our brother was still alive and well, had hopes that he would one day come to avenge his father's murder ; but now that he is no more, 'tis to thee I look, that thou shrink not from slaying thy father's murderer, even Ægisthus,² with this my sister's hand to help ; no more need I hide aught from thee. Whither,³ pray, and to what hope that is still unwrecked, wilt thou turn thine eyes and sit with folded hands ? Thou whose portion now is tears, robbed of all share in thy father's wealth,—thou that

¹ Madvig suggests, somewhat needlessly, *οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅ γ' εἶπον*, "thou dost not understand my drift."

² Wunder regards l. 957 as an interpolation ; certainly it is not necessary.

³ Others have taken *ποῖ* as equivalent to *quousque*, "how long," but there is small authority for such a usage.

hast to mourn, that, all this while, the years creep on and find thee still a maid unwed! Nay, hope no more that thou wilt e'er attain thereto;¹ Ægisthus is no such witless wight as ever to suffer thee or me to bear a child, sure cause of trouble unto him. But, if thou follow my counsels, in the first place shalt thou win a name for duteous love from thy father in his grave and from thy brother as well; next, shalt thou have henceforth the title "Free," e'en as thou wast born, and shalt find a husband worthy of thee; for all love to look at what is good and true. Nay, seest thou not what honoured fame thou wilt bring as well on me as on thyself, if thou consent? For who of citizens or strangers will not welcome the sight of us with such-like words of praise, "Behold these sisters twain, my friends,—the pair who saved their father's house, and, sparing not their lives, stood forth one day to slay their prosperous foes; these two deserve our love, and all should reverence these; and in our feasts and at our people's gatherings, these for their bravery all should honour."

Thus will all men tell our praises; and so, alive or dead, our glory will not fail. Come, dear sister, be persuaded, help thy father, share thy brother's toil, end my sorrows and thine own,—sure of this, that life disgraced disgraces noble souls.

CHO. To speaker as to hearer forethought is a good ally in cases like the present.

CHR. Yea, friends, and were her senses not perverse, she would have remembered caution, e'en as shé forgets, ere speaking thus. For whither, pray, dost turn thine eyes to arm thyself with such fool-hardiness and call on me to lend my help? Dost thou not see? Thou art a woman born, not man, weaker than thy foes in might. Their fortune smiles on them from day to day; ours ebbs and comes to nought.

¹ *i.e.*, to marriage and wedlock.

Who then shall scheme to master such a man and escape without ruing his folly? Beware lest, evil as our plight, we get worse troubles for ourselves, if any overhear this talk. This brings us no release¹ nor any profit either, to win fair fame and sorry death withal. Death is not the direst death, but craving death and failing e'en in that.² Nay, I entreat thee, ere our ruin is complete, our line left by us desolate, restrain thy wrath. And all that hath been said by thee, will I take care to have unsaid and void of consequence. Be wise enough thyself, at last though late, to yield thy weakness to their strength.

CHO. Be persuaded. Man hath no better gain to win than forethought and a prudent heart.

ELE. Nought unexpected hast thou said ; full well I knew thou wouldst reject my overtures. Well, I must do this deed alone, with none to help ; leave it undone I will not.

CHR. Ah ! Would thou hadst been so minded at the slaying of our sire ! Thou mightest have accomplished anything.³

ELE. In character I was ; 'twas power to think I wanted then.

CHR. Then cultivate that want through life.

ELE. These counsels prove thou wilt not help.

CHR. No, for 'tis but natural bad ventures e'en should fail.

ELE. I envy thee thy shrewdness, loathe thy cowardice.

¹ Elmsley would read *ἡμῖν*, taking *λῶει* in the sense of *λυσιτελεῖ*, but nothing is gained by so doing.

² Many critics regard ll. 1007, 1008 as out of place here, Schneidewin even bracketing them as spurious. Wolff somewhat ingeniously proposed to transfer the two verses to follow l. 822, where they certainly would suit admirably.

³ *i.e.*, if this is really thy purpose, it is a pity it did not occur to thee long ago ; our father's murder might then have been prevented. The MSS. reading *πάντα γὰρ* was corrected by Dawes to *πᾶν γὰρ ἄν*.

CHR. Praise me,—I will e'en endure it.¹

ELE. *That* shalt thou never have to hear from me.

CHR. There is a future, too,² long enough to settle that.

ELE. Begone ; there is no help in thee.

CHR. There is, but thou hast no desire to learn.

ELE. Go, tell thy mother all I say.

CHR. Nay, nay, I hate thee not so bitterly.

ELE. At least, then, know the shame to which thou bringest me.³

CHR. No shame at all, but care for thee.

ELE. Am I then to follow thy rule of right?

CHR. Yea ; when wiser grown, then shalt thou guide us both.

ELE. 'Tis strange indeed that one who speaks so well should err.

CHR. Thou hast rightly described thy own complaint.

ELE. What? Dost thou not think I speak with justice?⁴

CHR. Aye, but there are cases where e'en justice carries hurt.

ELE. *I* have no wish to live under such laws.⁵

CHR. Well, if thou go through with this, thou wilt praise me yet.⁶

ELE. Go through with it I shall, and thou wilt not dismay me.

CHR. Is this indeed the truth? Wilt thou not think again?

¹ The meaning is rather obscure. Either, "blame or praise me as thou wilt, I will bear it unmoved," or, as the Schol. interprets, "there will come a time when thou wilt praise me, and then I shall be content to listen."

² *i.e.*, as well as a present ; it will decide if I am ever to win thy praise.

³ *i.e.*, in refusing to help, or in discrediting me with posterity.

⁴ *i.e.*, in urging the slaying of Ægisthus.

⁵ *i.e.*, such as separate principle from expediency.

⁶ *i.e.*, when involved in trouble.

ELE. Nay, nought is more hateful than thinking,—if amiss.

CHR. It seems thou heedest not a word I say.

ELE. My mind was made up long ago ; 'tis no new thing.

CHR. Why then, I will away ; thou canst not bring thyself to approve my words, nor I thy ways.

ELE. So, go within. Follow thee I never will,—no, though thou now shouldst wish it sore ; for deep folly it is e'en to attempt an idle quest.¹

CHR. Well, if now thou seemest wise in thine own sight, why keep that wisdom ; anon, when launched on trouble's ways, thou wilt approve my words. (*Exit CHRYSOTHEMIS.*)

CHO. Why, when we see the birds² of the air, with truest instinct, careful to cherish those who gave them life and all their joy therein,—do we not pay these debts in equal wise ? But, by the lightning hurled by Zeus, and by Themis throned in heaven, not long shall we go unpunished !³

O voice divine that reachest 'neath the earth for mortal men,⁴ cry aloud for me in tones of woe to the Atreidæ in their graves, bearing to their ears a sad reproach, that now the fortunes of their house are all unsound,⁵ while, for their children, a feud 'twixt two no more admits the harmony of living still as friends.⁶ Electra, abandoned by all, weathers

¹ *i.e.*, the pursuit of peace and happiness which to thee are so dear.

² The affection of the stork, crane, and swan for the parent-birds seems to have been proverbial in ancient times.

³ As Paley remarks, this use of ἀπόνητοι for ἄπονοι is scarcely defensible,—perhaps owing to a gloss, ἀποίνητοι on ἀνάπονοι, which was possibly the true reading.

⁴ Jebb renders βροτοῖσι, “to dead men,” an unusual meaning certainly, and not required here.

⁵ The reading of the MSS. does not complete the metre ; perhaps Hermann's νοσεῖ δὴ may be admitted.

⁶ *i.e.*, they are too embittered for harmony to be any longer possible. But it must be confessed this meaning is strained, and there may be some corruption in the received text.

the storm alone, ever mourning her father's fate,¹ poor maid, like plaintive nightingale, recking nought of death, and ready withal to leave the light, once she hath destroyed the double pest.² What child would show such nobleness?

For of the noble no one cares to live disgraced, fouling a fair report, and losing thus a name, even as thou, O daughter dear, hast chosen a life of tears alway, to share it with thy sire,³ showing thy loathing for the wrong,⁴ to win a twofold praise in one,—the name of wise and noblest child.

May I see thee living yet, as much in power and wealth above thy foes as now thou art beneath their hand!⁵ For I have found thee embarked on no goodly lot; but for those greatest of existing laws,⁶ herein I see thee bear away the highest prize⁷ by piety towards Zeus. (*Enter ORESTES and PYLADES, followed by attendants, with a brazen urn.*)

ORE. Ladies, have we heard aright, and is our course directed straight to the goal we seek?

CHO. What seekest thou, and with what object art thou come?

¹ The MSS. reading τὸν αἰῖ πατρός is perhaps the remains of a marginal gloss, as suggested by Paley; but what the original was is difficult to conjecture. Conjectures are: τὸν αἰῖ πότμον, "the everlasting doom" (Paley); πότμον οὐδὲ πατρός (Blaydes); τὸν ἐὸν πότμον (Dindorf). The sense is given by the Schol. as αἰῖ τὸν τοῦ πατρός μόρον στονάχουσα.

² *i.e.*, Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra.

³ Others, with Campbell, take κοινὸν αἰῶνα to mean death, "the lot which all men share and all lament."

⁴ The MSS. reading τὸ μὴ καλὸν καθοπλίσασα seems almost unintelligible, nor are the conjectures at all convincing. Paley suggests καταπτύσασα, and this is perhaps as good as anything yet advanced. It has been adopted in the above version. Hermann translates the vulgate by "armans scelus," *i.e.*, "organizing a crime so as to . . ."; Dindorf and others, "having triumphed over guilt so as to . . ."; both of which renderings are surely impossible (cf. Jebb's note *ad loc.*).

⁵ Reading ὑπόχειρ with Musgrave for MSS. ὑπὸ χεῖρα.

⁶ *i.e.*, duty to parents.

⁷ Jebb renders differently, "prospering full well in regard to these."

ORE. I have long been asking where Ægisthus dwells.

CHO. Well, thy steps have led thee right ; thy guide was not to blame.

ORE. Pray, which of you, then, will tell those in the house of the welcome arrival of our company ?

CHO. This maid here, if the nearest ¹ should announce it.

ORE. Go, maiden, and, on entering, say that men from Phocis seek Ægisthus.

ELE. Ah, woe is me ! Never surely with visible proofs of the rumour we heard ?

ORE. What rumour *thou* hast heard, I know not ; but aged Strophius ² charged me to bring news of Orestes.

ELE. What news, sir ? How steals a terror over me !

ORE. In this small urn we carry hither, as thou seest, the small remains that death hath left of him.

ELE. Ah, woe is me ! 'Tis all plain now ! ³ Ready to my hand I see my grief, ⁴ methinks.

ORE. If indeed thou art weeping for the woes of Orestes, know that this vessel holds his dust.

ELE. Then I entreat thee, sir, give me this urn into my keeping, if indeed it hideth him, that I may weep and make lament for myself and all my race in company with this his dust.

ORE. (*to his attendants*). Bring it hither, give it her, whoever she is ; for 'tis not as an enemy she craves this boon, but as a friend, maybe, or one by birth of kin to him.

¹ The word *ἄγγιστρον* is capable of a double meaning. Electra stands in this relation not only to those within, as the Chorus understand, but also to the new arrival. It is a good instance of Sophoclean *εἰρωνεία*.

² It is noteworthy that Orestes says he was sent by Strophius as being Agamemnon's friend ; while the disguised messenger said he came from Phanoteus, who is Clytæmnestra's friend. Each adapts his story to his audience.

³ The punctuation is Jebb's.

⁴ *i.e.*, the urn, "a burden of sorrow" which she can now take in her hands.

ELE. (*receiving the urn*). Memorial of him I loved the best, last token of Orestes' life, how contrary to all my hopes,—so different from the sending forth,¹—have I received thee back! For now I lift thee in my hands, a thing of nought; but then I sent thee forth from home in all thy radiant youth, my child. Would that I had left my life, or ever I sent thee hence to a stranger's land, stealing thee away in these my arms, and saved thee from a bloody death, that so thou mightest have lain dead that day, winning a share in thy father's tomb! But now, away from home, an exile on a foreign shore, thou hast met an evil doom, without thy sister near; and I, unhappy girl, washed thee not nor decked thy corpse with loving hands nor gathered from the blazing fire its piteous burden, as I should. Nay, with stranger hands to tend thee, hapless boy, art thou come hither, a little burden held in little urn. Ah me, for my nursing long ago, all profitless, which oft-times I have spent on thee with pleasant toil! For thou wert ne'er thy mother's pet so much as mine, nor was it those about the house, but I, that nursed thee,—I whom thou wouldst ever call by sister's name. But now 'tis o'er, and thou art dead, all in a single day; for as a whirlwind hast thou passed, sweeping it all away.

My sire is gone, and I am dead to thee,² while thou thyself art dead and gone. Our foes are mocking; and our mother, no mother to us, is wild with joy,—she of whom thou wouldst oft send secret word to me that thou wouldst soon appear to punish her in person; but this hath our curst fate, both thine own and mine, wrested from us, sending me hither, in thy dear body's stead, ashes, shadows, things of

¹ One MS. gives ὄσπερ, a tempting reading if better supported; ὦνπερ is extremely difficult to explain, unless as a case of irregular attraction to ἐλπίδων for αἴσπερ.

² *i.e.*, I am to thee as thou art now to me; death has ended all relations between us.

nought. Ah me, ah me! O hapless form! Alas, and woe is me! Ah, thy direful journey hither!¹ How hast thou undone me, dearest child,—undone me, yes, O brother mine! Wherefore take me to thyself to share this grave of thine, nought to nought, that henceforth I may dwell with thee below. For while as yet thou wert on earth, I shared with thee alike in all; and now, in death, I would not miss thy grave; for the dead, I see, have no more grief.

CHO. Think, Electra, he was mortal that begat thee, and Orestes mortal too; wherefore grieve not to excess. This debt to death we all must pay.²

ORE. Ah me! What can I say? To what have recourse, at a loss for words? No longer can I curb my tongue.

ELE. And what is it pains thee? To what do these words point?

ORE. Canst thou be that Electra, of whom we all have heard?

ELE. Behold her here, and in most piteous plight.

ORE. Alas, then, for thy grievous case!

ELE. Surely, sir, thou art never mourning thus for me?

ORE. O body marred by foul, unholy hands!

ELE. To whom but me can these thy scorns apply, sir?³

ORE. Alas for thy unwedded state, thy life of woe!

ELE. Pray, sir, why that earnest gaze,—those sighs?

ORE. How little I knew, it seems, of my own sorrows!

ELE. What has been said to show thee this?

ORE. 'Tis seeing thee, whom grief has made a far-seen mark.

¹ *i.e.*, the bringing of his supposed ashes in the urn from Crisa to Mycenæ.

² This verse is omitted by many critics as a commonplace interpolated from elsewhere, but it may well be genuine here.

³ *i.e.*, these pitying remarks must be meant for me, though I scarce know why a stranger should be so moved by my sorrows

ELE. And yet 'tis but a trifling part thou seest now.

ORE. How *could* there be more grievous sights than these?

ELE. Thus, that I am living with the murderers——

ORE. Of whom? Whence comes this crime thou hintest?¹

ELE. The murderers of my sire. And, next, I am their slave, perforce.

ORE. Why, who is it constrains thee thus?²

ELE. My mother is she called, but no-wise like a mother acts.

ORE. How so? By blows or outrage to thy life?

ELE. By blows, and outrage, and all wrongs.

ORE. And is there none to help thee, or to hinder her?

ELE. No, none; these ashes thou hast brought me here are his whom once I had.

ORE. Unhappy one, what pity fills me as I gaze, this long while past!

ELE. Then know, thou art the only one that e'er hath pitied me.

ORE. Yea, for I am the only one that ever came to share thy grief!³

ELE. Thou surely art never a kinsman come I know not whence?

ORE. I will tell thee that, if these are friends here present.

ELE. Yes, they are friends, and thou wilt speak to trusty ears.

¹ *i.e.*, "whither points this hint of crime?" "from what quarter dost hint it?"—this is Jebb's explanation, and the only one which suits Electra's answer. Wunder's "by whom was the crime committed?" does not suit the context.

² *i.e.*, compels thee to be a slave to murderers.

³ Brunck and others read *τοῖς ἴσοις*, but this gives a less natural sense; Orestes should surely say, "I alone pity thee, because I alone feel for thy woes" (cf. Paley's note *ad loc.*).

ORE. Let go that vessel then, that so thou mayst learn all.

ELE. In Heaven's name, sir, do not treat me so !

ORE. Obey my words, and thou wilt ne'er do wrong.

ELE. Nay, by thy beard, deprive me not of what I do most prize !

ORE. Be sure, I will not let it go.

ELE. Woe is me for thee, Orestes, if I must then forego thy burial.

ORE. Hush, hush ! Thou dost not right to mourn.

ELE. Not right to mourn my brother's death ?

ORE. *Thou*¹ hast no right to use such words.

ELE. Am I so slighted² by the dead ?

ORE. Not slighted thou at all ; but this is nought of thine.

ELE. It is, if here I hold the ashes of Orestes.

ORE. Orestes' ashes, no !—save as we made up the tale.

ELE. Then where is my poor brother's tomb ?

ORE. Nowhere ; live men need not tombs.

ELE. How sayst thou, boy ?

ORE. The truth, and nothing else.

ELE. What, is he still alive ?

ORE. If I am, so is he.

ELE. What, art *thou* Orestes ?

ORE. Look on this my father's seal, and learn if I speak true.

ELE. Most welcome light !

ORE. Most welcome, I attest !

¹ Whether *σοι* is here emphatic or not may be questioned. Two versions are possible : (α) "it is not right for thee (or anyone) to speak of him as dead" ; (β) "*thou* hast no right to . . .," whatever others may do.

² *i.e.*, will the dead reject my tribute of grief? Linwood, however, renders, "have I no share in . . .," and understands the next line to mean, "thou art deprived of nought ; this urn is none of thine." But *ροῦτο* may equally well mean, "this mourning."

ELE. O voice,¹ art come ?

ORE. Ask not elsewhere henceforth.

ELE. Do I hold thee in my arms ?

ORE. So mayst thou hold me evermore !

ELE. Ladies of my country, best of friends, behold Orestes here, whom stratagem was used to kill but now has made alive again.²

ORE. We see him, daughter, and our eyes o'erflow with tears, in gladness at the happy chance.

ELE. O son³ of sire most dear to me, this moment come—come back to find and set thine eyes on whom thou fain wouldst see !

ORE. Yes, we are come ; but wait awhile, and hold thy peace.

ELE. But why ?

ORE. Silence is safer, lest some one in the house should hear.

ELE. Nay, by the virgin Artemis, ne'er will I deign to fear those women there, useless cumberers of the ground, for ever pent indoors.

ORE. And yet take heed ; e'en in women's breasts the war-god finds a home ; full well, I trow, thou knowest this from past experience.⁴

ELE. Ah me and well-a-day ! The woe thou castest up to me may ne'er be hid or done away,—its nature I can ne'er forget !

¹ As Jebb well says,—“a *present* and *living* Orestes—no more the exiled brother who spoke to me only in *φήμαι*—no more the dead Orestes.”

² *i.e.*, the fiction of his death had been the means of lulling all suspicions, and so of saving his life.

³ Paley thinks that Pylades also is addressed, but this seems most unlikely, and the fact that Orestes replies in the plural, *πάρεσμεν*, is little to the purpose.

⁴ *i.e.*, if Clytæmnestra slew her husband, beware of what she yet may do.

ORE. I know it well, my child ; but, when occasion calls, then is the time to remember these things.

ELE. All time, all time, would be my fitting time¹ to tell these things as they deserve, for scarcely now am I free to speak.

ORE. Yes, so say I. Wherefore remember this.²

ELE. What must I do?

ORE. Be chary of thy speech until the occasion comes.

ELE. Who, then, now that thou hast come, would thus take silence as a fair exchange for words,—when past all hope and thought I look on thee?

ORE. In Heaven's good time for guiding my footsteps hither hast thou seen me.³

ELE. Thou tellest of a grace that goes beyond that first,⁴ if 'twas Heaven that brought⁵ thee to our roof; I count it as a sign from God.

ORE. Loth though I am to check thy joy, yet I fear thou givest way too much to it.

ELE. O thou that hast deigned to come so late in time,—most welcome advent to mine eyes,—do not, seeing me thus beset with woe——

ORE. Do not, what?

ELE. Rob me of the joy of seeing thee, making me resign it.

ORE. In sooth 'twould anger me to see another do so.⁶

¹ *i.e.*, to tell these things is a task suited to all time ; no time would be too much, but fit to tell hereof.

² Others render, “preserve then this new liberty,” but this suits less well with what follows.

³ A line is apparently missing here, though some doubt the exact antistrophic correspondence of trimeter iambs, and the sense is fairly clear as the text stands.

⁴ *i.e.*, thy coming straight home is a greater piece of luck than thy mere preservation ; it is, indeed, providential.

⁵ Reading *ἐπόρισεν* for MSS. *ἐπῶρσεν*, which is against the metre.

⁶ *i.e.*, I not only will not do so myself, but I should be angry if another did.

ELE. Dost thou consent ?

ORE. Indeed I do.

ELE. Ah friends, the voice I never thought to hear has sounded in mine ears. *¹ * * * but I restrained myself and said no word, hearing and saying nought, ah me ! But now I hold thee to my heart, and thy dear face hath looked on me, which I will nevermore forget, however fortune frown.

ORE. A truce to all superfluous speech ! Tell me not of thy mother's sins, nor how Ægisthus drains our heritage, squandering, wasting aimlessly. For the tale might hinder thee from seizing the occasion.² But tell me what will suit the present time, when to show ourselves or hide, and end the mocking of our foes by our arrival here ; and see to it that thy mother guess not thy secret from thy glad looks, when we twain³ go within ; but mourn as for that idle tale of dire mischance ; for soon as fortune smiles on us, then shall we be free to show our joy and laugh aloud.

ELE. Yea, brother, as thy pleasure is, so mine will be ; for all my joy is of thy giving, not as mine own I won it. Nor would I choose⁴ by paining thee ever so little to find great gain myself ; for thus should I serve but ill our present fortune.

But what comes next,⁵ thou know'st of course, having learnt that Ægisthus is not within, only thy mother there ; never fear that she will see my face radiant with happy smiles. Nay, for the ancient hate hath sunk into my heart ; and, having seen

¹ The text here is mutilated ; possibly, as Jebb suggests, some allusion to Clytæmnestra's cruelty was made, or to some expression of the general opinion, *e.g.*, " they said thou wouldst never come."

² *i.e.*, when it came. Paley reads, on his own conjecture, *λόγου χρόνος* for *χρόνου λόγος*, " time would preclude the propriety of such a narrative," but the change is not necessary.

³ Orestes and Pylades are meant.

⁴ Reading *δεξαίμην*. Others, *βουλοίμην*, a probable gloss.

⁵ Others, " matters in the house."

thee, I shall never cease to weep for joy. How should I, who have seen thee both alive and dead in this one journey hither? Thou hast worked me miracles; so that, should my sire appear to me alive, no marvel should I count it any more, but should believe I saw him. Since, then, mine eyes behold thee thus returned, give *thou* thy orders as thou wilt; since,¹ e'en alone, I had not failed in both attempts; for either I had nobly saved my life, or else as nobly died.

CHO. Silence, I counsel ye; for I hear at the door the steps of one of those within.

ELE. Enter, sirs, the more so as ye bring with you what none will thrust away nor yet receive with joy.²

AGED ATT. Most foolish and bereft of sense, prize ye your lives henceforth at nought, or have ye naturally no wits, when, standing not on danger's brink but in the very midst and worst of it, ye know it not? Nay, had I not been keeping guard here at the door this while, ye would have had your doings in the house before yourselves;³ but, as it is, I have displayed all caution here. And now a truce to all long speech and this loud joy⁴ run riot, and pass within; for, in such cases as the present, delay is ill; 'tis time to make an end.

ORE. What chance have I in what comes next, suppose I enter now?

¹ The sentence is elliptic, and is thus expanded by Jebb, "command me as thou wilt (no part thou canst assign can be more arduous than what I had resolved to do, hadst thou not come); for, if left solitary, I would have secured one of two things—to save myself nobly, or as nobly die."

² Electra, not knowing who may overhear her, uses purposely ambiguous language; it may be either understood of the urn, or of the vengeance they bring with them.

³ *i.e.*, your schemes would have been reported before you arrived, and you would have found your enemies prepared.

⁴ Dindorf's *σὲν βῶν χαρᾶς* is plausible. Paley suggests that the verse is interpolated, without, however, assigning any valid reason.

AGED ATT. A good one; to begin with, no one knows thee.

ORE. Thou hast reported me as dead, I trow.

AGED ATT. Know that thou, whilst here¹ on earth, art numbered with the dead.

ORE. Are they glad at this, or what say they?

AGED ATT. I will tell thee that, when the end cometh; as things now are, 'tis well with all they do,—yea, e'en what is not well.²

ELE. Who is this, brother? Tell me, I pray.

ORE. Dost thou not know him?

ELE. No, nor can I bring him to my mind.

ORE. Dost not know him into whose hands thou gavest me in days gone by?

ELE. Who? what?

ORE. He in whose arms I was conveyed away to Phocis, by thy forethought.

ELE. Can this be he who alone of many was found faithful by me at the murder of my sire?

ORE. 'Tis he; question me no further.

ELE. Most welcome light! Thou only saviour of the house of Agamemnon, how cam'st thou here? Art thou he that didst save Orestes and me from many a woe? O hands most dear, O thou whose feet did sweetest service then, how have I not known thee all this while, how didst thou conceal the truth, slaying me with words the while, when thou hadst deeds to move my deepest joy? All hail, father; for in thee, methinks, I see no less.³ All hail, and

¹ ἐνθάδ'ε is capable of a double meaning,—perhaps intended,—“here” in the house, *i.e.*, by Clytæmnestra, or “whilst yet alive upon this earth.”

² *i.e.*, even their unnatural and unholy joy, wrong as it is, is well for us, for it blinds them to the impending danger, and gives a further justification to our vengeance.

³ Paley suggests that ll. 1359 and 1361 may be interpolations, but

know thou this,—of all men most I hated thee, most loved within one day.

AGED ATT. Enough of this, meseems; for all the tale 'twixt this and then,—full many a night, with days not less, as they roll round, will tell thee the story, Electra, and make all plain.¹

You twain that stand by, I warn² you, now is the time to act; now is Clytæmnestra alone; now is there no man within; but if ye delay, reflect that ye will have to fight with such, aye and with others more than these, more skilled in arms.³

ORE. No time now, Pylades, for us to talk this matter o'er at length, but go within at once, after an obeisance to all gods of our sires, whose statues find a place before these gates.

ELE. King Apollo, hearken to them graciously, and to me as well, who full oft have stood before thee, giving of all I had with earnest hand. And now, O thou Lyceian god, with such vows as I may,⁴ I ask, entreat thee, and implore, show thyself our kindly helper in these schemes, and let men see what penalties for impious deeds are meted out by gods.

CHO. Behold how Ares moveth onward, breathing slaughter, such as none may cope with.⁵ E'en now they pass beneath the roof, the hounds that dog the steps of

perhaps he builds too much on antistrophic correspondence in iambic *ρήσεις*.

¹ *i.e.*, all that has happened since Orestes went to Phocis, after Agamemnon's murder, may be better told hereafter.

² Jebb defends *ἐννέπω γε* thus, "I warn you, whether you heed me or not"; but many editors adopt *ἐννέπω γῶ*, from Hermann.

³ *i.e.*, the retinue of Ægisthus.

⁴ Others render "with such as I may, that is, words, which is all I have." Paley, on what seem very insufficient grounds, doubts the genuineness of ll. 1379-83 as they now stand.

⁵ As Jebb points out, this can hardly mean "the blood of unholy strife," as Liddell and Scott render, for this is not at all what the

crime, from whom is no escape; wherefore now shall the dream of my heart remain no long time in suspense. For the champion of the dead, with stealthy step, is led within the house,—within his father's rich old halls,—the keen-edged¹ slaughter in his hands; and Hermes, son of Maia, is guiding him straight to his goal, in darkness having veiled the guile, nor tarrying now.

ELE. Maidens, whom I love the best, anon our friends will set about it; in silence wait.

CHO. How goes it? What do they now?

ELE. She is decking the urn for burial, and those twain stand over her, hard by.

CHO. But why hast thou sped forth?

ELE. To watch lest Ægisthus enter, ere we know it.

CLY. (*within*). Alas! O house devoid of friends and full of murderers!

ELE. Hark, a cry within! Hear ye not, friends?

CHO. I heard,—ah, yes!—a note of dread, that made me thrill with horror.

CLY. Ah me, ah woe is me! Where, Ægisthus, art thou now?

ELE. Hark, again, a piercing cry!

CLY. My son, my son, have pity on thy mother!

ELE. Nay, he found no pity at thy hands,—he nor yet his sire.

Chorus thought it. Paley renders, “the blood of this unhappy family feud.” Jebb gives *δύσμαχον* as an equivalent, but it is difficult to decide with any certainty.

¹ The phrase *νεακόνητον αίμα* is extremely difficult to understand, and it may be doubted if it could mean “hands lately incited to a deed of blood,” as Paley explains. On the other hand, it seems equally unlikely that Sophocles should have used *αίμα* for *μάχαιραν*, as Hesychius says. Meineke conjectures *νεαρόκμητον* in the sense of *νεαρών*, but there is no authority for the word. Dindorf, after Hermann, reads *νεοκόνητον*, “having newly-shed blood on his hands,”—not the required sense.

CHO. O city, O thou ill-starred race, 'tis now thy doom
this day to die!¹

CIV. Ah me, I am stricken!

ELE. (*calling to ORESTES*). A second blow, if possible!

CLY. Ah me, once more!

ELE. Yea, would it were "Ah for Ægisthus" too!²

CHO. The curse is coming to its end;³ the dead beneath
the earth still live. Those who were murdered long ago
are draining now the murderer's blood,—the blood of
retribution.⁴

Lo! here they come; their reeking hands still drip from
Ares' sacrifice; words fail me.⁵

ELE. How stand ye now, Orestes?

ORE. 'Tis well within, if what Apollo spake was well.

ELE. Is she dead,—that wretched woman?

ORE. Fear not henceforth that thy mother's pride will
affront thee any more.

ELE.⁶ * * *

* * *

ORE. * * *

CHO. Cease; I see Ægisthus full in view.

ORE.⁷ * * *

ELE. Back, back, good youths!

¹ Reading *φθίνειν*, *φθίνειν*, with Hermann. Those who retain *φθίνειν* regard it as equivalent to *φθείρει*, a doubtful expedient. The use of *καθαμερία*, in sense of *hodierna*, is apparently unexampled.

² Reading *Αίγισθφ γ'* for *θ'* of MSS. with Hermann.

³ *i.e.*, are working themselves out.

⁴ *παλίρρυτον*, so Bothe for MSS. *πολύρρυτον*.

⁵ *i.e.*, I cannot describe the scene. This seems an obvious sense, but many adopt Erfurdt's *ψέγειν*, "nor can I blame them,"—a very frigid sentiment.

⁶ Jebb marks a lacuna after l. 1427, consisting of a dochmiac metre and an iambic trimeter spoken by Electra; also an iambic trimeter spoken by Orestes.

⁷ Another iambic trimeter is here wanting, according to Jebb. In neither case does Paley note the omission.

ORE. Where ¹ see ye him ?

ELE. He is close upon us, ² coming on his way exultingly from the suburbs of the town, * * * ³

CHO. In through the porch with all the speed ye may, that, having ended what came first so well, ye now may compass this that follows.

ORE. Take heart ; we will accomplish it. Dost understand ? ⁴

ELE. Hasten then.

ORE. (*turning to depart*). Lo ! I am gone.

ELE. Things here shall be my care.

CHO. 'Twere well to say a few soft words in this man's ear, that he may rush to meet his hidden doom.

ÆG. Which of you can tell me where the Phocian strangers are, who, they tell me, have brought us news of the death of Orestes amid the wreckage of chariots ?

Thee, yes thee I ask, e'en ⁵ thee who wast erst so bold ; for it concerns thee most, I trow, and thou art like to know and tell it best.

ELE. Full well I know ; how could I fail ? Else were I careless of what befalls the dearest of my kin. ⁶

ÆG. Where then may those strangers be ? Tell me that.

¹ Some read *που*, "anywhere."

² *ἐφ' ἡμῖν* is rendered by some, "at our mercy," "in our power." Blaydes regards it as part of the preceding question.

³ The rest of this verse is wanting, but the sense is not affected.

⁴ Taking *ἦ νοεῖς* interrogatively as part of what Orestes says. Wunder, whom Jebb follows, reads *ῥ' νοεῖς*, assigning the words to Electra, "hasten on the way thou intendest"; but, as Blaydes objects, the position of the words is then awkward, and the sense less good.

⁵ Reading *καὶ* rather than MSS. *καί*, which would seem to mean that others besides Electra were first addressed.

⁶ The language, as so often in this play, is intentionally ambiguous. Ægisthus understands Electra's words as relating to her mother, while her real meaning is, "the most joyful event in the fortunes of my own," *i.e.*, of Orestes.

ELE. They are within, having found their way to a kind hostess.¹

ÆG. Have they in very truth announced his death?

ELE. Nay, no mere words, but proof, they bring.

ÆG. Can I then see it and be sure?

ELE. Thou canst indeed, and 'tis a sorry sight.

ÆG. In truth 'tis not thy way to give me such glad greeting.

ELE. Be glad then, if thou findest gladness here.

ÆG. (*as the interior of the palace is disclosed by the eccyclema*). Silence² all, throw wide the doors, for Argos and Mycenæ all to see, that, if any erewhile was uplifted with idle hopes of this Orestes, now, seeing him dead, he may welcome my bit in his mouth and get him wisdom without constraint, nor find my heavy hand upon him.

ELE. Lo! now my part is done; time has taught me wisdom; and I agree with those who are my betters.³

ÆG. (*catching sight of the covered corpse*). O Zeus, I see a sight that only Heaven's wrath hath brought to pass; but if that word offends, I call it back.⁴

Remove all covering from the face,⁵ that, kinsman as he was, he may win my tears as well.

ORE. Lift it for thyself; this is not my task, but thine, to look hereon and give it kindly greeting.

¹ καθήνυσαν or κατήνυσαν has also a double meaning, (i) "found their way to," (ii) "despatched, killed."

² Paley reads οἴγειν, characterizing σιγᾶν as pointless; but surely it was a fitting occasion to proclaim silence!

³ Electra means, "my schemes are finding accomplishment; I have done my part in forwarding the plans of Orestes and Pylades" (τοῖς κρείσσοσιν). Ægisthus, however, understands, "All is over; resistance on my side is at an end; I agree with you, my betters."

⁴ i.e., man must not judge his fellow for fear of divine Nemesis, so I retract what I said. Or perhaps he checks some expression of joy which was rising to his lips.

⁵ Paley, "remove that which conceals it from my sight."

ÆG. 'Tis well advised and I will hearken ; but call me Clytæmnestra, if she chance to be within.

ORE. She is near thee ; look no more for her elsewhere.

ÆG. (*lifting the covering*). Ah me, what do I see ?

ORE. Whom fearest thou ? Whom dost not know ?

ÆG. Who can these men be, in the midst of whose toils, poor wretch that I am, I have fallen ?

ORE. Hast not perceived this long while now, that thou hast been addressing living men ¹ as dead ?

ÆG. Ah me ! I understand thy speech. This must be Orestes, and none else, that speaks to me.

ORE. And wert thou, then, so wise a seer, and yet at fault so long ?

ÆG. Undone, ah woe is me ! But suffer me to speak,—if but a word.

ELE. Suffer him to say no more, brother, in Heaven's name ; permit no lengthy speech. For when men are involved in woe, what gain from such delay would one already doomed derive ? ² Nay, slay him with all speed, and, having slain him, cast him forth, far from our sight, to find the burial he deserves. ³ For this, and this alone, would quit me of my ancient wrongs.

ORE. In with thee at once ! No issue this for thee of words ; thy life is now the stake.

ÆG. Why lead me in ? What need of darkness, if this deed be fair,—why not slay me on the spot ?

ORE. Dictate not thou to me ! Go find the very spot where thou didst slay my sire, to die upon the same.

¹ Reading ζῶντας for MSS. ζῶν τοῖς, which Campbell translates, "dost thou not perceive that, all this while, thou, a living man, hast been replying to the dead in tones like theirs ?" *i.e.*, with a tongue as much doomed to death as theirs ; but this is extremely far-fetched, and the emendation is a probable one.

² ll. 1485-6 are omitted by many editors ; they are only added in the margin of L.

³ *i.e.*, such as dogs and carrion-birds will give.

ÆG. And is this house, then, doomed to witness every woe of Pelops' race, both these and those to come?

ORE. Thine it must; of that am I thy perfect seer.

ÆG. Well, 'twas none of thy sire's,—the art thou boastest.¹

ORE. Thou answerest me too much; our going is delayed; come, move.

ÆG. Lead thou the way.

ORE. Thou must go before.

ÆG. Dost fear I shall escape thee, then?

ORE. Nay, 'tis rather that thou die not as thou wouldst;² needs must I keep this bitterness for thee. This doom were best for all,—aye, instant death for all who seek to override the laws. Ill-doing then had never been so rife.³

CHO. O race of Atreus, how hardly, after many a woe, hast thou emerged in freedom's light, crowned by the effort of to-day!

¹ For Ægisthus the bitterness of death is past, and he can even taunt his captor, "Agamemnon was no such perfect seer, or he might have foreseen his death."

² *i.e.*, where and how thou wouldst. Death must be made as bitter as possible by every painful association.

³ Dindorf, with some reason, regards ll. 1505-7 as the interpolation of a later hand.

TRACHINIÆ.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HERACLES.

HYLLUS.

MESSENGER.

LICHAS.

OLD MAN.

DEIANEIRA.

IOLE, a mute, with other Eubœan captives.

NURSE. }¹

ATTENDANT. }

CHORUS OF TRACHINIAN MAIDENS.

SCENE.—Before the House of Heracles at Trachis.

¹ Whether these were two distinct persons, or one and the same, has not been agreed amongst editors. The Laurentian MS. (L) assigns l. 49 *sqq.* to a *θεράπεινα*, and l. 871 *sqq.* to a *τρόφος*. Jebb follows those who assign both passages to the nurse.

INTRODUCTION.

THE story of Heracles finds many different versions at the hands of ancient writers, and it would be difficult to say which of these Sophocles followed in the *Trachiniæ*,—if indeed he followed any *one* definitely throughout. It is mainly with the closing scene of the hero's life that the poet is concerned, and with the events directly leading up to this tragic climax; incidentally certain facts relative to his past career may be gathered, often dimly enough, from scattered hints through the play. Thus, for example, the winning of Deianeira from her suitor Achelous, the river-god; the insult offered to the young bride at the river Evenus by the ferryman, Nessus the Centaur, with its tragic sequel; the visit to Eurytus at *Æchalia* in *Eubœa*, and the treacherous murder of Iphitus, the son of his host, in revenge for the father's opposition to the passion of Heracles for his daughter Iole; the year of bondage to Omphale in *Lydia*, imposed by Zeus as a punishment for this crime; the sack of *Æchalia* and the capture of Iole;—these, and a few allusions to the hero's labours performed for Eurystheus, king of *Argos*, by reason of Hera's jealousy of Alcmena's son, must be gathered here and there from the speeches and choral odes, to serve as an introduction to the play itself.

The moment chosen by Sophocles for the opening of the play is an extremely critical one in the life of Heracles. An oracle had told him that, after long years of toil and suffering, an end of all his troubles should come, but what this end was to be was not further specified. Twelve long years of constant toil have passed; each labour has been faced and surmounted; and only once has the patient hero adopted unworthy means to secure his

end. Baffled rage had led him once into an act of cruel treachery ; and Zeus, his father, claims the penalty ; so for a twelve-month more he must toil in shameful servitude to a barbarian woman ; but the hero has brooded the while over his disgrace, and no sooner is his year of bondage over than he avenges himself on the ultimate cause of his affliction by sacking Æchalia and slaying Eurytus with all his race, save Iole, the maiden whose fatal beauty had first ensnared him.

Meantime his faithful wife, Deianeira, is waiting and hoping her lord's return at Trachis, whither Heracles had removed with his family from Tirysus after the murder of Iphitus, in order to be under the protection of King Ceyx.

It is at this point that the play opens. Deianeira, the lonely, patient wife, is discovered before the house of Heracles at Trachis ; she is reviewing, partly to herself, partly to her old and trusty nurse, the troubled life she has passed, ever since the eventful day when her mighty lord saved her from her savage suitor, Achelous, and made her his own true wife. Toil has succeeded toil ; no respite ever comes to Heracles ; no sooner has he returned than he must start again ; and now he has been absent full fifteen months, and still no message from him. Some dire mischance has come upon him. Was this the meaning of that mysterious tablet he left at his departure ? (ll 1-48.)

Here the old confidential servant ventures to interrupt her mistress. Why should she not end this cruel suspense by sending one of her many sons in quest of tidings of his father ? Hyllus, the eldest, might surely go. Scarcely has the nurse spoken, when Hyllus himself is seen approaching with haste. He has news of his father ; they say that he is in Eubœa, waging war on Eurytus. Deianeira then confides to her son her fears for Heracles,—how that an oracle had said that this would be the turning-point in the life of Heracles, bringing him death or rest for evermore. Hyllus at once professes his readiness to seek his father, and lend him his aid at this crisis. (ll. 49-93.)

As Hyllus quits the stage the Chorus enters ; it is composed of fifteen young maidens of Trachis, to whom, as to all others around her, Deianeira has endeared herself by the charm of her gentle, loving nature ; they begin by invoking the sun-god to reveal where Heracles now is ; for his wife is wasting away,

haunted by sleepless fears on his behalf, as each successive peril brings him to the very jaws of death. And yet it is not Heaven's will that man's lot should be free from pain. "Sorrow and joy come round to all in turn." Zeus will not be careless of his son. (ll. 94-140.)

"Yes," answers Deianeira, "ye came to sympathize, I know, but it is not for tender maids like you to understand a depth of misery like mine,—and never may ye learn it by suffering! Only one who has gone through it can fathom the anguish of the lonely wife." And she goes on to tell them of a greater trouble even than any heretofore,—how Heracles, the last time he left his home, solemnly confided to her keeping a certain tablet, and gave her full instructions about the division of his goods, in case he should be absent beyond a term of fifteen months. This period has expired, and the worst must now be feared. (ll. 141-177.)

At this moment a messenger enters hurriedly with a wreath upon his head. "Heracles is alive and victorious," he excitedly proclaims; "Lichas, his herald, is telling the people his adventures; the crowd delays him, or he would have been here ere now." (ll. 178-199.)

"All praise and thanks to Zeus!" cries Deianeira; and the Chorus gladly take up the strain of joy, in which the maidens of the household also join. (ll. 200-222.)

Lichas is now seen approaching at the head of a band of captive maidens. Deianeira greets him, and at once inquires of the welfare of Heracles. "He is alive and well," replies Lichas, "and will be here anon when he has finished a great sacrifice he is offering to Zeus in Eubœa for his victory. These are captives, whom he chose out for himself and the gods after sacking the town of Eurytus." The herald next describes the cause of his master's long absence,—how he had been condemned by Zeus to serve Omphale in Lydia, as a slave, for the treacherous murder of Iphitus; to which he was provoked, says Lichas, by the insolent behaviour of Eurytus. However, old scores are cancelled now; Eurytus and all his race are slain, and Æchalia is enslaved. (ll. 223-290.)

Overjoyed as Deianeira is at the news of her husband's safety, she is filled with a strange pity for the captives, "once the daughters, maybe, of free-born sires, but now doomed to the life

of slaves." And there is one above the rest, whose beauty and sadness especially moves her compassion. She questions her, but receives no answers, and with a native delicacy, which constitutes one of the chief charms in her perfect womanhood, Deianeira does not press the question on the ill-fated girl, but turns to Lichas for further information. The herald, however, professes complete ignorance. "I asked not many questions; I went through my task in silence." With these words, all are turning to enter the house, when the messenger begs Deianeira to tarry a moment; he has something to tell her, which she ought to know, something for the truth of which he will vouch. Briefly, then,—Lichas has lied to her. The real reason why Heracles sacked Œchalia was to win yon beauteous captive, who is none other than Iole, daughter of Eurytus. "Never dream, lady, that she comes hither as a slave; it is not likely, if his heart is fired with longing!" This was the story Lichas told the folk; many heard him, so that he cannot now go back upon his words. (ll. 291-382.)

Advised by the Chorus, Deianeira adjures Lichas, before his departure for Eubœa to rejoin his master, to tell her the honest truth. He tries to prevaricate, but is sharply taken to task by the blunt messenger, and under the latter's rigid cross-questioning, and Deianeira's pathetic entreaties, is eventually forced to admit that he had concealed the literal truth from his mistress, in the hopes of saving her unnecessary distress of mind. "It is even as the messenger has said; it was to win Iole that Heracles sacked Œchalia; but pardon me and be kind to her." Deianeira, by a supreme effort, conceals her emotion, merely bidding Lichas come into the house with her to receive a gift to carry to Heracles. (ll. 383-496.)

In the interval between this and her re-appearance, the Chorus, mindful of the part which Iole seems doomed to play, sing an ode celebrating the resistless power of Love; as it has oft beguiled the gods, so it led to that memorable strife between Heracles and Achelous for the hand of Deianeira. (ll. 497-530.)

Deianeira now reappears, carrying in her hand a coffer securely sealed. She has come to tell her youthful friends what she has devised to regain her husband's affection. No anger against him prompts her deed; he has been unfaithful before; but it is

a sickness sent by Heaven, and she can pardon that ; but then comes the haunting fear that a younger, fairer rival may supplant her, and this she cannot bear. Her aim is solely to win back her husband's love ; and she can find but one desperate means to this. Long ago, when Nessus, the Centaur, paid the price of the insult he offered her at the river Evenus, he gave her, with his dying breath, a charm to win her lord again, if ever his affection cooled. It consisted in a portion of the blood which flowed from the monster's wound, caused by the poisoned shaft of Heracles. This she had collected as bidden, and had carefully preserved till now in a secret place, apart from heat of fire or sun. Now is the time to prove its potency. So she has anointed a robe with the charm, and is sending it, by the hand of Lichas, to Heracles, to be worn by him, and him alone, on the great day of sacrifice, and not before. Fully instructed, and charged with his mistress's last words, Lichas goes his way with the coffer. (ll. 531-632.)

The Chorus forget any misgivings they may have felt about the mysterious charm, and give way to strains of exultant joy, anticipating the happy day when Heracles will return with renewed love to his wife's bosom. (ll. 633-662.)

But their joy is short-lived. Deianeira re-enters with news well calculated to inspire alarm. She has seen something which has filled her with wild misgivings. A piece of sheep's wool she had used to smear the charm on her present to Heracles has crumbled away to powder where she threw it down on the stones in the sun's full blaze, while clots of foam seethed up from the spot. In a moment the truth has flashed upon her ; the Centaur had some dark design, when he beguiled her into gathering the charm ; doubtless the blood contained the same poison which has always proved fatal to every creature it has touched,—even to the god Cheiron, when accidentally wounded by one of the arrows dipped by Heracles in the hydra's venom. What, if she has killed her lord ! Death is all that then remains. (ll. 663-722.)

The Chorus are endeavouring to allay her fears, when Hyllus enters in excitement and confirms her worst presentiments. Heracles is dying in agonies, and she is to blame. He had received his wife's gift, and on the appointed day had clad him-

self in the robe, to offer a great sacrifice. At first all went well, but, as the heat of the fire called out the latent poison, the garment clung to his flesh and preyed upon his very vitals. In his anguish he called for the unhappy Lichas and dashed out his brains in a transport of rage ; and then, as the pain became more and more unendurable, his wish was to be removed anywhere out of men's sight. Accordingly he was laid in a boat, and conveyed from Eubœa to the Malian coast, and will soon be at his home, alive or dead.

Such is the story Hyllus unwillingly tells, and, having told it, flings a bitter curse at his mother. Deianeira leaves the stage without a word, and the Chorus sadly chant the sudden fulfilment of the old prophecy. This then was to be the end of all toil for Heracles ! The Centaur's craft has brought him to a fearful end. Little did Deianeira reckon of this ; she thought to cure, and bitter indeed must be her mourning now ! Aphrodite's hand is seen through all this fatal work. (ll. 723-861.)

A cry of sorrow from within the house, and the distress depicted on the old nurse's features as she emerges, prepare the maidens for bad news ; but they are seized with horror at the tale she tells,—so far beyond the worst they feared. "Deianeira is dead, slain by her own hand !" And the heart-broken old servant goes on to describe how her mistress had rushed to her bower from the sight of all, after a last farewell to her household gods and such loved objects as she chanced to see, and then, flinging herself upon the marriage-bed, in an agony of tears, had prepared for the awful deed. Meantime, the faithful nurse, who had been watching her from a place of concealment, ran to fetch Hyllus ; but it was too late ; when they returned together the sword was in her heart then at last Hyllus knew his error, and his grief was terrible to see. (ll. 862-946.)

"Oh for some strong breeze to waft me far away !" sigh the Chorus. But it is no time for feeble lamentation, for strangers are seen bearing Heracles on a litter towards the house. The sufferer is asleep, but the unrestrained sorrow of Hyllus awakes him, and the pain breaks out again. He prays for death. "Is there not one among the thousands in Hellas, whom he has succoured by his toils, to grant him this small boon ? At least, his son might draw his sword, and end such agony. Of all the

many toils that he has faced without a groan, none was so dire as this ; and to think that a hero like Heracles is brought to such a pass by the hand of one feeble woman !”

This pitiful thought maddens him, and he calls on Hyllus to bring forth the traitress, that she may meet her doom, for “though I am as nought and cannot crawl a step, yet will I be avenged on her that hath done this deed.” (ll. 947-1111.)

Exhausted by rage and pain, Heracles is still. Hyllus seizes the opportunity to plead his mother's innocence, but the very mention of her rouses another paroxysm in his father ; and it is only with great difficulty that the suffering hero can be brought to see that it was Nessus who had tricked her into using what she thought was but a simple love-charm. (ll. 1111-1142.)

But at last he sees it all, and, accepting his doom, prepares for death. The old oracles have all come true, but it is only now that their full meaning is clear. For Hyllus his father has two commands, to each of which obedience is exacted by oath. The first is that the son shall carry his father's body to the summit of Mount *Æta*, and there, raising a mighty pyre, burn him alive. Hyllus is forced to consent, under pain of being haunted by his father's avenging fiends, for ever, in case of disobedience. The only part of the task which he is excused is the actual kindling of the pyre. (ll. 1143-1217.)

The second command is almost more exacting. He must swear to wed *Iole*. “What ! when she alone is to blame for my mother's death, and for thy sorry plight besides ? Better be dead than live thus !” But Heracles is inexorable, and Hyllus, first calling the gods to witness that he does it under sore constraint, once more takes the required oath. (ll. 1218-1251.)

The hero's mind is now at rest, and with an effort of final endurance he bids his bearers lift their burden and set forth for *Æta's* summit. Hyllus, seeing that the end has come, gives the signal, and the sad procession starts, the bereaved son uttering one last protest against the cruelty of the gods, and of Zeus in particular. “They beget children, they are hailed as fathers, and yet they can look calmly down on such sufferings. In all this there is nought but Zeus.” (ll. 1252-1278.)

TRACHINIÆ.

DEI. There is an ancient saying amongst men, declared in days of old, that thou canst not surely know the life of mortal man, ere he die, whether it hath been for him a life of weal or woe ; but for myself, or ever I have reached the halls of Hades, right well I know that mine is but labour and sorrow ; I, who whilst yet¹ I dwelt at Pleuron in the palace of CENEUS, my father, had such a grievous dread of marriage as never ÆTOLIAN maid hath felt. For there came to woo me a river-god, e'en Achelous, who oft asked me of my sire, appearing visibly in three shapes ; now as a bull he would come ; now as a writhing speckled snake ; and other-whiles with human trunk and forehead of an ox,² with streams of his fountain's water gushing from his shaggy beard on every side. Such was the suitor I had to expect ;³ to die was, then, my constant prayer,—ah me !—or ever I approached the bed of such a lord. But at last, and to my joy, however late, there came the famous sÓN of Zeus, Alcmena's child, who met him in the lists of fight, delivering me. As for the manner of their struggle, I cannot describe

¹ Reading *ναίουσ' ἔτ' ἐν* with Erfurdt for *ναίουσ' ἐν* of L.

² Reading *κύτει βούπρωρος*, as given by Strabo, for MSS. *τύπη βούκρανος*. This is now accepted by most editors as the more poetical phrase, though the Schol. follows the MSS. ; so too Campbell.

³ Others render "having accepted," but the context is against such a meaning, though usage may recommend it.

it; I know it not; whoso sat to watch, nor quailed before that sight, he might tell thereof,—not I, for I was sitting there in wonderment and dread, for fear that beauty's gift would win me sorrow at the last. But Zeus, the ruler of the fray, ordained its issue happily,—if so indeed it be; for from the day that I became one with Heracles as his own chosen bride, I have ever been a prey to terror after terror, anxious for his sake; for one night brings a trouble to me, and the next night in its turn doth thrust it thence.¹ Children we have had, 'tis true, whom he has only seen at times, e'en as a farmer with a distant field, the which he seeth once at sowing, and at harvest once. Such was my husband's life, that sent him ever faring to and fro, upon some master's² errands. But now, when he is clear of those his toils, 'tis now I have the chiefest cause for fear. For ever since he slew the mighty Iphitus, outcasts from house and home we have been living here in Trachis at a stranger's³ court; but where he now is, that no one knows; only I know that he is gone, causing me thereby cruel pangs on his behalf. Well-nigh sure I am that some harm hath befallen him; for 'tis no trifling time, but ten whole months and yet another five, that he now tarries, and no tidings of him. There must be some dire hap; that tablet tells me so which he left me ere he started; oft do I pray the gods that I may have received it without harm.⁴

NUR. Mistress, Deianeira, oft ere now have I seen thy

¹ *i.e.*, the next night has its own sorrow to bring, and so ousts the previous night to make room for it. This seems the simplest explanation of these slightly obscure words. Wunder and Campbell follow the Schol. in understanding, "for night brings him home, and in turn sends him away, bringing the succession of his toil," *i.e.*, he no sooner returns one night than he is off the next on a new toil.

² *i.e.*, Eurystheus, whose name she cannot bring herself to utter.

³ Ceyx, the king of Trachis.

⁴ Wunder rejects ll. 44-48, but his reasons for so doing do not seem conclusive.

tearful lamentations, while thou wailest o'er the going forth of Heracles; but now, if it be right to teach the free with what a slave has thought, e'en I¹ must utter what is best for thee: ² how comes it that thou, with all the sons thou hast, yet sendest none of them in quest of thy lord, and chiefly Hyllus,—whom this mission best becomes, if he have any regard for his father, for his being thought in prosperous case?³

But lo! I see him close at hand, speeding with timely steps⁴ towards the house; wherefore, if I seem to thee to speak at all in season, thou canst make use of him and of my counsel.

DEI. (*as HYLLUS enters*). My child, my boy, even from base-born lips, it seems, the word in season falls; this woman, to wit, although a slave, hath spoken as the free-born would.

HYL. What said she? Tell me, mother, if I may be told.

DEI. It is a shame to thee, she said, not to have inquired where thy father is, when he hath been so long on stranger's soil.

HYL. Nay, but I know, if we may put any trust in what is said.

DEI. And where, my son, hast thou been told that he has settled?

HYL. 'Tis said he served a Lydian mistress,⁵ as her bondman, throughout the bygone year.

¹ Others begin the apodosis at πῶς, rendering here, "and if I must say . . ."

² There is a var. lect. τόσον, "just thus much," but this is somewhat weak.

³ The apparent awkwardness of δοκεῖν has given rise to several conjectures, of which Heath's νέμειν . . . δοκεῖ is, perhaps, worth noticing, though the Greek of the MSS. is quite intelligible.

⁴ Others refer ἀρίπους to its more usual sense, "with sound foot," and so here "nimble."

⁵ *i. e.*, Omphale.

DEI. If indeed he stooped to that, there is then naught one might not hear.

HYL. From that, at least, he hath escaped,—so I am told.

DEI. Where, then, is he now reported to be,—alive, or dead? ¹

HYL. He is on his way to attack Eubœa, the land of Eurytus, they say,—or soon will be.

DEI. Dost know, then, my son, that he left me sure oracles concerning that land?

HYL. What are they, mother? I know not of what thou speakest.

DEI. That either he is doomed to end his life, or, after carrying through this task, he shall henceforth ² lead a life of bliss for all the remnant of his days. Wilt thou not, then, my son, go to share his toil, when his fate is thus wavering in the balance? For, if he save his life, our safety is assured; ³ if not, we share his death.

HYL. Yea, mother, go I will; and, had I known myself the purport of these prophecies, I had been there,—aye, long ago; but, as it was, our father's usual luck suffered us not to anticipate terrors or to fear overmuch. ⁴ But now, since I know this, I will leave nought undone to learn the whole truth thereof.

DEI. Then go, my son; for even to one who is late, good fortune brings in gain, if ever he hear the news of it. ⁵

¹ Deianeira can scarcely believe he would have survived such degradation.

² Reading *εις τό γ' ὕστερον* with Reiske for *εις τὸν ὕστερον* of MSS.

³ After *σεώσμεθα* follows in L *ἢ πίπτομεν σοῦ πατρὸς ἐξολωλότος*,—a line which most editors now follow Bentley in regarding as spurious.

⁴ Lines 88, 89 have been suspected, and Dindorf rejects them; but by reading *εἶα* for *ἐγᾶ*, with Vauvilliers, a suitable sense is obtained. Wunder would transpose these lines to follow l. 91, reading *ἀλλ' ὅ* instead of *νῦν δ' ὅ* of the MSS.

⁵ *i.e.*, Hyllus may be behindhand in seeking news of his father; but if the news prove good, it is a gain, even so late as this.

CHO. O thou, to whom the spangled night gives birth, in the hour she is stripped of her starry robe, and again doth lay to rest, a ball of fire ! O sun-god, sun-god, tell me this, I pray ; where dwells Alcmena's son ? oh where is he, thou flaming god of dazzling brilliancy ? Haply mid the firths of sea, or at rest on either continent ?¹ Speak, thou prince of matchless sight !

For Deianeira, I hear, that bride of strife, is holden with yearning² evermore, like some unhappy bird ; and never lulling her eyes' fond longing into tearless slumber, but nursing³ an ever-mindful fear for the journey her husband hath gone, she wasteth through brooding o'er her widowed couch, a prey to sorrow in her dire forebodings.

As one may⁴ see the endless waves following each other o'er the sea's broad back, before the breath of tireless north or south, e'en so his life of many toils, restless as the Cretan sea, at one time turns⁵ the son of Cadmus from his course, anon uplifts his head. But some god doth keep him ever from the halls of death, suffering not his steps to stray.

¹ *i.e.*, "where is he, on land or sea?"—the two continents being Europe and Asia. Paley's explanation seems rather far-fetched ; what he says, (cf. note *ad loc.*) is this : "The notion seems to be that H. may be in the narrow strait of the Hellespont, resting as it were on both shores, or he may be in the Euripus near home." Surely the question asked is meant to be a more general one !

² For *ποθουμένα* Nauck conjectures *πόθου πλέα*, which is ingenious, but unnecessary.

³ Reading *τρέφούσαν* with Casaubon for MSS. *φέρουσιν*.

⁴ Reading *κύματ' ἄν εὐρέϊ* with Porson.

⁵ Reading *στρέφει*, the conjecture of Reiske for MSS. *τρέφει*. It is extremely difficult to see what meaning *τρέφει* can yield. Paley understands "a sea of troubles attends upon Heracles, and increases the trouble of his life,"—a rendering pronounced impossible by Linwood, with good reason. Campbell gives the sense of the passage thus : "Toil is the ordinary life (*τρέφει*) of Heracles, and at times this toil brings him to honour (*αὖξει*) ; hitherto it has not brought him into disaster."

Wherefore I find in thee some cause for blame, and, though with all respect ¹ I speak, yet will I advance a view opposed to thine. Thou shouldst not, I maintain, wear out that happier hope; for the son of Cronos himself, who is sovereign over all, hath not ordained for man a painless lot; but sorrow and joy come circling round for all, like to the Bear's revolving course.

Night with her spangled robe abideth not with mortal man; nor woe nor wealth; but on a sudden each is gone; and to another,² in his turn, there cometh joy and cometh loss. 'Tis this, then, I would have my queen aye cherish in her hopes; for who e'er heard that Zeus was so regardless of his children's good?

DEI. (*addressing the CHORUS through their leader*). Because thou hast heard of my trouble, thou art come,—so I surmise; but the pain that gnaws my heart, mayst thou never know by experience, as now thou art a stranger to it! For in such happy places³ of its own the young plant grows, unhurt by scorching heat of sun, by rain, or any wind that blows, reared 'mid joy, and free from woe; until the day when "wife" instead of "maiden" is her name, and she findeth at night⁴ her share of troublous thoughts, fearful for her husband or her babes. Then might she see for herself, by the light of her own case, how heavy my load of anguish is.⁵ True, the sorrows I have wept ere now have been full many; but there is one, that I shall tell anon, surpassing all before. Now, when Heracles, my king, was starting from home on that

¹ Reading *αἰδοῖα*, Musgrave's correction of *ἀδεῖα*, which Campbell explains by "in a pleasant mood," but this gives no proper antithesis.

² Others understand "and to him," *i.e.*, to him who has lost either joy or sorrow.

³ *i.e.*, where sorrow is as yet unknown.

⁴ *i.e.*, either as she lies awake, or in her dreams. Some render, "in a night," *i.e.*, the night of marriage, which cannot be the meaning, surely!

⁵ Dindorf rejects ll. 150-152.

last journey, he left in the house an ancient tablet with symbols graven on it, which he had never before deigned to explain to me, on all his many enterprises; but ever went his way as if to do, not die. But now, as though his life were done, he told me what I was to take myself as a marriage-portion, and the several shares he assigned to each of his children in their father's estate; first fixing a time,—to wit, a year¹ and three months more,—and saying that after such absence from his country, he was doomed either to die then at that date, or, if he escaped beyond the limits of that time, henceforth to live a painless life.

Such, he explained, was the end ordained by Heaven for the toils of Heracles;² so spake Dodona's ancient oak, once long ago, he said, by the mouth of its twin doves.³ And this is now the hour, when comes the certainty of these things, as⁴ they must be brought to pass; and so it is, when sleeping sweetly, I spring from my bed in terror, good friends, to think that I am doomed, maybe, to be henceforth bereft of him, my peerless lord.

CHO. Peace! a solemn silence now! I see a man approaching with a wreath upon his head, as suits with news of joy.⁵

MES. Mistress Deianeira, mine shall be the first news to

¹ Brunck reads *κάνιαύσιον*, but the MSS. *κάνιαύσιος* is defensible, it regarded as attracted into the case of *βεβώς*, "a year gone." Dobree suspected ll. 166-168, which Dindorf rejects, with the approval of Nauck and Wecklein, but it seems better to retain them, as there is no overwhelming reason to condemn them.

² Wunder and Dindorf reject l. 170, rather to the detriment of the sense.

³ Some understand *πελειάδων* literally, that is, "by signs drawn from doves"; others say that the priestesses at Dodona were called *Πελειάδες*.

⁴ Others follow the Schol., and regard *ώς* as equivalent to *ώστε*, "so that they must be fulfilled."

⁵ The reading *χάρην*, conjectured by Brunck, "on account of his news," is not so pointed.

free thee from alarm. Know, then, that Alcmena's son is alive and victorious, and is bringing the first-fruits from his warring to the gods of the land.

DEI. What is this thou hast told me, old sir?

MES. That he, thy envied¹ lord, will come to thy halls ere long, appearing to thee in his conqueror's might.

DEI. From whom hadst thou this news,—from citizen or stranger?

MES. Lichas, the herald, is proclaiming this to crowds,² in the mead where cattle browse in summer; from him I heard it, and darted away, to be the first, forsooth, to tell thee this tidings, and so get some reward from thee and win thy thanks.

DEI. How is it he cometh not himself, if 'tis well with him?

MES. He finds it nowise easy, lady; all the Malian folk stand gathered round and question him, and he cannot advance on his way, for each is bent on having his curiosity³ satisfied, and will not let him go, ere hearing all he wants. And so it is he stays with them,—their wish, not his; but thou wilt soon see him here before thy face.

DEI. O Zeus, thou lord of Æta's unscythed meadows, at last, though late, thou hast given us gladness! Cry aloud, ye women in the house, and ye who are outside the court, for there hath risen on me, beyond all hope, the light this message sheds, the joy whereof we now are reaping.

¹ Others, less well, render "the object of much love," *i.e.*, from Deianeira.

² *πρὸς πολλοὺς* is Hermann's almost certain correction of MSS. *πρόσπολος*, a seemingly pointless addition.

³ The Schol. took *τὸ ποθοῦν* as equivalent here to *τὸ ποθοῦμενον*, but this is impossible; it can only mean "that which desires." Linwood makes it the subject of the sentence, "the curious crowd, each eager for full information, will not let him go." Of emendations Jebb mentions that of E. Thomas, *τὰ ποθεῖν*, with approval; but the text seems sound enough.

CHO. Loud let maidens' voices rise within the house, with cries of joy beside the hearth;¹ and with them let men's shouts be joined to the praise of our champion Apollo, lord of the goodly quiver! And raise withal, ye tender maids, the pæan's note, calling loudly on his sister, Ortygian² Artemis, the slayer of deer, with torch in either hand, and on the neighbouring nymphs! I soar aloft; nor will I spurn the flute,—thou sovereign³ of my soul! Lo, the ivy⁴ fires my blood! Evoe!—as it sets me whirling even now in eager Bacchic dance! Hail, all hail, thou healing god! See, see, dear lady! There, before thy face and full in view, thou hast these things.⁵

DEL. I see it, friends; it escaped not my watchful⁶ eye,—the sight of yonder company. (*To LICHAS.*) All joy I bid our herald, come at last!—if indeed thou bring me aught of joyful news.⁷

LIC. (*he is followed by a train of captive women*). Fair hath

¹ Reading

ἀνολολυξάτω δόμοις ἐφεστίοις
ἀλαλαγαῖς ἃ μελλόννυμφος, . . .

and understanding *κλαγγὰ* with *ἃ μελλόννυμφος*. This is simpler than to understand *ἃ μελλ.* of Deianeira, "she who is soon to become a bride again," which is more than the Greek can mean; or than to read *δόμος*, and render "this house, which is about to receive a bridegroom" (Paley). The MSS. reading, *ἀνολολύξετε δόμοις . . . ὁ μελλόννυμφος*, supplies no meaning. The corrections were due to Burges and Erfurdt respectively.

² The Homeric Hymn to Apollo describes Artemis as born in Ortygia, Apollo in Delos.

³ Probably an invocation of the flute, though some refer it to Apollo or Dionysus.

⁴ *i.e.*, one of the outward marks of Bacchanals, to whom the Chorus liken themselves in their transports of joy.

⁵ *i.e.*, the good news which Lichas brings.

⁶ Reading *φρουρὰν* with Musgrave for MSS. *φρουρά*, which might mean "nor has watching with the eye been neglected by me."

⁷ Others join *χαρτόν* with *φανέντα*, "whose appearance, late though it be, is welcome, if thou come with aught of news."

our coming been, lady, and fair our welcome now, as suits the end attained; for a man in prosperity is bound to win fair words.

DEI. O best of friends, first tell me that which I would fain hear first; shall I receive Heracles alive?

LIC. I left him hale enough, be sure,—alive and prosperous withal, oppressed by no disease.

DEI. Where,—in his ancestral land or on foreign soil? Tell me.

LIC. There is a headland in Eubœa, where he is consecrating altars and dues of fruitful trees to Cenæan¹ Zeus.

DEI. Letting his vows be seen, or prompted by some oracle?

LIC. 'Twas through a vow he made, when seeking to take and sack the home of these women thou seest before thee.

DEI. And these,—pray, whose are they and who? They claim our pity, unless I am deceived by their present plight.

LIC. These thy lord chose out as a special prize for himself and the gods, at the sack of the city of Eurytus.

DEI. Was it then before this city that he stayed away so long,—an endless age, beyond all expectation?

LIC. Nay, but he was holden in Lydia the greater while,—not free, but bought, as he himself declares; but that word, lady, should carry no offence, where Zeus is found to be the cause. So, by his own confession, one whole year he passed as bondman to Omphale, his foreign mistress. So stung was he, incurring this reproach, that he laid an oath upon himself, and swore that he would yet enslave, with wife and child, the man who brought this suffering on him; and 'twas no idle word he spake; but, as soon as he was purified,² he gathered a foreign host and went against

¹ The north-west of Eubœa ends in the promontory of Cenæum. Zeus was worshipped under this title in the neighbourhood.

² Either, as the Schol. says, by his year of exile, or by regular rites of purification.

the city of Eurytus ; saying that he alone of mortal men had had a share¹ in causing him this woe ; for when he came unto his house to sit beside his hearth as a guest of many years, Eurytus railed on him with many a sneering word and baleful heart withal, saying,—“Spite of the unerring arrows in thy hands, thou art far behind my sons in trials of archery” ; then called him “a free man’s slave,” “a battered wreck,” and, lastly, at a feast, his guest being full of wine, he cast him from his doors. Now Heracles was wroth at this ; so, when Iphitus² came another time to the hill of Tiryns, following the tracks of his mares, that had strayed, he flung him from the summit of a tower-like height,³ the while both eye and thought were ranging otherwhither. But for this deed king Zeus, the sire of all, who dwelleth on Olympus, was angered, and sent him forth to be sold as a slave, impatient of his deed, because in slaying this one man he used his only guile. Had he avenged him openly, Zeus, I trow, had pardoned him a victory justly won ; for gods, no more than men, love insolence.⁴ Now they,⁵ with their overweening pride and evil tongues, are themselves all dwellers in the house of Hades, and their city is enslaved ; while these women thou seest, fallen from their happy state on joyless days, are on their way to thee ; for so thy lord commanded, and I, his faithful servant, do his bidding. He will be here himself anon, be well assured, as soon as he hath offered holy sacrifice for the capture of the town to

¹ *i.e.*, with Zeus, who actually imposed the penalty.

² A son of Eurytus.

³ Perhaps the top of the huge walls of Tiryns is meant, though the Schol. understood the expression of “a towering hill.” Any one acquainted with the ruins of Tiryns and its site will probaby prefer the former interpretation as the more suitable.

⁴ *i.e.*, Eurytus had wantonly provoked Heracles, and he deserved punishment, which Zeus would not have grudged if it had been openly dealt out.

⁵ *i.e.*, Eurytus and all his race.

Zeus, the god of his fathers. For this of all my happy news is the sweetest word in thine ears.

CHO. Now is thy joy made manifest, O queen,—part already here, while of the rest thou hast been clearly told.¹

DEI. And have I not the justest cause for feeling joy at this news of my husband's success? The one must needs attend the other.² Still they, who watch events with heed, see reasons for fearing that the man, who prospers now, may one day have a fall. Yea, my friends, a strange pity hath entered my heart, as I gaze at these luckless captives, outcasts in a stranger's land, homeless and fatherless, daughters once of sires free-born, maybe, though now they lead the life of slaves.³

O Zeus, who turnest the foe to flight, never may I see thee come 'gainst any child of mine in such a mood; but, if ever thou must do so, then do it not, while yet this life is mine! So fearful am I, seeing these. (*Addressing IOLE.*) Ah, hapless girl, who then art thou? Maid or mother? To judge by outward looks, thou knowest naught of such things,⁴ and comest of some noble stock.

Whose daughter is this stranger, Lichas? Who was she that bare her? Who her sire? Tell me all; for the sight of her causes me more pity than those others inspire, as she alone has sense enough to understand.⁵

LIC. But what know I? Why shouldst thou e'en question me? Maybe she was born not one of the lowest amongst yon folk.

¹ *i.e.*, here are the herald and the captives, and thou hast heard that Heracles is close at hand.

² *i.e.*, good news and joy go ever hand in hand; my joy is a natural sequence of your good news about Heracles. Wunder and others reject this line most needlessly.

³ Ll. 301, 2 are rejected by Nauck.

⁴ *i.e.*, marriage and motherhood.

⁵ *i.e.*, Iole shows by her demeanour that she feels her position.

DEI. Was she of royal descent? Had Eurytus any daughter?¹

LIC. I know not; for indeed I made no long inquiries.

DEI. Hast thou not even learnt her name from any of her comrades?

LIC. Not I; I did my task, but held my peace.

DEI. At least tell *me*, unhappy girl, with thy own lips; yea, for I am indeed distressed, that I know not at least who thou art.²

LIC. In no wise like her previous conduct, believe me, then, will it be if she speak at all;³ for she hath not uttered one word, small or great, but, ever travailing with her weight of woe, hath been weeping, poor girl, from the time she left her breezy home. Her present plight, though bad indeed it be for her, may claim excuse from us.

DEI. Then let her have her way and pass within, as best may please herself; and may she find⁴ no further grief,—at least from me,—to crown her present woes!—nay, those she has suffice.

Now let us all unto the house, that thou mayst hasten to the place⁵ thou wilt, while I set all in order in our halls. (LICHAS turns to go, and the captives follow.)

MES. (*with an earnest gesture to DEIANEIRA*). Aye, but tarry first a moment here, that thou mayst learn, apart from

¹ Others understand, "was she a child of Eurytus, maybe?"

² *i.e.*, if only I knew who thou wert, I might offer my sympathy; it is a matter of regret to me that I know not even this.

³ Reading *δίησει γλώσσαν* with Wakefield for MSS. *διοίσει*, which has been variously explained as "set her tongue in motion," or, "be different as to speech." Paley suggests *διοίξει* as a possible emendation.

⁴ Reading l. 331 thus: *τοῖς οὔσιν ἄλλην πρὸς γ' ἑμοῦ λύπην λάβοι*. The MSS. give generally *τοῖς οὔσι λύπην*, which Triclinius amended as above. Jebb prefers *λάβη*, the correction of Blaydes, to the MSS. *λάβοι*; but the change is at least unnecessary.

⁵ *i.e.*, back to Cenæum, to rejoin Heracles.

yonder band, who they are that thou art taking to thy house, and mayst clearly know what it behoves thee of matters never mentioned in thy hearing. Herein am I fully informed.

DEI. What now? Why dost thou stop me thus upon my way? ¹

MES. Stay, and hear me. Yea, for it was no idle tale thou didst hear from me before, nor, I trow, will this be.

DEI. Am I, then, to call those others back again? Or wilt thou tell it all to me and these maidens?

MES. There is nothing to prevent its being told to thee and these; but let those others be.

DEI. Well, they are gone; speak, then, and declare thy meaning.

MES. Yon man spake not straightforward truth in aught that he said just now; either he is now a sorry messenger, or else no honest one before.

DEI. What dost thou say? Tell me clearly all thy meaning; for what thou hast said as yet, still leaves me in the dark.

MES. I heard that fellow say, in the presence of many witnesses, 'twas for yonder girl that Heracles slew Eurytus and sacked Æchalia's lofty towers; and Love was the only god that charmed him to those warrior deeds; no bondman's toil on Lydia's shores, as slave to ² Omphale; no hurling of Iphitus to his death; but now yon herald hath thrust Love aside, and is telling a different tale.

Well then, when he could not bring her father to give him the maid for a mistress, he trumped up some trivial charge as a pretext, and marched against her native land,—the land where, Lichas said, this Eurytus bare sway; ³ and

¹ Others explain, "why dost thou approach me thus?" *i.e.*, as if to stop my way.

² Reading *ὕπ' Ὀμφάλῃ* with Herwerden for *ἔπ'*. Wunder regards ll. 356, 7 as interpolated,—a view shared also by Blaydes and Nauck.

³ Ll. 362, 3 are rejected by most editors; they are certainly awkward and unnecessary.

he slew the king, her father, and sacked the town. And now, as thou seest, lady, he¹ is bringing her with him to this house, in no careless fashion, nor as a slave;—nay, never look for that;—it is not likely, if his heart is fired with love. Wherefore it seemed good to me, my queen, to show thee all that I had learnt from yonder man. And there were many Trachinians with me, listening to his story, even as I was, in the midst of their place of gathering, so that they can convict him. Now if my words offend, I am sorry for it; still I have told the honest truth.

DEI. Ah, woe is me! In what plight am I now? What plague unseen have I received beneath my roof? Ah, misery! Is she as nameless, then, as he, who brought her, sware?

MES. In good sooth, no! but famous both by name² and birth,—a daughter of Eurytus by lineage, by name Iole erst, of whose origin that herald had never a word to tell, because, forsooth, he asked no questions!

CHO. Perdition seize—I say not *every* wicked man,³ but him who practiseth these secret villainies to his own dishonouring!

DEI. Maidens mine, what must I do? I feel bewildered by the news now brought.

CHO. Go and inquire of the herald; maybe he would tell the truth, if thou wouldst straitly question him.

DEI. Yea, go I will; thou givest sound advice.

MES. And I,—am I to stay, or what to do?

DEI. Stay; for lo! the herald is now coming from the house, self-summoned, without my sending for him.

¹ Heracles is probably meant, though he has not actually arrived at Trachis. Others make Lichas the subject.

² Jebb reads *ὄνομα*, after Fröhlich and others, pointing out that the MSS. *ὄμμα* can scarcely mean “in regard to her appearance or beauty,” as it is usually understood. Some editions assign l. 379 to Deianeira; so Paley, rendering, “certainly she is very distinguished in look and appearance,” but this seems very weak.

³ *i.e.*, any sin, save such base treachery, might be condoned.

LIC. Lady, what message am I to carry back to Heracles? Tell me; for I am starting, as thou seest.

DEI. How soon thou speedest hence, though slow enough in coming, before we have even renewed¹ our converse!

LIC. Well, if thou wouldst ask me aught, here I am.

DEI. Wilt thou indeed dispense truth's certainty?²

LIC. In aught I chance to know, I will,—so witness mighty Zeus!

DEI. Who, then, is the woman thou hast brought hither?

LIC. She is of Eubœa; but, what her stock, I cannot say.

MES. Come, sir, look this way. To whom dost think thou speakest?

LIC. And thou,—pray, what is the drift of this question?

MES. Make up thy mind to answer what I ask, if thou hast sense enough.

LIC. To Deianeira, the queen, daughter of CENEUS, wife of Heracles, and my own mistress,—unless, perchance, I see amiss.

MES. The very thing I longed to hear thee say; this lady is thy queen, thou sayst?

LIC. Aye, justly so.

MES. How then? what penalty dost thou expect to pay, if found unjust towards her?

LIC. How unjust? What subtlety hast thou devised?

MES. None; nay, 'tis thyself who really doest that.

LIC. I will away,—fool that I have been to hear thee this long while.

MES. Not till thou hast answered one small question.

¹ Reading *κἀννεώσασθαι*, with Hermann, for MSS. *καὶ νεώσασθαι*.

² Reading *νεμεῖς* with Nauck for MSS. *νέμεις*, which is variously interpreted as "hast thou the trustworthiness of sincerity?" (Campbell), or, "dost thou respect fidelity to the truth?" (Linwood). Blydes, reading *νεμεῖς*, renders "wilt thou also give a pledge of truthfulness?" *i.e.*, an oath, for instance.

LIC. Say it, if there is aught thou wantest ; indeed, thou art not silent now.

MES. The captive, whom thou hast escorted to these halls—thou knowest her, I trow ?

LIC. Yea ;¹ but why dost thou ask ?

MES. Didst thou not say, then, that this thy charge, whom thou regardest now with stranger's eyes,² was Iole, daughter of Eurytus ?

LIC. In whose presence, pray ? Who and where is he that thou wilt find to witness that he heard me say it ?³

MES. In the presence of many of the citizens ; a large crowd of Trachinians heard as much as that from thee in the midst of their place of gathering.

LIC. True ; I said I had *heard* so ; but 'tis not the same thing to mention a surmise as to be positive of what is said.

MES. Surmise, indeed ! Didst thou not say, on thine oath, that thou wert bringing her to be the wife of Heracles ?

LIC. Bringing him a wife,—I ? Tell me, I pray thee, dear mistress, who this stranger may be ?

MES. One who was there and heard thee say, that, for love of yon girl, the city was utterly destroyed, and that the cause of its sack was not the Lydian Omphale, but the sudden passion for this maid.

LIC. Mistress, let this fellow hence : 'tis not for men of sober sense to hold such silly talk with crazy folk.

DEL. Nay, I conjure thee by Zeus, whose lightnings flash along the glens of Cæta's heights, rob me not of the story ! For she, to whom thou wilt speak, beareth no malice ; no,

¹ An ingenious conjecture, perhaps of Turnebus, adopted by Brunck and Dindorf, reads *κάτοισθα δῆτ'* ; οὐ φημι, " pray, dost thou know her ? No, not I."

² Some, objecting that Iole is not present at the moment, suspect the text. Of conjectures, Blaydes's *ἡσπερ ἀγνωεῖς γονάς*, " she whose birth is all unknown to thee," is possible ; but the vulgate may be sound.

³ Reading *πάρα* with Bothe for MSS. *παρών*, " to witness that he was there and . . ."

nor is she ignorant that human nature delighteth not always in the same objects. Whoso, then, stands up to fight with Love, as one stands up to box, he is not wise; for Love rules even gods according to his will,—me too, ah, yes! and why not e'en another, weak as me? Wherefore I am mad indeed, if I find any cause to blame my lord when seized with this weakness, or this girl, his accomplice in what is nowise shameful, nor fraught with any harm to me. It cannot be.¹ Nay, but if thou hast been taught by him to lie, no noble lesson art thou perfecting; while, if herein the schooling is thine own, cruel wilt thou appear, when thou art bent on proving kind.² Nay, tell me all the truth; for 'tis a deadly disgrace for a free-born man to have the name of liar fixed on him. Escape detection, no! thou canst not; for there are many, to whom thou hast spoken, to tell me; while, if thou art afraid, thy fears are groundless; for not to learn the truth, that were pain and grief to me; but to know it,—where's the terror there? Hath not Heracles had other loves ere now,—no man more? And yet not one of them hath ever had to bear a bitter word or taunt from me; nor shall this girl, e'en though the passion of her love absorb her very soul;³ for I pitied her,—yes, more than all the rest,—seeing that her beauty had ruined her life, and that she, poor girl, had been the unwitting cause of her country's sack and slavery. Well, that must drift downstream before the wind.⁴ But to thee I say: though false to others, never lie to me!

¹ *i.e.*, nothing will make me bitter against Heracles; Iole need not fear.

² The Schol. gives a different explanation, "thou wilt appear false, when wishing to tell the truth," *i.e.*, habit will become a second nature.

³ Others make Heracles the subject, "though he is utterly absorbed with love of her." Either rendering is defensible; it is merely a question of taste, on which editors differ.

⁴ *i.e.*, these things must take their course now, as it is too late to alter them.

CHO. Hearken¹ to her, for she saith well ; nor wilt thou have to blame her hereafter ; and thou wilt get my thanks.

LIC. Dear mistress, I will tell thee all the truth, keeping nothing to myself ; for I see that, mortal as thou art, thou thinkest as a mortal should, not unkindly. 'Tis even as he saith ; it *was* that wild passion for this girl, which long ago pierced through the heart of Heracles ; for *her* sake yon ruined town, Œchalia, her native place, was razed before his spear. And this he never told me to conceal, nor himself denied,—for I must say what may be said for him ; nay, 'twas I, lady, who sinned,—if haply thou count this a sin,—fearing I might grieve thy heart by telling such a tale. But now that thou really knowest all there is to tell, both for his sake and for thine own no less, bear with the woman, and let the words, which thou hast spoken touching her, remain thy bond. For he whose might hath found no rival hitherto, is now completely vanquished by love for this girl.

DEL. Nay, but to act e'en thus is just what I design. Be sure I will not take upon myself a trouble of my own incurring,² by hopeless struggles with the gods.

Now let us go within, that thou mayst receive the message I entrust, and take the gifts I have to add³ in quittance of those received ; for it is not right that thou shouldst depart empty-handed, after coming so fairly furnished.

CHO. Great the strength of victory,⁴ which Cypris ever

¹ Jebb reads *πιθοῦ* with Dindorf for MSS. *πέιθου* ; so too Paley.

² *i.e.*, the evils attendant upon jealousy. Others understand, "will not aggravate the mischief brought on me by others," *i.e.*, the bringing home of Iole by Heracles.

³ In *προσαρμόσαι* some detect a subtle allusion to the actual "fitting on" of the fatal shirt.

⁴ *i.e.*, her victory proves her might ; it is so conclusive. Other explanations are, "Cypris ever carries off some great strength from a victory," whereas others, though victorious, are exhausted (Paley) ; or, "sweeps onward with mighty force of conquest" (Campbell).

bears away. The tales about the gods,—I pass them by, nor tell how she beguiled the son of Cronos, or Hades, lord of realms of gloom, or Poseidon, shaker of the earth; nay, rather will I tell¹ what stalwart² combatants entered the lists to win this lady's hand, or ever she was wed;³—who they were that came forth to the hard-fought fray, with its showers of blows and clouds of dust. One was a mighty river-god, a monster bull to view, four-legged, with horns above, e'en Achelous, forth from Cœniadæ; the other came from Bacchic Thebes, with curvèd⁴ bow and spears, and brandishing a club, a son of Zeus. So then these met in close⁵ affray, all eager for the bride; and in the midst, sole umpire of their fight, sat Cypris, wand in hand, giver of wedded bliss.

Then was heard the thud of fists, the twang of bow, and crash of bull's horns, all together; and wrestlers' tricks⁶ with limbs close-locked were there, and deadly blows of forehead's shock,⁷ and laboured groans from both. But she, the while, their dainty, beauteous prize, was seated on a hill-side with a far outlook,⁸ awaiting her lord to be. And so the

¹ Jebb punctuates with a note of interrogation, but it is perhaps preferable to supply a verb from λέγω, as above; so Paley and Campbell.

² The meaning of the word ἀμφίγυος is not clearly settled in this context. Some understand it as synonymous here with ἀμφιδέξιος, "dexterous."

³ Jebb renders "for her hand" (πρὸς ὑπέρ), but is not this superfluous here?

⁴ Either referring to the shape of the bow, the ends of which curved outwards, or in the sense of "elastic," *i.e.*, "drawing against that which draws it" (Campbell).

⁵ Either simply = ὁμοῦ, so Liddell and Scott; or perhaps, "with gathered might" (Campbell).

⁶ Explained somewhat obscurely by Hesychius as a manœuvre of wrestlers, by which they attempted to spring on an adversary's back.

⁷ *i.e.*, when the bull charged. This is better than, "blows on the foreheads."

⁸ Or "seen in the distance."

battle rages, as I tell ;¹ while she, the fair young maid, for whom the two are striving, awaits the issue with a piteous look, and then forthwith she leaves her mother's side, as when a calf is taken from its dam.

DEI. Friends, while our guest, with a view to his journey, is speaking with the captive maidens in the house, I have come forth to you by stealth, partly to tell you what my hands have devised, and partly to bewail my woes in company. I have taken to my house with the rest,—as doth a sailor when he ships a freight,—a maiden, no ! a maiden no more, I trow, a mistress rather,—a bale to wreck my peace of mind.² And now we wait the same embrace, we two to share one bed. Such the guerdon Heracles, my husband good and true, as I was used to call him, hath sent me in return for keeping his house so long. Be wroth with him, I know not how, oft as he is sick of this disease ; but live with her, and share a husband's love,—what woman could ? And it would come to that ; for hers, I see, is beauty ripening still, while mine is in decay ; and the eye is wont to snatch youth's bloom, but from that other turns away.³ This, then, is my fear, lest Heracles, though called my lord, should be my younger rival's love. But since, as I said, it ill becomes a woman of sense to show anger, I will tell you, friends, how

¹ The text of the MSS., *ἐγὼ δὲ μάτηρ μὲν οἷα φράζω*, which has been explained, "I speak as a mother might speak," or, "I tell the tale as her mother told it," is undoubtedly corrupt, nor are the emendations at all satisfactory. How far the corruption goes it is impossible to say. Jebb's conjecture, *ἀγῶν δὲ μαργᾶ μὲν, οἷα φράζω*, is provisionally adopted above ; it is ingenious and intelligible, and may serve to stop the gap awhile. Some have suspected a lacuna, not without reason ; Wunder rejects the last five verses of this chorus, and Bergk thought them a variation of the second edition (cf. Paley's note *ad loc.*).

² *i.e.*, as a ship's captain takes in with a promiscuous cargo some bale which is destined to wreck him, so I have taken this girl to my house, along with the rest, to be my bane.

³ There seems to be a bold fusion of metaphors in this passage, but the text is not on that account to be suspected.

I have bethought me of deliverance.¹ Once, in days gone by, I had a present from a monster long since dead, and hid it in a brazen vessel,—the gift I took, while yet a girl, from shaggy-chested Nessus, from the wounds of the dying Centaur, who, for a price, would carry men in his arms across the deep stream of the Evenus, without the use of oar or sail to send them on their way. Now he was e'en carrying me upon his shoulders, when, sent by my sire,² I first followed Heracles to be his bride; and, I being now half-way across, he laid lewd hands on me, and I cried out; whereon the son of Zeus turned round forthwith, and from his hands let fly a feathered shaft, and into his lungs it whizzed, piercing through his chest. Thus spake the monster, lying faint in death: "Daughter of aged Æneus, thus much profit shalt thou get of my ferrying,—so thou list,—because thou wert my latest charge. If thou with careful hand collect the clotted gore around my wound, at the spot where Lerna's monster snake hath steeped the arrow in black gall,³—this shall serve thee as a charm for the heart of Heracles, so that he shall never look on any woman to love her more than thee." Remembering this, friends, which I kept safe at home, 'neath lock and key, after

¹ Reading *νόημα* with Campbell for MSS. *λύπημα*, no explanation of which is at all satisfactory. Other conjectures are Jebb's *λώφημα*, "relief,"—a rare word, only quoted by Hesychius; *τέχνημα*, Blaydes; *λυτήριόν τι πημονῆς* (omitting *τῆδ'*), a conjecture of E. Ziel, adopted by Blaydes in his text.

² The MSS. reading is *τὸν πατρῶον ἠνίκα στόλον*, which may be taken, as above, as a cognate accusative with *ἐσπόμην*. Blaydes reads *ἠνίκ' ἐς δόμον*, but neither this or any other proposed emendation is good enough to take the place of the vulgate.

³ *i.e.*, where the venom, in which the arrow was dipped, can be traced by the darker colour of the blood. Others explain, "the blood from my wound clotted round the arrow, at the place where . . ." *i.e.*, at the arrow's head. Paley adopts Madvig's conjecture, *μελάγχολος . . . ἶος*, in apposition to *θρέμμα*, "where the venom, drawn from the water-snake of Lerna, plunged in."

his death, I dipped this robe in it, adding aught else he had said ere he died,—and lo! 'tis all accomplished. No deeds of wicked daring e'er be mine to know or learn, abhorring, as I do, all daring in my sex! But if, by any means, I may surpass this girl by spells and charms put forth on Heracles, my plans thereto are laid; unless, perchance, ye think my purpose rash; if so,—why, I will cease at once.

CHO. Nay, if there is any cause to trust thy scheme, we think thee not ill-advised.

DEI. There is *this* cause for trust,—my own belief in it, albeit I have never tried the proof.

CHO. Well, experience must be thy guide; for, unless thou make a trial, thou can'st have no means of judging, though thou seem to have.

DEI. We shall soon know then; for yonder I see Lichas; he is already at the door, and will be going ere long. Let me be but carefully screened by you! For though thou do unseemly deeds,—if they be darkly done, thou ne'er wilt have a shameful fall.

LIC. What am I to do? Give thy instructions, daughter of CENEUS, for already I am late through staying here so long.

DEI. The very thing I have been preparing for thee, Lichas, whilst thou wast speaking to the stranger maidens within, that so thou mayest carry this long woven¹ robe for me,—a gift for my husband there of my own handiwork. And, when thou presentest it, say that no one is to put it on before him, nor is it to be shown to the sun-god's light, in hallowed court, or at the blazing hearth, till he stand forth for all to see,² and show it to the gods the day when bulls are slain. Thus had I vowed, that, if ever I should see or

¹ Reading *τανανφῆ*, Wunder's correction of *τόνδε γ' ἐνυφῆ* of MSS.

² Retaining *φανερὸς ἐμφανῶς* of most MSS. Triclinius gave *φανερὸν ἐμφανῆς*.

hear of his safe home-coming, I would robe him therein, as was but right,¹ and so present him at the altars of the gods, new-clad in new attire. And thou shalt carry a token of this, which he will surely recognize, when his eye lights on this signet's seal.²

Now start; and, first, observe a rule,—“no messenger should ever seek to overdo his hests”; and, secondly, so act, that thine be found no single, but a double meed of thanks,—both his and mine in one.

LIC. Nay, if indeed I ply our Hermes' craft, in trusty sort, no fear of my e'er failing in thy case, to bring yon coffer, as it is, before his eyes, and duly add these words of thine³ in proof.

DEI. Prithee, now begone; for thou knowest also the whole state of matters in the house.

LIC. I know and will report that all is safe.

DEI. Well, and thou hast seen my welcome of the stranger girl,—how kindly I received her.

LICH. So kindly that my heart was 'mazed with joy.

DEI. What else, then, couldst thou say? 'Twere early yet, I fear, for thee to tell the longing that I feel, until I know if I inspire such longing there. (*Exeunt LICHAS and DEIANEIRA.*)

CHO. O ye who dwell by the hot springs⁴ near the haven and the rocks and by the heights of CÆta; and ye who have

¹ *i.e.*, as my vow bound me to do. Others render “completely” with *σωθέντ'*, without adducing any parallel instance of such a use of *πανδίκως*.

² Reading with Burges *ὁ κείνος ὄμμα θεῖς | σφραγίδος ἔρκει τῷδ' ἐπ', εὖ μαθήσεται* for MSS. *ὁ κείνος εὐμαθὲς . . . ἐπ' ὄμμα θήσεται*, which has been strained to yield a meaning by taking *ἐπιθήσεται ὄμμα* as equivalent to *ὄψεται*. Jebb adopts Billerbeck's *ἐπὸν μαθήσεται*, which Blydes regards as a certain conjecture. (Cf. Paley's note *ad loc.*)

³ Reading *ὦν λέγεις* with Wunder for MSS. *ὦν ἔχεις*.

⁴ *i.e.*, near the warm springs of Thermopylæ, situated between the Malian gulf and the heights of CÆta.

your homes along the midmost¹ Malian gulf, by the strand of the maid with shafts of gold,² where meet the famous synods held by Hellas at the Gates!³ Soon on your ears shall rise once more the dulcet music of the flute, lifting loud no jarring note, but sweet as lyre⁴ when swept for gods; for Alcmena's son, the child she bare to Zeus, is hastening home, and with him the spoils of all prowess. Twelve long months, without one word of news, we waited for him who was gone from us so utterly, a wanderer o'er the sea; while she, his loving spouse, would ever waste with bitter tears her poor sad heart. But now the war-god, stung to fury, hath loosed her from her days of woe.⁵

Oh may he soon arrive! Let not his ship of many oars, the chariot of the deep, delay, till he has reached this town, leaving yon island's altar-hearth, where, rumour has it, he is sacrificing! Thence may he come, all fond desire,—his heart made one with hers by soft persuasion of the anointed robe!⁶

DEI. (*re-entering with a troubled look*). Friends, how I fear that I may have gone too far in all that I did but now!

CHO. What is amiss, Deianeira, thou daughter of Æneus?

DEI. I know not; but my heart misgives me, that I may

¹ *i.e.*, landlocked, being closed in by Eubœa, Trachis, and Phthiotis.

² Artemis, the huntress-goddess.

³ Meetings of the Amphictyonic Council were held near Thermopylæ.

⁴ Others understand, "a note of minstrelsy divine, responsive to the lyre."

⁵ *i.e.*, the suspense is at last over; the outbreak of war at Æchalia has brought news of Heracles to Deianeira. Musgrave conjectured *αὐτῶν στροθεῖς*, "the storm of war now laid again," but this is not appropriate; it is thanks to the war breaking out that news has come of Heracles.

⁶ Little can be made of this most hopeless passage. The above translation is obtained by reading *πανίμερος*, the conjecture of Mudge for MSS. *πανάμερος*; *παρφάσει* with Pretor for *ἐπὶ προφάσει*, and *φάρους* with Haupt for *θηρός*. For the various conjectures cf. Jebb's Appendix.

ere long be found the author of a dire mischance, resulting from fair hope.

CHO. Surely it concerneth not thy gift to Heracles.

DEI. Indeed it doth. And so I would ne'er advise any one to yield to zeal blindfold.

CHO. Tell us, if it may be told, the reason for thy fear.

DEI. So strange a thing hath come to pass, my friends, that, if I tell the same, it will sound to you¹ as a marvel too wild for dreams. Lo! that which I used but now to anoint the robe for his wearing,—a white tuft of wool² from a sheep's fair fleece,—hath vanished, not consumed by aught within the house, but of itself devoured, wasting and crumbling away from the pavement's surface.³ But, that thou mayst know all, e'en as it happened, I will unfold the tale at greater length.

Of all those rules he taught me erst, that Centaur wild, with the pain of the cruel barbed shaft still in his side, nought I left undone, but remembered them all, like writing which none may wash from its tablet of bronze. E'en thus was it prescribed to me; thus I did.⁴ I was to keep this philtre in a secret place, apart from fire alway and out of the hot sun's reach, until I should apply it, freshly spread, to one of whom we wot. So I did; and now, when I was called to act, I anointed the robe within the house, in the secrecy of my chamber, using a tuft of wool which I had plucked from a sheep of the home-flock;⁵ then, after folding

¹ The construction is not very clear. Either we must supply *ἔσται* or an equivalent, or read *ὑμᾶς* for *ὑμῖν* as subject to *μαθεῖν*; Jebb prefers the latter course.

² Reading *ἀργῆς . . . πόκος* with Wunder for MSS. *ἀργῆτ' . . . πόκω*.

³ Fröhlich's conjecture for these *possibly* corrupt words is ingenious, *καὶ ψήχεται κατ' ἔδαφος*.

⁴ Wunder rejects this line and l. 690 and 695, unnecessarily in each instance. In Deianeira's excited state of mind such reiterations are very natural.

⁵ Probably a flock kept near the house to supply food and victims:

my gift, I laid it in the coffer's depths, as ye saw it, out of the sun-god's light. But as I went within again, I saw a thing too strange to tell, beyond man's comprehension. It chanced that I had thrown the wool, plucked from the sheep, wherewith I had smeared the robe, into the full blaze of the sun's beams; where, growing warm, it melted all from view, crumbled away on the ground, resembling, most of all, what thou wilt see the saw eat out, when wood is being sawn.¹ Like this it lies where I threw it; while from the ground, whereon it lay exposed, rose seething gouts of foam, as when rich juice of purpling grapes,² plucked from the vine which Bacchus loves, is spilt upon the earth.

And so, ah me! I know not which way to turn my thoughts, but see that I have done a fearful deed. For wherefore, pray, or in return for what, should the monster, when dying, have shown good-will to me, on whose account he died? Not so; but he was beguiling me, bent on destroying his own slayer; whereof I gain the knowledge all too late, when it avails no more. Ah, woe is me! for unless haply I prove wrong in my surmise, I, and I alone, shall plunge my lord in utter ruin. For I know that the arrow he sped had power to hurt e'en Cheiron, a god withal, and whatso³ beast it ever touch is doomed. And must it not prove fatal to my lord as well,—this black envenomed gore, which welled from yon Centaur's wound? It must be so, I feel. Yet 'tis my fixed resolve, if he shall come to harm, to link my death to his, taking the self-same plunge; for to live with a sullied name is what no woman, who prizes her birthright of virtue, can bear.

¹ *i.e.*, all appearance of wool was gone, leaving a residuum like sawdust.

² Campbell renders, "in blooming vintage-time."

³ Reading $\chi\acute{\omega}\nu\pi\epsilon\rho$ with Wakefield for MSS. $\chi\acute{\omega}\sigma\pi\epsilon\rho$, which has been rendered "and even as it touches."

CHO. Needs must one fear dire issues;¹ but yet it were not well to condemn thy hope before the event.

DEI. Rash counsels exclude even the hope, which lends a certain confidence.

CHO. Nay, but, in the case of such as are not wilful sinners, anger softens; and it were right thou find it so.

DEI. Aye, such would be the words, not of an accomplice in the mischief done, but of one with no trouble of his own.

CHO. Best to say no more, unless thou hast aught to tell thine own son; for he is now at hand, who went erewhile in search of his father.

HYL. O mother, to have chosen thee one of three things!—that thou hadst ceased to live; or, if alive, wert called another's mother; or that thou hadst gotten somewhence a better heart in place of that thou hast!

DEI. My son, what reason have I given thee for this loathing?

HYL. Know that thou hast slain this day thy husband,—and my sire.

DEI. Alas! my son, what word hast thou divulged?

HYL. A word which cannot fail to be fulfilled; for that which eye hath seen,—who can make it void?

DEI. How sayest thou, my son? Who can have taught thee to say that I have done so fell a deed?

HYL. With mine own eyes I saw my father's grievous plight; 'tis no mere hearsay this.

DEI. And where was he, when thou, approaching close, didst take thy stand beside him?

HYL. If thou *must* hear, then must I tell all. When he had sacked the famous town of Eurytus, and gone his way with trophies and first-fruits of victory, he dedicated altars and a leafy precinct to Zeus, the god of his fathers, at the cape Cenæan, a sea-beat headland of Eubœa; it was there

¹ *i.e.*, such as Deianeira herself has foreboded; or the meaning might also be "things terrible," such as the disappearance of the wool.

I saw him first, glad sight to longing eyes. Now he was just preparing to slay full many a victim, when Lichas, his own herald, arrived from home, bringing thy gift, the deadly robe; and he put it on, as thou didst bid erewhile, and so began the sacrifice with twelve bulls, free from all blemish, the first-fruits of the spoil; though, taken all together, one hundred victims of all kinds were brought to the altar by him. At first, poor wretch, he prayed in gracious mood, pleased with the adornment of his robe. But when from the holy rites the flame blazed up, fed by the blood and the sap of the wood, a sweat broke out upon his skin, and the robe clung unto his sides, glued as by a craftsman's hand to every limb, while fierce convulsions racked his bones; and then it preyed upon his flesh, as it had been¹ some fell and deadly viper's poison. Thereupon he cried aloud for the hapless Lichas, who was wholly guiltless of thy crime, asking how² he came to bring that robe; but Lichas, poor wretch, knowing nought, told him it was thy gift and none other's, just as it was sent. When Heracles heard that, as a spasm of the thrilling pain seized hold upon his lungs, he caught him by the foot, where turns the ankle-joint, and hurled him at a sea-beat rock, which rose from out the waves; spattering white brain from the hairy scalp, as the crown of the skull was all scattered in bits, and blood poured forth therewith. And all the folk brake forth in cries of woe, to see one mad, the other done to death; and no man dared to stand before the man. For now a spasm brought him to the ground, then made him spring into the air, with shouts and yells; while the rocks were ringing all around, the headlands of the Locrian hills and Eubœa's promontories. Now, when he was faint with throwing himself in anguish oft upon the ground, and with crying oft in loud lament, cursing his ill-matched union with a wretch like

¹ Reading $\omega\zeta$ with Wakefield for MSS. $\acute{\omega}\zeta$.

² Others, "with what evil design."

thee, his marriage with one of Æneus' race,—a prize, forsooth, that wrecked his life, when won,—then, from out the veil of smoke, lifting his distorted gaze, he saw me in the press of men with streaming eye, and, seeing me, he cried: "My son, come hither; fly not from my woe, not though thou have to share my death. Nay, lift and bear me hence; and, if it may be, set me¹ in some spot, where none of mortal men shall e'er set eyes on me; or, if thy pity sticks at that, at least transport me from this land forthwith, and let me not die here." No sooner had he given these commands than we laid him in the centre of the ship, and so,—though scarcely thus,—we brought him to land here, roaring the while in his spasms; and soon will ye see him, living still or lately dead. Such the plots, and such the deeds against my father's life, of which thou standest convicted, mother. For this may Justice and the avenging fiend requite thee with punishment! So I pray, if it be right; and right it is, for thou thyself didst fling away the right, I trow,² by slaying the best of all the sons of earth, whose like thou wilt never see again. (*DEIANEIRA turns to go.*)

CHO. Why dost thou go hence without a word? Knowest thou not that thy silence seconds the accuser's words?

HYL. Let her go hence! A fair wind speed her going, far from my sight,—well gone!³ For why should she retain the honoured name of mother, all in vain, seeing that there is nought of mother in her deeds? Nay, let her go; farewell to her! And may the joy she gives my sire, be such as she herself may win! (*Exit HYLUS.*)

CHO. My daughters, see how suddenly hath come upon

¹ Reading with Wakefield $\mu\epsilon\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ for MSS. $\mu\acute{\iota}\theta\epsilon\varsigma$, which is rendered by those who retain it, "put me somewhere out of the way."

² Paley, however, explains "thou hast thrown this very justice as a shield before my action," *i.e.*, made it right for me to act thus.

³ Retaining MSS. $\kappa\alpha\lambda\tilde{\omega}\varsigma$, which is surely preferable to $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta\varsigma$, though characterized by Jebb as weak.

us that heaven-sent word, uttered long since by voice prophetic, which told how, when the twelfth year was drawing to its close, in the fulness of the months, it would bring to an end the chain of toil for the own-begotten son of Zeus! And lo! 'tis wafted to its goal,¹ true and sure. For how should he, who seeth not the light, have any more his bondman's toil for aye, now life is past?² For if a guileful doom, the Centaur's trick, is steeping his limbs in a deadly cloud, while to him cleaves the venom, which Death engendered and the speckled serpent nursed,³—how shall he look upon to-morrow's sun, when that terrific Hydra-shape hath gripped him fast, and, therewithal, the murderous stings of black-haired monster, subtle-tongued, break out upon his skin, tormenting him?

One part hereof this hapless wife assigned⁴ him of herself, fearing⁵ nought of this, but seeing great mischief from his new marriage rushing upon her home; the rest, that came of a stranger's⁶ scheming, with issues fraught with

¹ The word *κατουρίζει* is taken intransitively by many on the Schol.'s hint, but Linwood and Paley are more probably to be followed, who supply a subject from what precedes, either "the god" or "the voice of his oracle."

² The reading of Schneidewin here and in the corresponding passage in the antistrophe gives good sense, and is as probable as any offered,

ἔτι ποτ' ἔτι πόνων ἔχοι θανῶν λατρείαν,

and in l. 840,

φόνια δολιόμυθα κέντρ' ἐπιζέσαντα.

The word *Νέισσον* was probably a gloss, which then led to further corruption. Most editors attempt some correction; specimens of these are noticed in Jebb's Appendix to the passage.

³ Reading *ἔτρεφε*.

⁴ Reading *τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ προσέβαλε* for MSS. *τὰ μὲν οὐ τι προσέβαλε*, which is explained to mean, "part she did not at all comprehend"; but such a meaning for *προσέβαλε* has no parallel.

⁵ Reading *ἄοκνος* with Musgrave for MSS. *ἄοκνον*, usually understood as "speedy,"—a doubtful meaning.

⁶ *i.e.*, Nessus, the Centaur.

death,¹ she waileth, I trow, as one lost, her eyes suffused with the tender dew of copious tears. Deep the woe, achieved by craft, foreshadowed by the approaching fate!²

The tears burst streaming from our eyes: there hath fallen on him,—ye gods!—a sickness, to excite our pity; such woe as ne'er hath come on his illustrious head from foeman's hand.³ Ah, champion spear with dark-stained point, thou that, in battle's stress that day, didst swiftly bring yon bride from Æchalia's towering walls! But 'tis the Cyprian queen whose work this is most clearly proved,—never speaking at her task.

FIRST HALF-CHO.⁴ Is it but my idle fancy, or do I hear some cry of sorrow ringing this moment through the house? Am I right?

SECOND HALF-CHO. No doubtful sound is raised within; nay, 'tis the wail of woe; the house hath some fresh trouble.

CHO. And mark with what a strange⁵ and gloomy look yon aged dame draws nigh to announce somewhat.

NUR. My children, how grievous, it seems, were the woes begun for us by that gift, despatched to Heracles!

CHO. What new event⁶ dost thou report, old dame?

¹ Others render "by a fatal reconciliation," *i.e.*, between Nessus and Deianeira, or "at a fatal meeting."

² *i.e.*, the death of Heracles by the guile of Nessus.

³ Jebb suggests *ἀναρσίων ἕπ' οὐπω τοῦδε σῶμ'* for MSS. *Ἡρακλέους*, which most editors regard as a gloss. There is a var. lect. *Ἡρακλέα*, but the difficulty is to reconcile strophe and antistrophe.

⁴ The distribution of ll. 863-870 follows Brunck's arrangement.

⁵ The traditional reading of the MSS. *ἀήθης* has been understood to mean "unlike herself,"—a meaning which can hardly be obtained from the word, though in the absence of certain conjecture it has been thought better to adhere to tradition. The conjecture *ἀηδής*, "with no joyous look," again strains the meaning of the Greek word, while Jebb's proposed *ἀγηθής*, though formed on analogy, does not exist.

⁶ Mekler's *καινὸν οἰκοθεν* deserves notice as a possible emendation of a very unusual word.

NUR. Deianeira hath gone on that last of all journeys,—gone without stirring a foot.

CHO. How? not dead surely?

NUR. Thou hast heard all.

CHO. Dead,—unhappy one?

NUR. Once more thou hearest it.

CHO. Unhappy lady, lost! How died she, dost thou say?

NUR. A death most cruel in the doing.

CHO. What fate did she encounter, woman?

NUR. Her own hand wrought her end.

CHO. What rage, what frenzied fit, conspired with fatal weapon's edge¹ to take her life? How did she contrive this death on death, and bring it all to pass alone?

NUR. By stroke of mournful steel.

CHO. Vain chatterer, didst witness this deed of violence?

NUR. Aye, that I did; for lo! I stood close by.

CHO. Describe it,—how 'twas done. Come, speak.

NUR. Her own heart schemed, her own hand wrought this deed.

CHO. What dost thou say?

NUR. The simple truth.

CHO. A fiend of vengeance dire is the child she hath born this house,—the child of yon new-found bride!

NUR. Aye, all too dire; and had'st thou been at hand and witnessed what she did, still deeper, surely, had thy pity been.

CHO.² Was woman ever bold enough to put her hand to such a deed?

NUR. Aye, and in a fearful way; as thou wilt bear me

¹ Reading *αἰχμῆ* with Linwood and Hermann for MSS. *αἰχμάν*, which is explained by Campbell, "prompted her in seizing this evil-pointed weapon,"—surely an impossible rendering of the Greek.

² Hermann rejects this and the next line as a clumsy interpolation intended to introduce the speech of the nurse less abruptly.

witness when thou learnest. On entering the house alone and seeing her son arranging a deep soft couch within the court, that he might then go back and meet his sire, she hid herself where none should see, and, flinging herself before the altars, loudly wailed that she was now forlorn;¹ and the tears would flow, whene'er her poor hands touched some chattel she had used in days of yore; and, as she ranged from room to room, the sight of any servant whom she loved would make her weep, poor soul, appealing the while to her own hard lot and her childless home² henceforth. But when she ceased from this, suddenly I saw her dart into the chamber of Heracles; and I kept watch on her from a hidden place of outlook. And I saw his poor wife lay the bedding on the couch of Heracles; this done, she sprang upon the bed and sat there in the midst; then, as the streams of scalding tears brake forth, she spoke: "O bed and marriage-bower,—mine own,—henceforth, for all the days to come, farewell! For nevermore shall ye receive me now, to sleep upon this couch." 'Twas all she said, and then with eager hand threw loose her robe, where³ the brooch of beaten gold was resting o'er the breast, baring her whole left side and arm. Thereon I ran, with might and main, and told her son of her design; but 'twixt my speeding to and fro, we found that she had stabbed herself with a two-edged sword, e'en to the very heart. And when her son had seen, loud moan he made, knowing now, poor boy, that he had forced her to this deed in his anger, having

¹ Reading *γένοιτ' ἐρήμη* with MSS., *i. e.*, as having lost both son and husband. Jebb adopts Nauck's *γένοιτ' ἔρημοι*, *i. e.*, the altars were so; but little is thus gained.

² Reiske's correction *ἑστίας* for MSS. *οὐσίας* is followed in the translation. Campbell explains the vulgate, "her childless existence for the future," but such a use of *οὐσίας* cannot be defended on any grounds. Numerous emendations have been proposed, of which Jebb's *καὶ τῆς ἐπ' ἄλλοις . . . οὐσίας* (*ἐπι* = "in the power of") is the latest.

³ Jebb reads *ῥ* with Wakefield for MSS. *φ*.

learned too late from those of the household that she had yielded to the monster's prompting and acted all unwittingly. So then the youth, in sore distress, gave way to sorrow unrestrained, uttering loud laments for her, and falling on her body to kiss it; stretching himself at her side with many a cry of woe,—how that he had flung at her a wicked, baseless charge; mourning his orphaned life¹ henceforth,—orphaned of the twain at once, of father and of her.

So fares yon house. Rash, then, is he who counts on two days yet, or haply e'en on more;² for there is no to-morrow for any, until he is safely through to-day. (*Exit the NURSE*).

CHO. Which sorrow to lament first, or which exceeds in misery,³ is hard, alas! for me to judge. One we have in the house before our eyes; for the other we wait⁴ with foreboding; and "have" and "soon to have" are kin.

Oh, that some rushing wind might rise at our hearth with wafting breath⁵ to bear me far from hence, that I die not of terror on the spot at the mere sight of the valiant son of Zeus! For they say that he is approaching, in front of the palace, holden in pains whence he cannot get free,—sight of wonder passing words.⁶

So, 'twas not far, but very nigh, the woe I heralded, in accents sad, like nightingale's shrill note! For lo! yonder are strangers from another land, approaching. Whither⁷ do they carry him? With loving care, as for a friend, they plant their heavy footsteps noiselessly. Ah, how still their

¹ Reading *βίον* with Wakefield for MSS. *βίου*.

² Reading *ἢ καὶ τι πλείους* with Dindorf for MSS. *ἢ καὶ πλείους τις*.

³ Reading *μέλεα* with Musgrave for MSS. *τέλεα*.

⁴ Reading *μένομεν* with Erfurdt for MSS. *μέλλομεν*. Hermann reads *μολόμεν*, "are cares to us."

⁵ Fröhlich's conjecture, *ἄπουρος ἐστίας τις*, deserves consideration.

⁶ *ἄσπετον θίαμα* has been proposed.

⁷ Or perhaps "how."

burden is! What must our verdict be,—that he is dead, or sleeping?

HYL. (*as HERACLES is carried in on a litter*). Woe is me for thee, my sire! Ah, woe for thee, unhappy that I am! What can I do? Or what shall I devise? Ah me!

OLD MAN. Hush, my son! Wake not the savage pain that drives thy father wild! He lives, although the life is faint¹. So clench thy teeth, and stay thy tongue.

HYL. How sayest thou, old man? Is he alive?

OLD MAN. Wake him not, whom slumber binds, my son; nor rouse or call again to life the fits of his dread malady.

HYL. Ah, but a load is laid on me that passeth bounds; I feel a madness in my heart.²

HER. (*recovering from his swoon*). O Zeus, to what land am I come? Amongst whom of mortal men have ye laid me, racked with anguish never-ending? Ah me, my agony! Again that damnèd gnawing pain! Ah me!

OLD MAN (*reproachfully to HYLUS*). Did I not surely know³ how much better it was that thou shouldst hide thy grief in silence, instead of driving slumber from his head and eyes?

HYL. In vain, for I know not how to bear the sight of agony like this.

HER. O thou Cenæan cape, mine altar-base, how fair a return hast thou, to my sorrow, achieved⁴ for sacrifice so

¹ *προπετής* is explained generally as "in a swoon"; Jebb renders "prostrate"; but in either case it comes to much the same thing,—he is prostrated by faintness.

² Jebb follows Madvig and Blaydes in placing a stop after *ἄπλετον*. Those who place no stop there understand "my heart is wild with weight of boundless woe."

³ Reading *ἐξῆδη σ'* with Wecklein for MSS. *ἐξῆδης*. Dindorf gives *ἐξῆδησθ'*, "hast thou now learnt"?—as Campbell renders after the Schol., also referring *κεῖθεν* to Heracles, "that he should remain shrouded in silence."

⁴ Reading *ἦνυσας* with Brunck, Wakefield, and Blaydes, for MSS.

fair! Oh hear me, Zeus!¹ Ah, what a wreck hast thou made of me! Would that I, unhappy wretch, had ne'er set eyes on thee, to see this frenzy at its height, past power of spells to soothe! For what singer of spells, what master-hand in healing art, save Zeus alone,² shall ever charm this scourge away? I should hail him as a marvel from afar.

Oh! oh! Let me alone! Leave me, leave me, hapless wretch, to sleep my last, my latest sleep!³ Where art thou touching me? Whither turning me? Thou wilt kill me, kill me surely! If there be e'en one pang that sleeps, this hast thou roused again! Its grip is on me,—oh the pain! Once more my foe creeps nigh! Whence are ye,⁴ O most thankless of the sons of Hellas,—ye whose land I purged so oft, throughout my woful life in death, upon the sea and 'mid all woods; and now will none of you turn⁵ fire or sword against this suffering life, to succour me? Oh, oh! Will none e'en come and strike the head amain⁶ from off this hated trunk? Woe is me, ah woe!

OLD MAN. Son of him who lieth here, this task hath reached a point beyond my strength; so lend thine aid;

ἡνύσω, which Linwood explains, "hast won for thyself from me to turn it to my sorrow"; this is possible, but slightly strained.

¹ Some join *ὦ Ζεῦ* with what follows, making Zeus the cause of his woe.

² The Schol. interprets, "without the will of Zeus."

³ Reading—

*ἐἴτέ μ', ἐἴτέ με δύσμορον ὕστατον,
ἐἴθ' ὕστατον ἐννᾶσθαι.*

So Jebb after Wunder and Hermann.

⁴ *i.e.*, "Can you really be of Hellenic blood, and yet so thankless?" Others follow the Schol. in regarding *πόθεν* as equivalent to *ποῦ*, but unnecessarily.

⁵ Reading *ἐπιτρέψει*. The var. lect. *ἀποτρέψει* has been understood to mean, "turn from its purpose against me." Possibly there is some corruption in the text.

⁶ Reading *βίᾳ* with Wakefield for MSS. *βίον*. So Paley and Jebb.

for thou hast too much strength at thy command to leave his saving in my hands.¹

HYL. There,—I have hold of him ; but, neither of myself nor with the help of others, can I make his life forget its pain : such is the doom dispensed by Zeus !²

HER. My son, where art thou ? Take hold and lift me,—thus, e'en thus ! Ye gods ! ah me ! Again it makes its fearful spring, to slay me utterly,—fierce fever not to be approached. O Pallas, Pallas, my tortures now begin anew ! Ah, my son, in pity for thy sire, draw thy sword, which none will blame, and smite me 'neath the collar-bone, and cure the angry pain, caused me by thy godless mother ! Oh that I may live to see her brought as low, by such a doom as she has meted out to me ! Sweet Hades, own brother of Zeus, give me, oh, give me rest ! cut short this wretched life by some swift doom !

CHO. Horror thrills me, friends, hearing these sorrows of our prince ;—so fair a man, so foully vexed !

HER. Ah, many a hot emprise ere now,—no *tales* of woe,³—have I achieved, as well by valiancy as strength ! But never yet was aught proposed for me, either by the wife of Zeus or by the hated Eurystheus, like this that Æneus' daughter, with her traitress face, hath fastened on my shoulders, a net that fiendish fingers wove, to me a robe of death ! Sticking tightly to my sides, it hath battened on my inmost flesh ; a greedy guest, it feeds upon the channels of my breath ; and hath already drained me dry of healthy

¹ Following Jebb's conjectural reading and interpretation, σοὶ γὰρ εἰτοῖμα εἰς πλεον ἦ . . . for MSS. σοὶ τε γὰρ ὄμμα ἐμπλεον ἦ . . . of which nothing satisfactory can be made ; for such renderings as "for thou hast an eye to save him clearer than is at my command" (*Prctor*) are but desperate attempts to explain what is inexplicable.

² Others understand, "such healing rests with Zeus."

³ Reading κοῦ λόγῳ κακὰ with Bothe for MSS. καὶ λόγῳ κακὰ, which has been explained, "grievous even in report"—(how much more in reality !).

blood ; from head to foot I am one wreck, made prisoner by these baffling bonds.

Such treatment have I ne'er endured from spearmen in the open field ; from earth-born army of the Giants ; from savage monster's might ; Hellas ne'er did thus to me ; not thus the world of barbarous tongues ; nor any land I ever went to purge ! But a woman, weak as women are,¹ not strong by nature like a man, hath brought me low, all by herself, not using any sword ! My son, come, show thyself true son of mine, and set not the name of mother before me. With thine own hands bring forth thy mother from the house, and deliver her thyself into my power, that I may know of a surety whether it grieve thee more to see my person tortured thus, or hers, when she is justly plagued ! Go, my son, harden thy heart ; and pity me, whom many must, moaning and weeping like a girl ; and none can say that he ever saw Heracles do this before ; nay, I ever followed trouble's lead without a sigh. But now,—ah me !—instead of that, I have been found a woman. Come hither unto me, stand close beside thy sire, and see the kind of hap that caused these sufferings ; for I will bare myself and show thee all. There ! look, all of you, upon my wretched frame ! Behold the sufferer ! see my piteous plight !

Ah me, alas ! ah me ! Comes anew that fiery thrill of pain, darting through my sides once more ; no rest am I allowed, it seems, from combating this fell, consuming pest ! King Hades, take me to thyself ! Smite me, O lightning blaze of Zeus ! Let loose on me thy brandished thunder-bolt, great king ; full on my head let it light, my sire ! For once again the plague devours me ; once more its full-blown fury bursts ! O hands, poor hands, O back and chest and arms of mine, to this are ye now come,—ye that, by

¹ Jebb reads *φύσα* with Nauck and Blaydes for MSS. *οὔσα* ; an improvement, if not a necessary correction. Blaydes and Reiske further write *θῆλυν*.

your might, in days of yore, subdued the lion in his Nemean lair, the herdsmen's bane, a fearsome beast that none might face ; and Lerna's water-snake ; and that wild monster-host of double form, like steeds upon their way, a wanton, lawless race, of overmastering might ; likewise the Erymanthian beast, and Hades' triple-headed hound beneath the earth, resistless prodigy, offspring of Echidna dire ; and the serpent, that watched o'er the apples of gold at earth's remotest bounds.

Of these and countless toils besides have I tasted ; and no man hath ever set up a trophy won from me. But now, thus strengthless, torn to shreds, I am wasted to utter wretchedness by an unseen plague,—I, of whom men speak as noblest mother's son,—I, whose sire they say is Zeus among the stars ! But of this ye may be very sure :—although I am a thing of nought, although I cannot crawl a step, yet, spite of that, will I work her woe who caused these sufferings. Might she but come ! So should she learn to tell this truth to all the world, that in my death as when alive I punished evil-doers !

CHO. Unhappy Hellas, what woe I see in store for her, if she shall lose a man like this !

HYL. O father, since thy silence gives me leave to make reply, hear me, spite of thy sick state. I will but ask thee what I have a right to win. Give in to me ; nor yield thus madly to the stings¹ of rage ; thus thou ne'er wilt get to know wherein thy longing to exult consists, or how causeless is thy bitterness.

HER. Cease, if thou hast said thy say ; for, in my stricken state, I wot not of the subtle speech thou long hast used.

HYL. I am come to tell thee of my mother, touching her present plight and her unwitting error.

HER. Traitor ! Hast thou again made e'en a passing mention, in my hearing, of her that slew thy sire,—thy mother ?

¹ Reading δάκνυει.

HYL. Yea, for 'tis so with her that to be still were wrong.

HER. Aye, wrong indeed, her bygone sins considered!

HYL. And wrong thou must allow, in view of what she did to-day.

HER. Speak; only beware thou be found not traitor born!

HYL. My news is,—she is dead, a victim lately slain.

HER. By whom? Strange the news thou tellest, boding ill!

HYL. Her own hand,—not a stranger's,—dealt the blow.

HER. Alas! too soon to die by mine, as she deserved!

HYL. Even thy rage would turn, shouldst thou learn all.

HER. Strange prelude to thy story! Explain thy meaning.

HYL. It comes to this,¹—she erred, but her intent was good.

HER. A good deed was it, worst of sons,—her slaying of thy sire?

HYL. She thought to lay on thee a charm to win thy love, when she saw yon bride within,—a grievous error.

HER. And who in Trachis knows such potent drugs?

HYL. Nessus, the Centaur, long ago beguiled her to madden thy desire with charm like this.

HER. Ah me! ah me! most hapless and undone, alas! Lost, lost! No more for me the light of life! Woe is me! Yes, now I see the straits in which I stand! Away, my son! Thy father's days are sped. Summon me thy brethren, all my sons, and with them the hapless Alcmena, bride of Zeus to little end,—that ye may learn from me the last I have to say,—the oracles I know.

HYL. Thy mother is not here, but hath her home at Tiryns by the sea,—so chance ordains; and she hath taken some of thy children with her and is bringing them up

¹ So Erfurdt and Hermann, placing a comma after *χοῆμ'*. Paley and others render, "she acted on a mistake in the whole matter,"—but the other version is far more graphic.

there, while others thou mayst hear are dwelling in the town of Thebes. But all of us now here, father, will serve thee to the last, as we are told, in aught there is to do.

HER. Hear thou, then, the work in hand. The time is come for thee to show what claim thou hast to be called son of mine. It was foreshown me by my sire, in days long gone, that I should not be slain by aught that breathed the breath of life,¹ but by one already dead and housed with Hades. And so it is the monster Centaur hath slain me, the dead slaying the living, just as God's oracle foretold. And I will declare new prophecies, whose issue doth agree with these, of like tenor with the old;² these I wrote me down, from the whispering of my father's oak, the many-tongued, when I came to the grove of the Selli, whose home is on the hills, and on the earth their bed; which told me that, at this hour now living³ and with us, a full release from all my load of woes should come; methought of happy days in store; but death was my release, it seems,—and death alone; for woe no more befalls the dead. Since, then, my son, these things are clearly coming true, 'tis thy turn now to lend thy father aid, delaying not till thou provoke my tongue to wrath,⁴ but yielding of thine own accord thy help, finding out that best of laws,—obedience to a sire.

HYL. Father, though I have my fears, when brought to such a point in speech,⁵ yet will I obey in what seems good to thee.

HER. First lay thy right hand here in mine.

HYL. Why dost thou so straitly urge this pledge on me?

¹ Jebb adopts Erfurdt's correction τῶν ἐμπνεόντων for MSS. πρὸς τῶν πνεόντων, thus avoiding the double preposition.

² Line 1165 is bracketed by Nauck; also line 1173.

³ Wunder suggests μέλλοντι, τῷ for MSS. τῷ ζῶντι καί.

⁴ Others understand, "and wait not for my tongue to goad thee on."

⁵ *i.e.*, a point where I am called upon to give a blind promise, or a refusal to obey.

HER. Give it at once, nor disobey !

HYL. There ! I tender it ; no denial shall be given.

HER. Swear, now, by the head of Zeus my sire.

HYL. Swear what ? Is this too to be told ?¹

HER. Swear to fulfil for me the task enjoined.

HYL. I swear I will, with Zeus to hear my oath !

HER. And pray that woe may be thy lot, if thou transgress this oath.

HYL. It ne'er will be, for I shall keep it ; but still I make the prayer.

HER. Dost know, then, Cæta's summit, sacred to Zeus ?

HYL. Yea, for full oft have I stood thereon to sacrifice.

HER. Thither, then, must thou carry up my body with thine own hands, helped by any friends thou wilt ; and, when thou hast cut much timber from the deeply-rooted oak, and hewn good store withal of wilding olive's sturdy logs, then lay my body on the pyre, and, taking in thy hand a blazing torch of pine,² set fire thereto. And let no tear of lamentation enter there ; but do the deed without a tear or groan, if indeed thou art my son ; but if thou fail, I will haunt thee, even from the world below, and my curse shall be heavy upon thee for ever.

HYL. Alas ! father, what hast thou said ?³ How hast thou treated me !

HER. E'en as thou must do ; else become some other's son ; be called not mine henceforth !

HYL. Once more, alas ! What deeds dost thou call on me to do, father !—to turn murderer, and shed thy blood !

HER. Nay, surely not, but healer of my present ills, the one physician of my pain !

¹ A full stop at *ἐξειρήσεται*,—the more usual pointing,—would make the sense, "this promise too shall be given."

² Lines 1195-1198 are rejected by Wunder.

³ To avoid the hiatus *τί εἶπας*, Jebb reads *τί δ' εἶπας*. Others give *τί μ' εἶπας*.

HYL. But how should I cure thy body by setting it on fire?

HER. Well, if thou art affrighted at the thought of this, at least do all the rest.

HYL. To *carry* thee, be sure, I will not grudge.

HER. Nor yet to heap the pyre, as I have said?

HYL. Nay,—all save touching¹ it with mine own hands. The rest will I perform; thou shalt not fail for me.²

HER. Enough e'en that; but, prithee, in thy giving, add to other greater gifts a further trifling boon.

HYL. Be it a boon exceeding great, it shall be thine.

HER. Dost thou wot, then, of the daughter of Eurytus, still unwed?

HYL. Iole thou meanest, I surmise.

HER. Thou art right. Lo! this is the charge I lay on thee, my son; take her to be thy wife, when I am dead, if thou art minded to practise piety, remembering the oath thy sire imposed; disobey me not. And let none other but thyself ever take³ her, who hath lain side by side with me; but do thou, my son, enter into this marriage thyself. Consent: for, after obeying me in a great matter, to rebel in a trifle blots out the former grace.

HYL. Alas! to be wroth with the sick is wrong; but who could bear to see him in this state of mind?

HER. Thy words evince no wish at all to carry out my hests.

HYL. Who, I ask,—seeing that she alone, in my eyes, helped⁴ to cause my mother's death and to bring thee in turn to this thy present plight,—who would make this

¹ The reading *ποτιψάων* of most MSS. presents the only example in an *iambic* passage of *ποτι* for *πρός*; some would accordingly adopt Hartung's *μή ποτε ψάων*, a reading supported by some later MSS.

² Some have rendered "my part of the work shall not flag," but Hesychius is the sole authority for the form *καμῶ*.

³ Reading *λάβῃ* with Elmsley for MSS. *λάβοι*, which would be a wish.

⁴ *i.e.*, she alone helped the plot of Nessus.

choice, save one whom vengeful fiends afflict? Better be dead myself, father, than share my home with those whom most I hate!

HER. This man, it seems, will not regard¹ my dying wish; but, mark thee well, the curse of gods shall wait for thee if disobedient to my words.

HYL. Ah me! thou soon art like to give us proof of thy disease?

HER. Yea, for thou art rousing me from pain that slept.²

HYL. Unhappy that I am! How difficult my case, on many counts!

HER. True, for thou thinkest fit to disobey thy father.

HYL. Nay, but must I, then, learn impiety, father?

HER. It is not impiety, if thou cheer my heart thereby.

HYL. Dost thou, then, bid me do the deed, as in duty bound?³

HER. I do; and call the gods to witness this.

HYL. Then I will do it, nor refuse, showing the gods what thou hast done;⁴ for I shall never be convicted of sin for obeying thee, father.

HER. Well ended! Make haste, my son, and add the boon to crown these words, that thou mayest lay me on the pyre, or evèr my convulsions come or sudden pain to sting. Come, haste and lift me! This, in truth, is rest from woe,—the end, the last of Hēracles!

HYL. Nought hinders thee from having this fulfilled, since thy commands are urgent on us, father.

¹ To avoid the slight irregularity of *νεμῆϊν*, the MSS. reading, Wakefield conjectured *οὐκ ἔμοι νεμῆϊ*, but no change is really necessary. Paley makes *ὡς* exclamatory, "how!"

² Others render "after (*ἀπὸ*) the pain had lulled." Some follow Linwood in retaining the var. lect. *ἀπεννασθέντος* (gen. abs.), but the word occurs nowhere else.

³ Some render *πανδίκως* here, as in line 611, "wholly," but there is no evidence for such a meaning of the word.

⁴ *i.e.*, the pressure brought to bear by thee on me.

HER. Come, stubborn heart, ere thou arouse this plague again,¹ give me a curb of steel to set my lips like stone to stone,² and stay my cries; for joy shall crown thy deed, reluctantly begun.

HYL.³ Lift him, my men; and do ye grant me full pardon for this, recognizing the utter heartlessness of the gods in the present work,—they who beget children and have the name of father, and yet look down on suffering like this!

The future none foresees; but the present is grief to us, to those gods reproach, and to him who undergoes this doom pain beyond all other men's.

Maiden,⁴ come thou too, nor linger at⁵ the house; strange and fearful the death thou hast seen, with many a sorrow new till now; and nought is here that shows not Zeus.

¹ *i.e.*, before allowing it to rise again by delay. Others boldly invent an intransitive use of ἀνακινεῖν, "before this trouble re-awaken," on the analogy of some other compounds of κινεῖν.

² Jebb's explanation of λιθοκόλλητον is here adopted, as eminently preferable to the usual rendering, "a curb set with sharp stones" (cf. L. and S.),—a meaning clearly invented to suit this passage; no such curb is ever mentioned elsewhere.

³ Editors are divided as to the assignment of the remaining lines. Jebb follows Hermann in giving them all to Hyllus. Some give the last four to the Chorus. Nauck, reading χαίρετ' for αἶρετ', gives lines 1259-1269 to Heracles, lines 1270-1278 to the Chorus, but regards the last four as spurious,—a view held by some about the whole passage.

⁴ These lines, if indeed they are genuine, which many doubt, are probably addressed to the leader of the Chorus.

⁵ Reading ἐπ' οἴκων, a var. lect. recorded by the Schol. for MSS. ἀπ' οἴκων, and adopted by Blaydes and Jebb.

AJAX.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AJAX.

TEUCER.

ODYSSEUS.

TECMESSA.

ATHENE.

MENELAUS.

AGAMEMNON.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF SALAMINIAN SAILORS.

SCENE.—Before the huts of Ajax and his followers, on
the coast of the Troad.

INTRODUCTION.

AFTER the death of Achilles, his arms were set up as a prize for the most valiant of the Achæans. The story of the contest is only briefly alluded to by Homer ("Odyss.," xi. 543-560), but is given at considerable length by Quintus Smyrnæus ("Post-homærica," v. 123-663). His account is as follows. When the funeral games in honour of Achilles were finished, his mother Thetis proclaimed to the Argive warriors, that the divine weapons of her son should be given to him who had saved the corpse from the Trojans, and proved himself the best of the Achæans. Whereupon Odysseus and Ajax, son of Telamon, rose to make their claims, and, when no decision could be arrived at, the matter was referred to the Trojan captives, who decided with one voice in favour of Odysseus. According to Sophocles, who gives but few details of the story, the award was made by chosen judges of the Achæans, though it is hinted that undue influence may have been brought to bear on the less influential voters by the Atreidæ, or even that the votes may have been tampered with. Be that as it may, the result caused Ajax such bitter grief and indignation that, after brooding sullenly over his defeat for several days, he, at last, in mad frenzy, attacked the flocks and herds belonging to the host, under the idea that he was taking vengeance on the hated Atreidæ and their immediate followers. The majority of these details are only introduced incidentally in the course of the play, which opens on the day following this wild slaughter of the cattle. The scene is laid in the Troad, in that part of the Achæan camp where Ajax and his Salaminian sailors,—who form the Chorus,—are quartered. It is still early dawn, when Odysseus is discovered tracking out the footsteps

of Ajax near the huts on the beach. He has his suspicions, and these are confirmed, beyond a shadow of doubt, by the goddess Athene, who, in a long conversation with him, describes how Ajax stole forth by night to slay the captains of the host, and how she drove him mad and diverted his fell rage to the cattle ; of these he slew some, while others were dragged off to his dwelling to be foully entreated. (ll. 1-65.) However, Odysseus shall see for himself ; and, in spite of that hero's unwillingness to run the risk of facing a madman, Athene summons Ajax forth. In the conversation which ensues between him and the goddess, the whole horror of the situation is vividly portrayed. The eyes of Ajax are miraculously dimmed, so that he sees not Odysseus, against whom his hatred is as bitter as ever. He hails the malignant goddess as his staunch ally, and exultingly unfolds to her, in the hearing of Odysseus, the success of his attack and the horrible punishment he intends to mete out to his prisoners,—to none more cruelly than to Odysseus. Nothing shall save *him*,—no! not even the intercession of Athene. (ll. 66-117.)

Odysseus has witnessed his enemy's ravings, and the sight only fills him with pity ; there is a certain magnanimity in him, not untinged, however, with selfishness ; he may one day be in evil case himself, so uncertain and changeable is the life of all mortals. " Even so ;" says Athene, " beware then of pride and boastfulness ; the gods love those of sober heart." (ll. 118-133.)

The Chorus of Salaminian sailors enter, and excitedly denounce the foul slander brought against their beloved master. It is Odysseus who has spread the lying tale they have just heard ; small wonder he wins belief ; it is the way of the world ; " aim at a mighty spirit, and thou wilt not miss thy mark." If only Ajax would show himself, these chattering jays would cower and fly before the mighty vulture ; but, without him, his faithful followers cannot repel the evil rumour. Who can have driven him so distraught? Was it Artemis, or the War-god maybe? Never of himself would he have erred so grievously. Zeus and Apollo avert the tale of shame ! Come forth, master, and champion thy good fame and ours ! (ll. 134-200.)

At this point Tecmessa appears upon the scene, and the Chorus gather from what she tells them that the rumour about

Ajax is all too true. She had witnessed part of his mad behaviour, though she knew not as yet all that had occurred on the past night ; she relates to his horrified followers, how he had tortured his victims, hacking some and scourging others in his hut ; and how, when the first paroxysm was over and the cloud partly lifted from his mind, his anguish became even more terrible, as he began to realise what he had done. (ll. 200-280.)

The Chorus press for more details of their master's mad doings ; and Tecmessa again recounts all she has seen,—the stealthy midnight sally ; the return with a mixed drove of cattle ; the slaughter of the harmless beasts, and the wild abuse of imaginary foes ; and, at last, the slow and painful recovery of reason. "But," adds Tecmessa, "I fear there is worse to come ; everything points to a fatal issue ; come and help me, if ye can ; men of his stern mood will often listen to friends." (ll. 281-332.)

The voice of Ajax is now heard within his hut, raised in lamentation ; and, when the door opens, he is disclosed, sitting amongst the slaughtered cattle. Catching sight of his trusty mariners, he entreats them to end his dishonoured life. Tecmessa tries to calm him, but he roughly bids her cease. "Hence, woman ; begone from my sight !" Then the Chorus offer him such poor comfort as they can, only to hear him break into wild abuse of Odysseus, coupled with a passionate prayer for instant death. "No longer am I fit to look to gods for succour, nor yet for any help of man." (ll. 333-409.)

Nothing is left now but shame and sorrow ; one thing alone is clear ; life henceforth has become impossible ; Troy, that has known him so long, shall know him no more ; Ajax has been humbled and disgraced ; death is the brave man's last resource ; so welcome death ! (ll. 410-480.)

"Let friends prevail to bend thy purpose," urge the Chorus. "Have pity on me and thy defenceless babe," pleads Tecmessa. "What awaits us but slavery, when thou art gone ! Surely past affection is not to go for nothing !" (ll. 481-524.)

Ajax cuts short these piteous appeals by calling for his son Eurysaces, and, when the child is brought, all the tenderness which lurks concealed within his rugged nature, bursts forth ; he is proud of the boy whom his captive bride has borne him, and prays that he may grow up in his father's own rough ways.

Then, after bequeathing him his famous shield, he entrusts the child to his Salaminian followers, leaving with them full instructions for Teucer, his foster-brother, on his arrival. (ll. 525-582.)

This done, he orders the doors to be shut, and all sounds of sorrow to be silenced, treating the heart-broken Tecmessa with a harshness in strong contrast to his late tenderness for their child.

The Chorus, once more left to themselves, break forth into mourning over the fall of their peerless chief, and their own long weary sojourn in Troy, far from their glorious island-home. "Ah, and what heavy tidings await the parents of Ajax! To think that the evening of their life should close amid such sorrow!" (ll. 583-645.)

Presently Ajax re-appears, with Hector's sword in his hand. His resolution is taken, and he is externally calm and self-possessed, professing himself changed in temper. "I go to purge away my stains, if haply I may escape Athene's wrath." "All things yield to authority: why not I as well? Yes, I have learnt my lesson. All shall now be well. Go ye and do as I have said." (ll. 646-692.) The Chorus, no less than Tecmessa, are completely deceived by this dissembling. Little do they guess the real purpose of Ajax, as they raise a joyful strain, calling upon Pan and Apollo to come and share their mirth!

"Ajax," they sing, "has forgotten his sorrows; no more is he breathing out rage and defiance against the Atreidæ; the days of happiness will come again." (ll. 693-717.)

But their joy is short-lived; for a messenger enters with the news that Teucer, who has just returned, has sent a most urgent message to keep Ajax closely watched, until his own coming. "What can this portend?" ask the chorus of the messenger, in consternation. "It was owing to a friendly warning given by Calchas, the seer, to Teucer." "Ajax," he said, "must, at all costs, be kept indoors for this one day, after which the anger of Athene will no more pursue him. It is Athene who is plaguing him for his rash pride, when, in days gone by, he scorned her proffered aid." "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (ll. 718-783.) Such is the disquieting message delivered to the Chorus, and by them to Tecmessa. The worst is to be feared. Ajax has indeed gone forth, and, unless

the seer is at fault, it may be too late already to save the doomed hero. None the less, Tecmessa entreats the help of the Salaminian sailors, and all sally forth in different directions to see if they can avert the dreaded catastrophe. (ll. 784-812.) There is a moment's pause, as the Chorus leave the orchestra, and then the scene changes, and Ajax is discovered alone upon the seashore, preparing to meet his end. Before him, firmly planted in the ground by the hilt, stands Hector's sword, fit instrument for the fatal act. All is now ready, and, in a grand soliloquy of unsurpassed pathos and beauty, the desperate warrior bids farewell to life. A prayer to the gods for an easy death ; a curse on the Atreidæ, who have brought him to this pass ; one word of pity for his aged parents ; a solemn invocation of the death-god, whom he goes to meet ; one last look on Sun and Earth, one final utterance of thanks to Nature for her bounteous care,—and Ajax has fallen on his sword. (ll. 813-865.)

At this supreme moment the Chorus re-enter in two bands from different directions ; their trouble has been unrewarded ; they have found no trace of their missing chief. Not so Tecmessa ; instinct, or chance, has guided her aright ; and her piercing cry proclaims to the Chorus that their worst fears have been realized. Yes, there is Ajax, fallen upon his sword, amid the brushwood of a little copse upon the beach ; Tecmessa has found his bleeding body, and, flinging herself beside it in an agony of grief, covers her beloved lord with her own mantle. (ll. 866-924.)

“So this was the appointed end ; this the meaning of those fierce complaints by night and day against the Atreidæ ; this the sequel to the contest for the arms ! Doubtless now that malignant chief, the much-enduring son of Laertes, is laughing loud with the Atreidæ over our poor master's fall !” Thus bitterly the Chorus muse ; and bitterly rejoins Tecmessa : “Well, let them laugh : the day will come, maybe, when they will miss his trusty hand. What is this to them ? Ajax has found the death he craved : 'twas Heaven's decree, not theirs.” (ll. 925-973.)

Teucer appears in the midst of their lamentations, and, after giving instructions that Eurysaces shall be at once removed from the power of his enemies and brought to him, bewails the

sad end of Ajax in passionate strains. "How shall I ever face Telamon, the sire of Ajax and myself, whose temper, ever short, will be doubly peevish now?" "The gifts of foes are no gifts, and bring no gain." So Ajax found it, and so it is. Hector and Ajax alike perished by their gifts to each other. (ll. 974-1039.)

Further speech is cut short by the sudden arrival of Menelaus, who comes to forbid the burial of Ajax. "Murderer as he was to all intents and purposes, let him be cast forth dishonoured, a prey to the birds of the sea. He would not listen to us in life, but, now that he is dead, we *will* control him. How shall order or good government be maintained, where men do as they list?" (ll. 1040-1090.) Teucer defies this insolent order, asking by what right of lordship the Atreidæ think to prevail. Was Ajax their slave? After much mutual recrimination, Menelaus rushes away in a rage to bring force and compel obedience, while Teucer goes to make hurried preparations for the burial, after bidding Tecmessa and her child sit by the corpse as suppliants till his return. Meantime the Chorus, in gloomy strains, lament (ll. 1091-1184) their own hard lot. "When will this weary war be over? Curses on the man who first taught the art of war to sons of Hellas! He it was who reft us of all joy in life, and brought us to this dreary Troy. And now our champion is taken from us,—our last hope is gone. Oh! to be wafted hence 'neath Sunium's cliff, to greet the sacred citadel of Athens!" (ll. 1185-1222.)

Teucer re-enters in haste, having seen Agamemnon approaching with angry aspect. No sooner has the general of the host appeared than he breaks out into violent abuse of "the son of the captive woman." "What! has *he* dared to stand up against the authority of his betters, and champion one who is as naught? Was Ajax the only man in all the host? Are the Atreidæ never to hear the end of his disappointed rage at the fair decision of the judges about the arms of Achilles? God forbid! The whip is good for the ox, and Teucer may find it an equally good cure for his refractory temper. Let him look to it,—and, before he speaks again, find some *free* man to plead his cause." (ll. 1223-1263.)

The Chorus endeavour to interpose and stay this undignified

wrangling, but Teucer is not to be silenced. "So this is all the gratitude a man finds after death! All the past services of Ajax are now as though they had not been. What boots it that he faced Hector single-handed, and saved the fleet from fire? How now? Shall Agamemnon dare to taunt another with base birth? Has he forgotten his own mother's shameful history, or the hideous story of his house? Let him look to it how he threatens a son of Telamon and Hesione, or tries to prevent a brave man's burial!" (ll. 1264-1315.) It seems as if the heated quarrel must lead to open violence, when fortunately Odysseus appears, and urges moderation. At the risk of offending Agamemnon, he pleads for the honourable burial of his late foe. "To harm brave men when they are dead is no fair thing." This championship of the corpse of Ajax has come from the least expected quarter, and it is with a very bad grace that Agamemnon is at last constrained to yield, expressing undying hatred of Ajax even while he does so. (ll. 1316-1373.)

As soon as the angry king has left the stage, Odysseus turns to Teucer and offers his friendship and assistance. He would fain help bury Ajax. Teucer bluntly thanks him, but refuses his aid in the actual burial, for fear of offending the dead. Odysseus acquiesces, and Teucer at once proceeds with the funeral rites, while the Chorus, deeply impressed with the uncertainty of human life, as exemplified in the fall of Ajax, sadly chant the solemn truth, which he had failed to grasp: "No man can read the future, to see how he will fare." (ll. 1374-1420.)

NOTE.—For the translation of the "Ajax," the text followed has been that of Professor Jebb's edition of the play in the "Catena Classicorum," which rarely deviates from that of Dindorf. Any variations from Jebb's text, which may have been adopted in the translation, are noticed in foot-notes.

The volume containing the "Ajax" in the Professor's larger edition, now issuing from the Cambridge University Press, had not appeared when this translation was being prepared; otherwise this later revision of the text of Sophocles would have been used.

A J A X.

ATH. Ever have I seen thee, son of Laertes, seeking to snatch some occasion against thy foes;¹ and now at the huts of Ajax near the ships, at his station on the camp's outskirts, I perceive thee this long while tracking with hunter's care and scanning the fresh traces of his foot-prints, to learn whether he is within or not. And right well are thy steps bearing thee to thy goal, with scent as keen as any Spartan hound's. For thy quarry hath but just gone within,—the sweat streaming from his head, and his murderous hands still reeking. No need, then, for thee to be peering any longer within these doors; but tell the reason of this thy eager quest, that thou mayst learn of her who knows.

ODY. O voice of Athene, most dear to me of powers divine, how plainly do I hear thy words, e'en though thou art but seen afar,² and with my soul I catch the sound, as if the brazen lips of Tyrrhene trumpet should speak! And now hast thou deemed aright, that it is on a foeman's track I am making my cast,—on the track of Ajax of the famous

¹ This has also been understood, "seeking to forestall some attempt of foes."

² Others render *ἀποπτος* "unseen;" but on æsthetic grounds it is hard to believe that Athene carries on a lengthy dialogue with Odysseus, and then with Ajax, entirely unseen. As Jebb justly objects, the effect would at last have become ludicrous. It is true that the other meaning is not very clearly supported.

targe. 'Tis he, and no other, that I have long been hunting down. For, in the night just past, he hath done to us a deed too strange to comprehend,—if indeed it be his doing; for we know nothing for certain, but are at a loss; and I offered to undertake this service. For lo! we have just found all our spoils of cattle slain,—done to death by violent hands,—and those, that watched the flocks, dead too. This guilt, then, one and all assign to him. Yea, and I have the story of a scout who spied him all alone, as he careered o'er the plains with sword still dripping,—and he told me all. At once I darted on his trail; and of some of the tracks I am certain, but others utterly perplex me, and I cannot discover whose¹ they are. In good season hast thou come; for in all things—be they past or yet to be,—I yield me to thy guiding hand.

ATH. Mine eye was upon thee,² Odysseus, and long since came I forth upon the way to watch thy chase with friendly zeal.

ODY. And do I toil, dear mistress mine, to any purpose?

ATH. Know that³ thou hast found in him the author of these deeds.

ODY. And wherefore did he wildly turn his hand to such a senseless act?

ATH. His soul was bowed with wrath for the arms of Achilles.⁴

ODY. Then why this wild attack on *flocks*?

ATH. It was your blood, he thought, that smeared his hand.

ODY. Can it be that this his scheme was aimed at Argives?

¹ The Schol. read ὄρου, which some follow—"cannot discover where the quarry lies."

² Or "I know it," *i.e.*, thy obedience to me; so Paley.

³ Others understand "Yes, for . . ."

⁴ *i.e.*, wrath at the decision which awarded the arms to Odysseus.

ATH. Aye, and he had e'en accomplished it,¹ had I relaxed my care.

ODY. What daring schemes and recklessness were here?

ATH. He started all alone at night to fall on you by stealth.

ODY. And was he really near us? was he at his goal?

ATH. Indeed he was,—at the gates of the chieftains twain.

ODY. How, then, did he stay his hand, all eager for our blood?

ATH. It was I who checked him from that baleful joy, by casting on his eyes distracting fantasies, and I turned him aside against the flocks and mingled herds, spoil still undivided² in the herdsmen's charge. On these he fell, and, hewing them in pieces all round him, hacked many a hornèd beast to death; one while, thinking that he had the two Atreidæ in his grip, and was slaying them; anon this chieftain, and then that, was his victim; while ever, as he raved in frenzied fits, my hand would urge him on, driving him into the fatal toils. Next, when he had rested from this toil, he bound fast together such of the oxen as were still alive, and all the sheep likewise, and drove them to his dwelling, as though his prize were men, not horned cattle. And now is he torturing them in their bonds within. But I will show thee also this madness of his openly,³ that thou mayst proclaim what thou hast seen to all the Argive host. Wait without fear, boding no mischance from him; for I will turn the vision of his eyes elsewhither, that he see not thy face.

¹ Some retain the reading *ἔξεπράξατ'*, but the var. lect. *ἔξέπραξεν* seems preferable.

² Taking *λείας* with *ἄδαστα*, "undivided from the spoil." Some, however, join *λείας* with *φρουρήματα*, "charges consisting of spoil."

³ If *περιφανῆ* is not to be taken as a predicate, Jebb's rendering, "this signal frenzy," may be intended.

(*Calling to AJAX.*) Ho ! thou that art binding thy captives' arms with straightening bonds, come hither, I say ! On Ajax do I call ; come forth before thy dwelling !

ODY. What dost thou, O Athene ? In no wise call him forth.

ATH. Peace, man ! rouse ¹ not coward thoughts !

ODY. Nay but, in Heaven's name, let it suffice for him to stay within !

ATH. What is there to fear ? Was he not a man ² before ?

ODY. Aye, a foe to Odysseus then and still.

ATH. Well, is it not most sweet to mock at foes ?

ODY. Enough for *me* that he abide within.

ATH. Is it the man's madness thou fearest to see openly ? ³

ODY. It is ; were he sane I had never shrunk from him for fear.

ATH. Well, but not e'en now shall he ever see that thou art near.

ODY. How,—if indeed he seeth with the self-same eyes ?

Ath. I will darken his eyes, e'en though the sight is there.

ODY. All indeed may come to pass, when gods contrive.

ATH. Stand silent, then ; stay just as thou art.

ODY. Stay I must ; but fain would I have been far hence.

ATH. Ajax, what ho ! A second time I call to thee. Why dost thou so lightly heed thine ally ?

¹ Reading ἀπεις. Paley, however, questions such a usage, and reads ἀπει with Linwood and Blaydes, "do not bring upon thyself a charge of cowardice."

² *i.e.*, just as much a brave man before, when you faced him, as now when you flinch from meeting him.

³ Schneidewin understands differently, "dost thou fear one who is mad," *i.e.*, one who, even if he had the intention, would not have the wit to work thee ill. But this would give less point to the answer of Odysseus.

AJAX [*coming forth from his hut, carrying a blood-stained lash*]. Hail to thee, Athene! All hail, thou child of Zeus! How nobly hast thou championed me! With spoils of solid gold will I then crown thy shrine for this booty's sake.

ATH. Well said! But tell me this; hast thou dipped thy sword well in the blood of the Argive host?

AJAX. I may boast I have; and I deny it not.

ATH. Didst thou really arm¹ thy hand against the sons of Atreus?

AJAX. So that yonder pair will nevermore dishonour Ajax.

ATH. The men are dead, I understand thee to say.

AJAX. Dead they are; let them rob me of my weapons now!

ATH. Enough! Next, as to Laertes' son,—what of him? In what plight hast thou placed him? Hath he escaped thee?

AJAX. That cursèd² fox,—dost ask me where he is?

ATH. Yes; 'tis Odysseus, thy rival, I mean.

AJAX. Most welcome of captives he, my queen! There he sits within: I have no mind that he should die yet.

ATH. What wilt thou do ere that? what more is there for thee to gain?

AJAX. Ere that shall he be bound to a pillar in the court.³

ATH. What evil wilt thou wreak, then, on the luckless wretch?

¹ Musgrave conjectured ἡμαξας, which Blaydes and Wunder follow; but ἡχμασας is quite in the style of Sophocles.

² Others render "cunning." The Schol. explains by μαστιγίαν "a sorry knave." Lat. verbero.

³ In his frenzy Ajax speaks of his hut as if it were a regular house, built round a court.

AJAX. And his back shall be crimsoned by the scourge, or ever he die.

ATH. Oh, torture not the wretch so cruelly!

AJAX. In all else, Athene, have thy way,—say I; but this, and no other, is to be *his* doom.

ATH. Then vent thy violence, since it pleases thee to act thus; abate not thine intent at all.

AJAX. I go to set about it; and on thee I lay this hest,—be ever at my side to champion me as now! (AJAX *re-enters his hut.*)

ATH. Dost mark, Odysseus, the greatness of Heaven's might? Whom couldst thou have found more prudent than this man, or better to perform a thing at need?

ODY. Indeed I know none; yet I pity him in his wretchedness, although he is my foe, seeing him fast bound to an evil doom,—with an eye to mine own case as much as his; for I see that all of us who live are nought but phantoms, or an empty shadow.

ATH. Mark then such things, and never let thine own lips speak haughty words against the gods, nor take upon thee¹ any pride, if thou excellest another in might or in riches deeply stored. For a day² brings low or a day uplifts all human things; and it is the prudent whom gods love, the wicked whom they hate. (*Exit ODYSSEUS, as ATHENE vanishes.*)

CHO. Son of Telamon, whose home is sea-girt Salamis, fast rooted in the waves, in thy prosperity I joy; but when there comes a blow of Zeus, or angry words of Danaan tongues assailing thee with slander, then am I filled with mighty dread and in wild affright, like fluttering dove with terror in its eye. Even as there prevail against us, to our shame, loud murmurs of the night now past,—how thou didst go to the meadow, where our horses frisk, and slay the

¹ The var. lect. *ἄργς* would mean “exalt thy pride.”

² Others, more generally, “the day in its course,” “Time.”

flocks and herds of the Danai,—even the spoil that still was left of our spear's getting,—slaughtering them with flashing steel. Such whispered tales Odysseus forges and carries to the ears of all, winning wide belief. For the tale he now tells of thee is easy to believe, and every one, who hears it told, is more exultant than the teller, in wanton insult of thy woes. For arrows aimed at noble souls will never miss; but, were one to say such things against *me*, he would not be believed. It is the powerful whom envy assails. And yet the weak without the strong are but a feeble tower of strength;¹ the small by union with the great, the great by resting on the less, will best remain upright. But none can slowly teach the wisdom of these saws to fools. Such are the men who clamour at thee; nor have we any power to defend ourselves against these charges without thy aid, O prince. Yea, for no sooner have they escaped thine eye than they chatter like flocks of birds; but,² wert *thou* suddenly to appear, in a moment would they be still, cowering in silence, and crouching for fear before the mighty vulture.

Was it, then, the daughter of Zeus, the Tauric³ Artemis, that stirred thee,—dread rumour, big with shame to me!—to attack the herded cattle of the host, haply in vengeance for some victory, whence she reaped no fruit, or else as cheated⁴ of her glorious spoils, or for the slaying of her stags without due gifts to her? Or was it e'en the great War-god, in his harness of bronze, that wreaked vengeance

¹ Jebb renders otherwise, "a slippery garrison for the walls." But if, as Paley suggests, quoting Donaldson's explanation, the allusion is to a wall of Cyclopean masonry, in which large stones are kept in place by means of smaller, the other rendering is preferable.

² Reading δ' after αἰγυπιῶν. Porson gives σ', making ὅτε γὰρ . . . ἀγέλαι parenthetical. Others omit ὑποδείσαντες with Dobree.

³ *i.e.*, as worshipped in Tauris. Others understand "riding on," or "drawn by bulls."

⁴ The MSS. give ψευθεῖσα δώροις, but the Schol.'s comments show that he found ἀδώροις, the reading now received.

on thee by plots of the night,¹ resenting some slight to his helping spear?

For never, son of Telamon, of thine own heart's prompting,² canst thou have gone so far astray as to fall upon the flocks. A plague from Heaven must have come. Oh, may Zeus and Phoebus both avert the foul report which the Argives spread! And if the mighty kings,³ or he who sprung from that accursèd stock of Sisyphus,⁴ are foisting their lies on thee and spreading furtive rumours, do not, prince, oh, do not bring on me an evil name, by thus burying thyself⁵ any longer in the huts beside the sea!

Nay, rouse thee from thus sitting still, wherever it is that thou art rooted to the spot in this long rest from battle's stress,⁶ raising ruin's flame to heaven; ⁷ but fearlessly they rush upon their way in the breezy⁸ glens,—thy insolent foes; while every tongue is loudly jeering, to our deep pain; and for me abides a settled grief.

TEC. (*appearing from the hut of AJAX*). Sailors from the fleet of Ajax, of the race of the earth-born sons of Erechtheus, there is lamentation for us who care for the house of Telamon afar.⁹ For now the dread, the mighty Ajax, our rugged lord, lies stricken by a clouding storm.

¹ *i.e.*, by making thee devise thy plot of the bygone night, rather than by subtle promptings at dead of night.

² Others follow the Schol. in joining *φρενόθεν γ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὶ* "to the left of," *i.e.*, "out of thy senses,"—a very doubtful construction.

³ The Atreidæ.

⁴ Odysseus, whose mother Anticleia was pregnant by Sisyphus when she married Laertes—according to one story.

⁵ So the Schol. explains. Others render "keeping the eye fixed on."

⁶ Some adopt the Schol.'s interpretation of *ἀγωνίῳ* "causing trouble and peril to thyself."

⁷ Or perhaps "the heaven-sent plague,"—so Jebb.

⁸ Others render "windles-, calm." (The text of the *ἐπιφθόος* is uncertain.)

⁹ Supplying *ὄντοσ*. Paley renders, "we who have a concern for the

CHO. What heavy change from the day¹ hath the bygone night witnessed? Speak, daughter of Phrygian Teleutas; for to thee, his spear-won love, hath wild Ajax been ever constant; and so thou mightest hint the cause, not all unknowing.

TEC. How, then, can I tell the tale unutterable? For dire as death is the woe thou wilt learn. Seized with madness, our glorious Ajax hath been brought to shameful ruin in the night. Such butchery mayest thou behold within his hut, victims weltering in their gore,—the sacrifice his hand hath offered.

CHO. What tidings of our fiery prince hast thou declared, not to be borne nor yet escaped,—proclaimed by the mighty Danaï, and magnified by loud report! Ah me! I fear what is in store. Ajax will be slain in sight of all;² for his the frenzied hand that slew, with dark-stained blade, at once the herds and those that had charge of the steeds.³

TEC. Ah, me! so 'twas thence,—thence, that he came to me, driving his captive flock! Whereof he set to cut the throats of some, inside his hut, upon the ground; others he rent asunder, hacking at their sides. Next he lifted up a pair of rams⁴ with white feet, and, after cutting off the head of one and the tip of the tongue, he flung them away; but the other he bound upright at a pillar; then, seizing a heavy house of Telamon without any close connection with it," *i.e.*, supplying *ὄντες*, but at such a moment this would be a frigid sentiment.

¹ The text is certainly corrupt. Reading *ἀμερίας* sc. *ῥρας*, as Dindorf suggested, a possible meaning is obtained, though the expedient is desperate enough. Others adopt Thiersch's correction, *ἡρεμίας*, "what heavy change from its tranquillity hath fallen upon this night."

² Linwood, "he will kill himself, it is clear."

³ The word *ἵππονώμας*, which is generally accepted in place of the old reading *ἵππονόμους*, suits the metre of the antistrophe, but gives a poor sense, whether understood as "horse-tending" or "horse-riding"; indeed, the epithet seems so entirely pointless in this connection that we are perhaps justified in suspecting corruption.

⁴ Thinking probably that they were Agamemnon and Menelaus.

trace from horse's harness, he laid on with twofold whistling scourge, uttering words of foul abuse, taught by some god, never by man.

CHO. 'Tis high time now to hide our heads, each man within his cloak, and with all haste to steal away ; or, seated on the bench at speeding oar, to give our ship her way across the sea. Such fearful threats do Atreus' sons, who share their power, advance against us. Death by stoning,—such the doom I dread to share, struck down with yonder man, on whom is come a fate admitting no approach.¹

TEC. 'Tis so no more ; his fit is past like keen south wind, —one rush, and then a lull, and lightnings cease to flash ;² and now, with his senses returned, he feels fresh pain. For the sight of self-inflicted woes, to which no other put a hand, intensifies the agony.

CHO. Nay, but if his fit is o'er, all may yet be well, I trow ; for, when once the ill is gone, 'tis less accounted of.

TEC. But which wouldst thou choose, if one gave thee the choice,—to pain thy friends and yet have joy thyself, or to share their sorrows with a mutual grief?

CHO. The twofold evil is the greater, surely, lady.

TEC. Why then *we*, without being mad, are the sufferers now.³

CHO. How meanest thou? I gather not thy drift.

¹ His maniac rage making it dangerous to approach him.

² Others render "like a brisk wind that has suddenly come on without lightning"; but what sense this gives it is difficult to see; is the wind necessarily of short duration because there is no lightning? The conjecture *λαμπρὸς* would perhaps improve the sense "with a clear sky." Linwood thought the words *ἄτερ στεροπᾶς* were corrupt; if so, emendation is still needed.

³ *i.e.*, we are the heavier sufferers, having suffered all the time, while Ajax at least did derive a frantic pleasure from his delusions. Tecmessa is contrasting her sorrows with those of Ajax to show that the balance of ill is on her side. Jebb identifies *ἡμεῖς* with Ajax, *i.e.*, Ajax and we his friends, and renders "then are we losers now, though the plague is past," but surely this is not Tecmessa's point.

TEC. Yon man, our Ajax, while the fit was on him, found pleasure of his own in the horrors that possessed him, though to us, who were sane, 'twas pain to have him thus; but now that he hath pause from his complaint, and breathing space withal, his whole being is tormented with bitter sorrow, and so too ours, no less than formerly. Is not this a double woe, two ills instead of one?

CHO. Yea, I agree with thee, and I fear that some blow from Heaven hath come on him. It must be so, if, now that he hath pause, he rejoiceth not more than when he was distraught.

TEC. 'Tis even so, be sure of that.

CHO. How did the evil first settle upon him? Declare to us who sympathise all that befell.

TEC. Thou shalt learn the whole matter, as a sharer therein.¹ At dead of night,² when the evening fires³ no longer blazed, he caught up a two-edged sword and sought to steal forth on some bootless errand. Whereat I rebuked him, saying, "What doest thou, Ajax? Why art thou starting on this enterprise uncalled, neither summoned by messengers nor trumpet's voice? Nay, as yet the whole host sleepeth."

But short his answer came, in well-worn phrase:—"Woman, silence lends a grace to women." And I, upon this hint, gave o'er; but he rushed forth alone. Now as to what befell out there, it is not mine to tell; but, on returning to our roof, he had with him a captive drove of bulls, and shepherds' dogs, and fleecy⁴ prey. Some he beheaded;⁵

¹ *i.e.*, as a partner in his sorrows as in his prosperity.

² Others render "at the beginning of night."

³ It is not clear whether braziers for light or watch-fires are here intended.

⁴ Reading *εὐκερων* with Hermann and others for *εὐκερων*, thus introducing a reference to the sheep, and avoiding a slight tautology.

⁵ Or possibly, "broke the necks of some."

the throats of some he cut, bending back their heads, and cleft them to the spine ; others, still bound, he tormented as though they were men, falling on flocks the while. At last, darting out through the door, he began uttering wild words to some phantom shape, partly against the Atreidæ, partly about Odysseus, with many an added laugh, as he told of all the outrage he had gone and wreaked on them. Then rushing back again into his dwelling, at last, by slow degrees, his senses came again ; and, as his eye surveyed the house, filled with that scene of woe, he smote his head and cried aloud ; and, falling among the carcasses of butchered sheep, he sat with nails clutched tightly in his hair. Long while he sat without a word ; then flung at me those fearful threats, unless I showed him the whole matter as it chanced ; and asked what plight might now be his. And I, friends, in my terror, told him all that he had done, so far as I had certain knowledge. Straightway from his lips there burst loud cries of woe, such as I never heard from him before ; for aye his teaching was, that wailing on this wise proclaimed the sorry, abject knave ; not his to utter shrill laments, but, bull-like, deep low moans.

But now o'erthrown, in such sore plight, silently our Ajax sits, there where he fell, amid the kine his sword hath slain, tasting neither food nor drink. And plainly he is bent on mischief,—so strange his words and his laments. Come then, friends,—for this is what brought me hither,—come in and help, if aught ye can. For with men like this the words of friends prevail.

CHO. Tecmessa, daughter of Teleutas, a dire tale thou tellest us, that Ajax hath gone mad with his troubles.

AJAX (*from within*). Ah me ! ah me !

TEC. Things will be worse ere long, it seems ; heard ye not the voice of Ajax,—that loud and bitter cry ?

AJAX. Ah me ! ah me !

CHO. The man, it seems, is either mad, or grieved by present signs of madness past.

AJAX. My son, my son !

TEC. Ah, woe is me ! Eurysaces, 'tis for thee he calls ! What can his purpose be ? Where, where art thou ? Ah, woe is me !

AJAX. Teucer, Teucer ! Where is he ? Will he be for ever driving off the spoils, while I am perishing ?

CHO. He seems to have his senses now. Open the doors. He may feel some respect for self, e'en at the sight of me, perhaps.

TEC. (*as the interior of the hut is disclosed by a stage contrivance*). Lo ! I open ; and thou mayst behold his deeds and the plight in which he is.

AJAX. Ah, my trusty mariners, the only friends I now have left, alone still steadfast to the upright law,¹ see what circling billows now encompass me, borne on before a deadly surge !

CHO. (*to TECMESSA*). Alas, how all too true appears thy testimony ! The deed itself proclaims its foolishness.

AJAX. Ah, comrades, who have lent your aid in seamanship, ye that went aboard² with me, plying the blade o'er the brine,—yours, yes, yours is the only defence I still see against trouble ;³ come, slay me then with these.

CHO. Hush ! no ill-omened words ! Add not to the burden of thy doom by applying an evil cure to evil.

¹ *i.e.*, still loyal and true.

² Reading *ἄλιον ὅς ἐπέβας* with Linwood. Others read *ὅς ἀλίαν ἔβας*.

³ Reading with Dindorf and Lobeck *πημονῶν ἔτ' ἄρκος ὄντ'* for MSS. *ποιμένων ἐπαρκέσονται*, which is probably corrupt. Campbell, following the Schol., joins *μόνον* with *ποιμένων*, "the only shepherd," *i.e.*, "the only one to do a shepherd's duty"—a somewhat far-fetched interpretation. Others adopt Wunder's *πημονὰν ἐπαρκέσονται*. The objection to Dindorf's reading is the word *ἄρκος*, found apparently only in Alcæus, though it might occur in the lyrics of a tragedian.

AJAX. Dost see me,—me, the bold, the stout of heart, the man that never quailed in battle with the foe,—all the terror of my hands put forth on harmless¹ beasts? Ah me, the mockery! What outrage has been mine, it seems!

TEC. Ajax, my lord, I pray thee, speak not thus!

AJAX. Avaunt! away! begone! Woe, woe is me!

TEC. Oh, yield, in Heaven's name! return to thy right mind!

AJAX. Ah me, my evil fate! I have let them escape my hands, those men accursed; but, falling on hornèd kine and goodly flocks, have made their dark blood flow!

CHO. Why grieve, then, o'er a deed once done? These things cannot become other than they are.

AJAX. O thou whose eye is everywhere,² thou tool of all mischief evermore, most filthy villain in the host, Laertes' son, loud thou laughest for joy, I trow!

CHO. Each laughs or weeps, as Heaven wills.

AJAX. Yet³ would I might see him—mere wreck though now I am! Ah me, ah me!

CHO. Say not aught in pride; seest thou not in what sorry plight thou art?

AJAX. O Zeus, forefather of my sires, would that I might slay that prince of cozening rogues, that hated knave, and those two kings who share their sway,—and lastly die myself!

TEC. To this thy prayer another add,—that I may die as well; for why should I still live, when thou art dead?

AJAX. O darkness, that art light to me! O gloom, to eyes like mine most bright! Take, oh, take me home to

¹ *i.e.*, beasts that cause no fear to man. Others, however, understand, "that feel no fear."

² *i.e.*, who dost pry into everything. The correction of Morstadt, *πάντα δρῶν*, "thou who stickest at nothing," deserves notice.

³ Reading *ἴδοιμι μὴν νῦν* for MSS. *ἴδοιμί νῦν*, which leaves the metre a syllable short.

you,—aye, take me hence! No claim have I henceforth to look to the race of gods or to any aid of mortal men.¹

Nay, but the daughter of Zeus,—brave goddess she!—is plaguing me in deadly wise.² Whither, then, can a man flee? Whither shall I go, and there abide?—if, my friends, the past is fading, and vengeance is at hand,—if my heart was set on idle spoils, and the whole host is like to lift the hand and slay me, might and main.³

TEC. Ah, woe is me! to hear a man of sterling worth give vent to words like these,—words he would ne'er have brought his lips to say before!

AJAX. Ah, ye paths of the rushing sea,⁴ ye caves along the beach and seaward glades, a long, long time, a weary while, have ye been keeping me at Troy! No more are ye to keep me now,—no more a living man! Of that may all with sense be sure. Ah, Scamander's streams hard by, to Argive warriors kind, nevermore shall ye behold this man, whose like in all the host,—proud vaunt to make,—Troy never saw from Hellas forth; but now, dishonoured, thus I lie.

CHO. Indeed I know not how to check thee, nor how I am to let thee speak, beset as thou art with such ills.

¹ Others render "to look to the race of gods or men for any help," but βλέπειν *alone* can hardly mean "look to."

² Reading ὀλέθρι' for ὀλέθριον with Dindorf. Campbell adopts Wunder's οὔλιον.

³ ll. 405, 406 are certainly corrupt; perhaps also others in this lyric passage. Dindorf's text, here followed, runs thus:

εἰ τὰ μὲν φθίνει, φίλοι, τίσις δ'
ὀμοῦ πέλει, μώραις δ' ἄγραις προσκείμεθα.

Lobeck conjectured τίσις δ' ὀμοῦ, to which Dindorf added πέλει. The MSS. τοῖσδ' ὀμοῦ πέλας is almost unintelligible, but has been rendered "my fortunes perish together with these creatures." Elmsley suggests γάδε μὲν for τὰ μὲν. But probably the corruption goes deeper.

⁴ Others understand this phrase of seaward-flowing rivers, but it more probably refers to straits through which the sea rushes.

AJAX. Ah me ! Who ever would have thought that this my name would match my woes so well, to be the echo of them ? For twice, yea, thrice, may I now cry, ah me !¹—so sad my present plight ; whose father by his prowess bore off valour's prize, the first of all the host, and so gat home with all fair fame from this Idæan land ; while I his son, that followed in his wake, to this same land of Troy,—in might behind him not a whit, whose hand in service wrought not less,—disgraced in Argive eyes, am brought to ruin thus. And yet, methinks, at least I do know this :—were Achilles still alive to award men a prize for valour, his own arms being in question, none but I had caught them up. But, as it is, the sons of Atreus have made them over to an arrant knave, thrusting aside my own brave deeds. And had not these eyes and this brain, alike distorted, swerved from the purpose I held, never would they have given such a verdict against another.² But now that grim-eyed child of Zeus, the goddess invincible, hath baulked me in the very act of stretching out my hand upon them, by smiting me with frenzied fit, so that I stained my hands in the blood of poor brutes like these ; while yonder knaves have clean escaped,—no wish of *mine*,—and loud they laugh thereat ; but, if a god should bar the way, even the worse man may escape the better. And now what must I do ? I, who am clearly hateful to Heaven, abhorred by the host of Hellas, and loathed of all Troy and these her plains. Shall I to my home across the Ægean Sea, leaving the station of the ships, and the sons of Atreus to themselves ? How shall I show my face, then, to my father, on my coming,—to Telamon ? How will he ever bring himself to look on me, when I appear with empty hands, without the prize of valiancy, whereof he won a great and glorious crown himself ? I can-

¹ Ajax plays on the significance of his name,—*Αἴας*, “son of woe ;” its very syllables,—*αἰαῖ*,—echo his sorrow.

² *i.e.*, they should not have lived to do it again.

not bring myself to that. Well, shall I, then, attack the Trojans' fenced town, and, falling on them all alone, achieve some valiant deed, and so, at last, find death? Nay, thus should I gladden Atreus' sons, I trow. That cannot be. Some enterprise must yet be sought, to show my aged sire, that at least his son is not a coward at heart. 'Tis shame that one who is a man should crave life's longer term, when he sees no change in his evil case. For what joy can day succeeding day produce, when but to death it brings us near or but from death it moves us back?¹ I would not hold that man of any count, whose heart is warmed by idle hopes. Nay, honour claims a noble life, or else at once a noble death. Thou hast heard all.

CHO. None shall ever say that thou hast spoken on another's hint; nay, 'twas from thine own heart, Ajax. Yet refrain thyself, and, resigning these thoughts, let those that love thee sway thy purpose.

TEC. Ajax, lord and master, there falls not to the lot of man aught worse than slavery's doom.² I was the daughter of a free-born sire, a mighty man and rich, if ever Phrygian was; and to-day I am a slave. For this was the will of Heaven, maybe,—as 'twas thy work in chief. So now, made partner of thy bed, thine is the good I have at heart; then by the Zeus that guards our hearth, and by thy couch which made thee one with me,³ I pray thee, think me not a proper mark for all the bitter things thy foes may say, leaving me at the mercy of any of them! For on the day that thou

¹ *i.e.*, a life, which at best, is but a respite from death, can afford no real pleasure. Linwood understands *προσθεῖσα κἀναθεῖσα* differently, "adding to the account of life and taking off from (*i.e.*, deferring) death,"—regarding the phrase as a metaphor taken from calculating.

² Jebb renders "the fate-doomed lot,"—making Tecmessa a fatalist,—but surely this is foreign to her gentle resignation. Hermann's *captivitas* seems to give the sense of the context better.

³ Others render "where thou wast reconciled with me."

dost die, and by thy death dost give me up,¹ on that same day,—oh, think of it!—I too, rudely seized by Argive hands, shall have henceforth the portion of a slave,—and thy son with me. And some one of my masters will gird at me in bitter phrase, saying, “Behold the concubine of Ajax, once mightiest man in all the host, what menial tasks are hers in place of that high bliss!” On such wise will they talk; and sorely Fate will vex my life, while on thee and thy race such words bring shame. Nay, pity thy father, abandoned in his sad old age; thy mother, with her heritage of weary years, whose prayer goes up so oft to God that thou come home alive; thine own son—prince, oh! pity *him*; think of the cruel fate which thy death will bequeath to him and me, if, reft of childhood’s fostering care, forsaken by thee, he has to live his orphan life under harsh guardians’ eyes! For I have nought to look to any more save thee. My country thou didst ruin with the spear; and then a further stroke of Fate laid low my mother and my sire, that they might dwell in Hades’ house of death. What home, then, can I find but thee? What riches have I else? On thee my safety all depends. Bethink thee, too, of me. Surely a man should keep it in his mind, if he hath ever met with aught of joy! ’Tis kindness aye gives kindness birth. But whoso lets the memory fade of services received, can pass as noble nevermore.²

CHO. Ajax, I would thy heart were filled with the pity I feel! Then wouldst thou approve her words.

AJAX. Approve! Yea, surely she shall find I do, if she but bring herself to do my hests with heed.

TEC. Indeed, I will obey in all, dear Ajax.

AJAX. Then bring my child to me, that I may see him.

¹ There may possibly be an allusion to the technical sense of ἀφίεναι “to divorce.” Some read εἰ, not ἤ, “if thou die,” a distant hypothesis.

² Linwood regards ll. 523, 524 as interpolated, but the reproach is certainly not out of place here.

TEC. Nay, but in my fear I let him go from me.

AJAX. In the thick of these troubles? Or what, pray, meanest thou?

TEC. Yea, for fear he might haply meet thee and be slain, poor babe!

AJAX. Aye, that would have fitly matched my fate!

TEC. So I was careful, then, to guard against a woe like that.¹

AJAX. I thank thee for so doing and for the foresight thou hast shown.

TEC. How then can I serve thee, now that things are so?

AJAX. Let me see him face to face and speak to him.

TEC. Why, surely; he is close at hand, in the charge of servants.

AJAX. Then, why this delay in his coming?

TEC. (*calling off the stage*). My child, thy father summons thee. Whoever of you servants is now his guide and guard, bring him hither.

AJAX. Doth he obey thy call, or has he failed to catch thy drift?

TEC. Lo! a servant is e'en now approaching with the child.

AJAX. Lift him, lift him hither to me. He will feel no fear, I trow, at the sight of this fresh-spilt gore,² if he is indeed my child,—his own true father's son. At once, though, must ye break him in; at once his nature must be cast in the likeness of his sire's rude ways.

My child, be happier than thy sire, but like him in all else! So shalt thou prove no worthless wight. And yet e'en now I have thus much to envy thee,—thou hast no feeling of these woes. Aye, life's most blissful time is while

¹ The cruel irony of Ajax is lost on Tecmessa; she thinks he is commending her action, and takes credit to herself for it.

² Linwood and Dindorf regard l. 546 as a probable interpolation; in itself it seems unobjectionable.

all feeling sleeps,—for not to feel is surely painless ill,¹—till that thou learn what joy and sorrow mean. But when thou reach that stage, then must thou show amongst our foes thy mettle and thy stock. The while on gentle breezes feed thee, fostering thy young life, a joy to this thy mother's heart. No Achæan, I feel sure, will ever put affronts on thee by acts of dire outrage, e'en though I am not there. So trusty a warder will I leave to watch over thee, even Teucer, one that will never flinch in fostering care, for all he rangeth now afar, on foemen's track.

On you, my warrior friends, my sailor folk, this common kindness I enjoin;—on Teucer too, to whom proclaim my hest, that he take this child to my home and show him to Telamon and to my mother, even Eriboæa, that so he may become to them a nurse of all their closing years, until they reach the nether god's deep bourn.² And tell him too that neither stewards of games nor he that proved my bane³ shall set up arms of mine as prizes for Achæans. Nay, but for the shield,—from which thou hast thy name, my son Eurysaces,—let me see thee take it thyself and hold it, turning it this way and that by its strong-sewn strap,—my shield of seven bulls' hides, that nought may rend! But for the rest of my harness, it shall all be buried with me.

(*To TECMESSA*) At once now take this child; make fast the house; and raise no mournful wail before our dwelling. In good truth, woman is a plaintive thing. Make haste and close the house. 'Tis not like a clever leech to be chanting spells o'er a wound that needs the knife.

¹ Most editors regard l. 554 as an interpolation; it was found, however, by the Schol.

² Critics are inclined to reject this verse, as inserted merely to limit *είσαεί*,—the word *μέχρις* being unused by tragedians elsewhere.

³ The position of *ἐμός* is so remarkable that some read *ἐμοί*. Those who defend it do so on the ground of emphasis.

CHO. I note this eager haste with dread ; it likes me not this keen-edged speech.

TEC. O Ajax, lord and master, what art thou bent on doing?

AJAX. Question not, nor ask. To be discreet is well.

TEC. Ah me, how sinks my heart ! By thy child no less than by the gods I do entreat thee,—prove not false to us !

AJAX. Too much thou dost annoy ! Knowest thou not that I am debtor to the gods no more, to do them any service ?

TEC. Hush ! good words only, pray !

AJAX. Speak to those that hear.

TEC. Wilt *thou* not hear me ?

AJAX. Too much already hast thou said.

TEC. 'Tis terror makes me, prince.

AJAX (*to the Servants*). Close every door at once !

TEC. In Heaven's name, relent !

AJAX. Methinks thou hast a dullard's wit, to dream of schooling now my ways !

CHO. O glorious Salamis, thou, upon thy sea-beat base,¹ dost rest a happy isle, I ween,—a mark for all men's eyes alway ; but I, poor wretch, this long while past, have lingered here, dwelling ever, with no count of the months, amid the folds in Ida's meads,² worn out by lapse of time, cherishing

¹ Reading ἀλίπλακτος. If ἀλίπλαγκτος, which has most authority of MSS. be retained, it should mean "roaming the sea," rather than "roamed round by sea ;" but there is no legend which would make this epithet applicable to Salamis, as it once was to Delos.

² Reading :

Ἴδαϊα μίμνω λειμώνι' ἔπαυλα, μηνῶν
ἀνήριθμος, αἰὲν ἔνναϊων.

[ἐνναίων is Paley's emendation, his reading being here adopted with the exception of the word μήλων.] The MSS. reading seems to be almost hopelessly corrupt ; the above is selected from the emendations of

a bitter hope¹ that I shall yet win home one day to Hades' darksome, hated halls.

And close beside me² Ajax bides, beyond all cure,—ah woe is me!—a prey to frenzy heaven-sent; whom thou ere-while didst once send forth from thee, victorious in the rushing fray; but now, instead, he broodeth all alone, and is found a grievous sorrow to his friends. And all that his hands had wrought before, deeds of rarest chivalry, have fallen, fallen to the ground, waking no love in the loveless hearts of Atreus' wretched sons.

Loud, I trow, will rise the piteous wail with, "Woe! ah, woe is me!"³—what time his mother, long grown old and grey, hears of his soul's disease; hers no nightingale's sad plaint, but loud and shrill will be her dirge, and on her breast will fall the noise of smiting hands, with rending of hoary hair the while.

various critics, and cannot claim to have any more probability than the numerous other corrections offered. The MSS. reading is:

Ἰδαία μίμνω λειμωνία ποία, μήλων
ἀνήριθμος, αἰὲν εὐνόμα.

Blaydes reads:

Ἰδαῖα ναίων λειμώνι' ἔπαυλα
. . . εὐνώμαι,

partly after Bergk and Lobeck, who had given εὐνώμαι and ἔπαυλα respectively. For μήλων a var. lect. μηνῶν is recorded. (Cf. Paley's *note ad loc.*)

¹ *i.e.*, the only hope which the wretched can have,—the release that death will bring at last.

² Others give ἔφεδρος its technical meaning, "a foe in reserve," *i.e.*, a third combatant sitting by to fight the conqueror in a previous bout.

³ Hermann follows the Schol., supplying a negative before αἰλινοι, but, as Jebb points out, the repetition of the word and its prominent position rather indicate that it represents what the unhappy mother will utter. On the other hand, it is certainly true that the balance of evidence is in favour of regarding the "Linus song" as a soft, plaintive melody. Cf. *L. and S.*

Better were he in Hades' halls,¹ whose² senses idly stray,—he who, though the noblest³ sprung, upon his father's side, of all Achæa's toil-worn sons, is no more constant to his natural bent, but dwells with stranger thoughts. Unhappy sire, what tidings are in store for thee of thy son's grievous doom,—doom that never yet befell the life of any Æacid⁴ save this!

AJAX. All things doth long and countless time bring forth from the unseen, and then, as soon as shown, doth hide them in itself; and there is nought too wild to hope; nay, even the dread oath is overpowered, and stubborn hearts withal. For instance, I myself, who hardened my heart so direly then, as iron is hardened in the dipping, have had my keen edge softened by yon woman's words; and piteous to me it is to leave her widowed with my foes, and my child an orphan. But I must go unto the baths and the meadows nigh the strand, to purge my stains and seek escape from the heavy anger of the goddess. Some place I go to find, where none hath trod; there will I bury this sword of mine, most hostile of all weapons, digging somewhere a hole where none shall see; nay, let night and Hades keep it safe below! For ever since I took it in mine hand, a gift from Hector, deadliest foe, I have had no honour from the Argives. Ah, 'tis true, that proverb which men have: "Foes' gifts are no gifts and bring no profit."

Henceforth, then, shall I know to yield to gods, and learn to revere the Atreidæ. They are rulers; wherefore yield

¹ Reading with Elmsley *κρείσσων παρ' Αἰδᾶ* for MSS. *κρείσσων γὰρ* . . .

² Reading *ὁ* before *νοσῶν* for MSS. *ἦ*, which would mean "better dead than mad,"—this gives good sense, but does not suit the antistrophic verse.

³ The reading *ἄριστος* is not certain, being found in only two MSS., but it gives a fair sense.

⁴ For *αἰῶν Αἰακιδᾶν* many admit the conjecture *δίῶν Αἰακιδᾶν* "the godlike sons of Æacus," an easy correction, but perhaps unnecessary.

we must. Why should we not? E'en things men dread and those that are most strong bow to authority. 'Tis thus that winter's storms, with track of snow, give way to summer with fair fruits; and thus night's dreary¹ round makes room for day's white steeds to light their blazing lamp; and the breath of dreadful winds doth lull the moaning deep;² yea, and the mighty master, Sleep, though he hath bound, yet setteth free, nor keeps his captive eye in thrall. And *we*—we surely must learn wisdom. Myself, yes,³—for now I come to see that a foe should have such hate from us, as one who yet will be a friend; and towards my friend such help and service shall I choose to show, as though he will not always stay my friend. For most men find that the haven of fellowship is no safe port. But touching this it shall be well.⁴ Go thou within, woman, and pray the gods that all my heart's desire may find a perfect end. And you, my comrades, pay the self-same heed to these my hests as she shall; and tell Teucer,—so he come,—to care for me and show goodwill withal to you. For lo! I go, where go I must; but do my bidding,—ye; and so, ere long, maybe, in spite of these my woes, ye shall hear that I am safe. (*Exit* AJAX.)

CHO. I feel a sudden thrill of joy; I soar aloft on rapture's

¹ The word *αἰανῆς* is variously connected with *αἰεῖ* in the sense of "never-ending," and with *αἰαῖ* or *αἰνὸς* in the sense of "direful." Modern critics incline towards the former derivation, though the Schol. seems to have taken the second view.

² According to a common Greek and Roman idiom the wind is said to calm the sea, when it ceases to blow.

³ Either there is an ellipse of *γνώσομαι σωφρονεῖν* here, or, as Paley suggests, an intentional aposiopesis,—the regular construction having been interrupted by the parenthesis.

⁴ The language here, as throughout the speeches of Ajax, is capable of a double meaning. To the Chorus it is reassuring, being taken by them to mean that he will seek reconciliation with God and man; to Ajax himself they speak not of reconciliation, but of the rest which, for him, is to be found in death alone.

wing ! O Pan, O Pan, leave, leave Cyllene's rocky ridge, lashed by the driving snow, and show thyself from o'er the sea,¹ O lord of the dance in heaven's choir, that thou mayst set afoot with me mad measures, such as none hath taught,²—the dances of thy Nysa, and of Crete !³ Yea, for now I fain would dance. And o'er the Icarian waves, for all to see, may King Apollo, god of Delos, come to join me and be gracious evermore !

From our eyes hath Ares⁴ lifted the dread cloud of woe. O joy ! Now, now, O Zeus, may the bright dawn of happy days once more draw nigh the swift, sea-faring ships ; since Ajax forgets his troubles again, and hath in turn performed all rites that gods decree, with utmost reverence for their laws.

All things doth mighty time decay ;⁵ and there is nought I would say might not be said, now that Ajax, contrary to hope, hath repented of his rage against the Atreidæ, and of his grievous feuds.

MES. Good sirs, I first would tell you this,—Teucer hath just arrived from Mysia's steeps ; no sooner had he reached the generals' quarters in mid camp than all the Argives fell to reviling him at once. They knew him in the distance as he came, and, closing round him in a ring, kept up from either side a volley of abuse in which all joined,—calling

¹ The word *ἀλίπλαγκτε* is generally rendered here "sea-roaming," and it is conceivable that Pan was worshipped as a sea-god at Salamis ; but Hermann and others prefer to connect *ἀλίπλαγκτε* closely with *φάνηθι*.

² *αὐτοδαῖη* "self-taught," *i.e.*, coming instinctively as fancy prompts, or possibly "taught by thyself," unknown to others.

³ Nysa was a name given to various places, where the worship of Dionysus prevailed. At Cnusus in Crete there was a special cult of the god by his priests the Curetes.

⁴ As frequently in Sophocles, Ares is the destroying god with power to end the havoc he has caused.

⁵ The MSS. here add *τε καὶ φλέγει*, probably an interpolator's gloss to make this passage square more exactly with l. 647.

him in scorn the brother of that madman who had plotted 'gainst the host,—saying that he should not save himself from death, all bruised and battered by their stones. So far, indeed, they went, that swords leapt¹ from their scabbards to men's hands; when lo! the strife, now near its crisis, was stayed by words of elders interposing. But where is Ajax, pray, that I may give him news of this? Needs must I tell my tale in full to those who have a right to hear it.

CHO. He is not within, but has but now gone forth,—new counsels to new ways adapting.

MES. Alack! alack! Too late, then, in his sending was he who sent me on this journey, or else I have appeared too late.

CHO. But wherein hath aught been scanted in this urgent business?

MES. Teucer's orders were, that yon man should not go forth from the shelter of his roof, till he himself should come.

CHO. Well, gone he is, his thoughts now turned to what is best,—to win release from Heaven's wrath.

MES. These words of thine are all too full of foolishness, if Calchas be indeed a seer of sense.

CHO. What said he? And what did he know² of this matter?

MES. Thus much I know, being present the while. Up rose Calchas from the circle of princes met there in council, and, withdrawing from the Atreidæ by himself, he laid his right hand in Teucer's, with all kind intent, and gave him strict commandment thus: "Keep Ajax, by all means thou canst, beneath the shelter of his hut, nor let him go abroad to-day,—this day whose light is shining now,—if thou

¹ Paley suggests that *διεπεραιώθη* may mean literally that "swords were crossed" by the angry Argives and Teucer's followers. The Schol., however, explains it by *διειλκύσθη*.

² Either an ellipse of *μαντεύεται*, or of *λέγεις* completes the sense. Schneidewin's conjecture *πάρει* is not necessary.

wouldst ever see him yet alive. For to-day, and only to-day, will the wrath of the goddess Athene torment him." Those were his words. "Lives o'ergrown and profitless,"¹—went on the seer,—“fall before heavy misfortunes of the gods' sending, whene'er one born to man's estate is filled with thoughts beyond man's sphere, despite his birth. Now, yon Ajax, at his very start from home, was found a witless wight, although his father gave him sage advice, saying to him, “My son, be victory thy aim, but always with the help of God.” But he made answer like a braggart fool, “Father, with help of gods even a man of naught might win him victory; good hope have I to pluck that glorious crown myself even without their aid.” So boastful were his words. And after that, a second time, in answer to the goddess Athene,² when she was cheering him on and bidding him turn his bloodstained hand against the foe, then spake he dreadful words,—words better left unsaid, “O queen, go stand near others of the Argive host; where I am, shall the battle never break.”³ Such the words whereby he won the dire displeasure of the goddess, harbouring thoughts beyond man's sphere. But, if indeed he is alive this day, haply, with Heaven's help, we may become his saviours.”

Thus spake the seer; and straight that other, even Teucer,

¹ A var. lect. given by Suidas is *ἀνόητα*, “senseless.”

² The genitive here is slightly irregular, standing in loose relation to the whole sentence. Possibly the poet intended *ἀνδωμένης* for *ἡνίκα ἠνέδατο*, or, as Jebb suggests, something equivalent to *ἡτίμωσε τὴν παραινέειν* has been displaced by the parenthesis, and the sense completed by *ἀντιφωνεῖ δεινὸν ἔπος*. Paley thinks *ὀργὴν ἐκτίσατο* was the original idea.

³ The metaphor is obscure, but the meaning seems to be, “the line shall not be broken.” So Campbell. Jebb renders “where stand I and mine, the storm of fight can never burst,” *i.e.*, nothing serious will occur on the enemy's side; but, as he says himself, this is far from satisfactory. There is a proposed emendation *οὔτι σοῦ χροῖζει*, “hath no need of thee,” but so violent a change of the text is scarcely warranted.

left the place of session and sent me with this charge to thee, for thy observance.¹ But if our task has been in vain,² and Calchas is a clever seer, yon man is now no more.

CHO. Unhappy Tecmessa, daughter of sorrow, come forth and learn what news this man proclaims; so near the quick this comes, that none may rejoice thereat.

TEC. (*coming forth with EURYSACES*). Ah me! why do ye rouse me from my rest again, who have but now found respite from unceasing woes?

CHO. Listen to this man, to the news he has brought us of Ajax,—bitter news to me.

TEC. Alas! what is thy tale, good sir? Are we undone?

MES. Of *thy* state I know not; but of *Ajax*, if haply he be abroad, small hope have I.

TEC. Abroad indeed he is, so that I feel a pang at what thou sayest.

MES. Teucer straitly charged, that ye should keep him under shelter of his hut, and let him not go forth alone.

TEC. And where is Teucer? Wherefore says he this?

MES. He is but lately come hither, and forebodes that this going forth of Ajax is fraught with death.³

¹ Others render "these commands that you should keep Ajax safe."

² Wakefield conjectures *ἀφυσπερίμεθα* "have come too late," but the word is nowhere found, and does not deserve Campbell's judgment that it is a probable emendation.

³ The meaning of this passage seems tolerably clear, but how to arrive at it with the received text is an extremely difficult problem. The Schol. cuts the knot by treating *φέρειν* as here synonymous with *εἶναι*, but this view is clearly untenable. Lobeck renders, "Teucer forebodes that he brings news of this going forth as fatal to Ajax," but this is intolerably harsh. Paley favours Palmer's explanation, "expects that this going forth of Ajax is bringing him a fatal misadventure,"—supposing that the sentence was interrupted by Tecmessa's eager inquiry, and that *τύχην* was intended to be added. Hermann renders "Teucer hopes to announce (i.e., *in time*) that this going forth is fraught with death for Ajax" (and so to stop him); this is the view

TEC. Ah, woe is me! From whom can he have learnt it?

MES. From Thestor's prophet son, this very day, whereon¹ he augurs life or death for him.

TEC. Ah, woe is me! stand forth, good friends, to aid my helpless lot! Quick, some of you, and hasten Teucer's coming! Go some to the westward, others to the eastward bays, and seek the man so direly sped! For I know now that I have been deceived by my lord, an outcast from the grace of yore.

Alas! my child, what shall I do? I must not rest idly here! Nay, I too will go, where'er my strength allows. (*She hands her child to an Attendant.*) Come, haste we and away! No time for sitting still, if we would e'en save a man who is so bent on death.²

CHO. I am ready to go, and I will show it not merely in words. Nay, speedy act and speedy foot shall follow therewithal. (*Exeunt omnes.*³)

AJAX (*standing alone on the sea-shore near his sword, which is planted in the ground by its hilt*). There stands the murderous blade, so placed that it may prove most keen,—if there be leisure e'en to think,⁴—Hector's gift, his whom

favoured by Campbell, and certainly does least violence to the Greek, but it does not seem to be quite what might be expected; it sounds forced and unnatural. Blaydes obtains the probable sense by reading *ὄλεθρον εἰς Διαντος* "tends to the death of Ajax," but this emendation is not a likely one. Various corrections of *φέρειν* are offered, e.g., *φθάνειν*, *κυρεῖν*, *ῥέπειν*,—any of which would remove the obscurity.

¹ Reading *ὄτ'*, i.e., *ὄτε* and understanding *ὁ μάντις* as the subject of *φέρει*. Many, however, adopt *ὄς* with Wunder and Dindorf, or retaining *ὄτ'* make *ἡ ἡμέρα* the subject to *φέρει*.

² Line 812 is rejected by Dindorf and others; it certainly weakens the passage.

³ Two points deserve attention here: (α) The Chorus make an exit during the course of the play; (β) there is a complete change of scenery. Both occurrences are most unusual in Greek tragedy,—the latter especially so.

⁴ Campbell renders "seeing one has leisure for thought also;" but

of aliens¹ I detested most, the man most hateful to mine eyes; in hostile soil,—the soil of Troy,—’tis fixed, fresh sharpened on the stone that eateth steel; myself I fixed it there, with all due heed, best friend to Ajax for a speedy death. Thus well prepared am I. And after this, be thou, O Zeus, the first to aid me, as is but right.² ’Tis no great boon that I shall crave of thee. Send, in answer to my prayer, some messenger to bear the evil news to Teucer, that he may be the first to raise my corpse flung round this reeking sword, that I be not spied, ere that, by some foe’s eye, and cast forth as a prey to dogs and birds. So short my prayer to thee, O Zeus. On Hermes, too, I call, the dead man’s guide below, to lay me soundly to my rest, with one quick leap, one unconvulsive spring, soon as this sword-blade cleaves my side. Yea, and I summon to my help those that are maids for evermore, whose eyes are ever bent on all that men go through, the dread Erinyes, of the far swift stride, that they may learn my piteous fate,—my ruin at the Atreidæ’s hands. Oh! that they would sweep them off to utter doom, villains by a death most vile,—e’en as they see me fall, slain by mine own hand, so may they too perish, slain by their own kin, by the hand of their children, their beloved!³

surely the meaning is rather “if, at such a crisis, one has time to think as well as act.”

¹ Some render ξένων in a more special sense “guest-friends,”—Hector and Ajax having exchanged part of their equipment, but Ajax is too bitter now to remember this.

² Zeus, as the ancestor of Ajax through Æacus, may be expected to help his kinsman.

³ Dindorf brackets ll. 839-842 as spurious. About the two latter there can be little doubt; both internal and external evidence is strongly against them. They come in very awkwardly and are unnecessary to the sense; some, however, defend ll. 839, 840, but there seems no good reason for retaining any of them; the transition is abrupt, and the Greek anything but Sophoclean. Campbell omits all four verses.

Come, swift Erinyes, vengeful friends, make prey of all the host and spare them not! And thou, who racest in thy car o'er heaven's heights, O sun-god, stay awhile thy golden rein, what time thou lookest on my native land, and tell my aged sire and her who nursed me, hapless mother, the tale of my infatuate deeds and of my death. She, I trow, unhappy wretch, will make the whole town ring with her loud cry of woe, on hearing this story told. But 'tis idle to lament these things without avail; nay, I must to the deed with all the speed I may.

O Death, Death, come now, look on me; and yet with thee I shall hold converse in yon world also, face to face. But on thee I call, O light of day now brightly shed, and on the sun-god in his car, for this last time of all, and never more henceforth. O light! O sacred soil of my own land of Salamis, whereon my father's hearth stands firm! Glorious Athens with thy kindred race!¹ Ye springs and rivers flowing yonder! And you, ye plains of Troy! To all I say "Farewell!" O ye that have nursed my life! Hark! 'tis his latest word ye now hear Ajax utter; henceforth shall I speak with the dead in Hades' halls. (AJAX *falls on his sword.*)

FIRST HALF-CHO. Double, double, toil and trouble! Where, oh! where have I not been? And yet no spot can say that I share its knowledge.² Hark! I hear once more a heavy tread.

SECOND HALF-CHO. Yes, our footsteps, thy fellow-voyagers'.

¹ *i.e.*, the Athenians, whom Ajax regards as one in race with his own Salaminians.

² Others render "no place knows of him so that I can share with it in the knowledge;" but the expression is strange and harsh, and the passage not improbably corrupt. Campbell reads *ἐφίσταται*, rendering "no place cries 'halt' to me that I might share its secret." Linwood suggests that *ἔπου* lies concealed under *τόπος*, but perhaps further correction is needed.

FIRST HALF-CHO. What news, then?

SECOND HALF-CHO. The side to westward of the ships has all been traversed.

FIRST HALF-CHO. Well, hast found aught?

SECOND HALF-CHO. Aye, trouble in plenty; nought more towards seeing him.

FIRST HALF-CHO. Nor, indeed, 'tis clear, is the man to be seen anywhere along the eastward road.

CHO. Ah! who will give me news of him? Who of the toil-worn sons of the sea, busied with sleepless catching of fish? or which of the goddesses¹ haunting Olympus, or of the rivers that flow towards Bosphorus?—if anywhere one of them beholds that man of savage spirit wandering. For hard it is, that I, at least, with all my weary wandering, have not succeeded in approaching him,² but still fail to light upon that feeble³ form.

TEC. Woe, woe is me!

CHO. Whose cry issued from the wooded glen hard by?

TEC. Ah me, unhappy that I am!

CHO. Lo! 'tis Tecmessa, his ill-starred bride, the captive of his spear; her soul is blent with that same piteous wail.

TEC. Lost, ruined, utterly undone, my friends!

CHO. What is it?

TEC. There lies our Ajax, but this moment slain,—himself the sheath for his hidden blade.

CHO. Alas for my return!⁴ Ah, my prince, thou hast

¹ The mountain-nymphs and river-deities.

² This has been understood in two ways: "cannot come near him with a lucky course," and "cannot attain a lucky course;" the first seems preferable.

³ Others understand "lifeless," but the Chorus did not know that Ajax was yet dead. Hermann renders *morbo debilitatus* "enfeebled by his complaint," and so it is usually taken.

⁴ *i.e.*, either my return without thee, or, my remote prospects of return now that my leader is gone.

slain thy¹ · ship-mate here, unhappy one ! Luckless lady thou !

TEC. Ours to raise the cry of woe, for 'tis with him e'en as I tell.

CHO. By whose hand did he do the deed, poor wretch ?

TEC. Himself by his own hand, 'tis clear ; this sword was fixed in the ground by him and on it he fell ; this convicts him.

CHO. Alas, my fatal blindness ! Alone² then didst thou meet thy bloody death, without a friend to watch o'er thee ! No heed I took,—all senseless dullard that I was ! Where, oh ! where is he, our stubborn chieftain, laid,—Ajax, name of woe ?

TEC. (*covering the corpse with a robe*). None shall gaze on him ; nay, but from head to foot will I wrap him in this mantle's folds ; for none, who really loved him well, could bear to see him spouting up from self-dealt wound the darkling blood at nostrils and from crimson gash. Ah me ! what shall I do ? Which of thy friends will lift thee up ? Where is Teucer ? How timely³ would his coming be, if now he came to help compose his fallen brother's corpse ! Ah, unhappy Ajax, from what a height to what a depth art fallen,—deserving, e'en in foemen's eyes,⁴ the tribute of their tears.

CHO. So thou wert doomed, unhappy one, doomed at last, of thy stubbornness, thus to bring unto its end an evil doom of woes past count ! Such were the laments I heard thee utter, ever day and night, from out thy savage soul,—words of hate against the Atreidæ, linked with deadly

¹ *σὸν* was conjectured by Hermann to make the metre of this line correspond with l. 947 in the antistrophe.

² Reading *οἶος*—others *οἶος*.

³ Reading with Dindorf *ἀκμαῖ' ἄν* for MSS. *ἀκμαῖος*. Others render “for he would come seasonably, if he came,” or, “would he may come in time, if he come !”

⁴ Some MSS. give *ἐχθρῶν* for *ἐχθροῖς*,—a needless change.

rage.¹ Ah, 'twas a mighty beginner of woes, the day when, to award the arms,² a contest for the doughtiest was ordained!

TEC. Woe, woe is me!

CHO. True grief doth pierce thy heart, I know.

TEC. Woe, woe is me!

CHO. That thou shouldst wail, not once but twice, is no surprise to me, lady, reft as thou hast been but now of one so dear as this.

TEC. Thine to think, but mine to feel these things,—aye, all too cruelly.

CHO. Yes, yes, 'tis true.

TEC. Alas! my child, how hard the slavish yoke in store for us, so keen the eyes that overlook us twain!

CHO. Ah me! a heartless pair are those Atreidæ, whose deed thou hast proclaimed in this thy woe,³—a deed without a name! Heaven avert it!

TEC. These things had ne'er been thus ordained without the will of gods.

CHO. All too grievous is the load they have laid upon us.

TEC. Yet such the woe that Pallas, child of Zeus, that goddess dire, brings to its birth for Odysseus' sake.

CHO. God wot that much-enduring man exulteth o'er us in his grim black heart, loudly laughing at these frenzied sorrows,—alas! and woe!—and with him join the princely pair, the Atreidæ, at the news!

TEC. Well, let them laugh and joy o'er this man's woes.

¹ The phrase *οὐλίφ σὺν πάθει* has been also variously understood: (α) "under that cruel blow" (Campbell); (β) "with emotion that boded evil" (Paley); (γ) "with that fatal occurrence," *i.e.*, the loss of the arms (Blaydes). But none of these renderings seem very satisfactory.

² The lacuna before *ὄπλων* might be filled, as Musgrave proposed, with the epithet *χρυσσοδέτων*, or *χρυσσοτύπων*.

So the Schol. explains. Others understand "in the mention, by the utterance of this sorrow," *i.e.*, the prospect of slavery.

Maybe, although they missed him not alive, they will lament him in the stress of war when dead. For they, whose minds are warped, know not the good, while yet they have it in their hands, till they have let it slip.¹ To me² his death is fraught with grief more than the joy they feel, and yet it pleased him well. The boon for which he longed is now his own,—e'en death, the thing he craved. Why then should they mock at him? By Heaven's decree, and not by theirs, he died,—no, not by theirs. Wherefore let Odysseus fling his idle taunts. Ajax is lost to them henceforth; he hath passed away, leaving grief and tears for me.

TEU. (*behind the scenes.*) Woe, woe is me!

CHO. Hush! 'tis Teucer's voice, methinks, I hear, uplifting a strain that bears upon³ this trouble.

TEU. O Ajax, my beloved, my own dear brother's form, hast thou, then, fared⁴ e'en as the rumour holds?

CHO. The man is dead, Teucer; rest assured of that.

TEU. Then woe is me for my heavy lot!

CHO. 'Tis even thus—

TEU. Ah me! unhappy that I am!

CHO. Well mayst thou mourn.

TEU. O all too hasty stroke!

CHO. Too hasty, Teucer, yes!

TEU. Ah, woe is me!—But what of this man's child? Pray, where may he be in this land of Troy?

CHO. Alone, by the huts.

TEU. (*to TECMESSA*). Then bring him hither with all speed, lest some enemy snatch him up, like the whelp of a

¹ Others render "till one dash it from their grasp," but this is less in keeping with the context.

² Paley encloses ll. 966-971 in brackets as spurious; but the Schol. recognized them.

³ Or perhaps "suitable to." So L. and S.

⁴ Reading *ἠμπόληκας*. Some read *ἠμπόληκα σ'*, "have I found thee in such plight as rumour says?"—a strange meaning for *ἐμπολᾶν*.

lioness, that is robbed of her mate.¹ Away, make haste, and help! 'Tis the way of the world to flout the dead,² once they are down. (*Exit TECMESSA with some of TEUCER'S followers.*)

CHO. And truly, Teucer, that was his commandment, while as yet he lived, that thou should'st care for this child, as indeed thou dost.

TEU. O sight, most grievous unto me of all the sights these eyes have seen! O road of all I ever trod,—the one I now have come,—most agonizing to mine heart, what time³ I learnt about thy death, O Ajax, best-beloved, while following hard on the tracks of thy steps! For swift through all the Achæan host there passed a rumour touching thee, as of some god's sending, that thou wert dead and gone. And I, unhappy, hearing it, fell moaning softly to myself, far away as yet; but now I see—and oh! 'tis death.

(*To an Attendant.*) Come, bare the corpse, that I may see the worst. O grievous sight, with cruel rashness fraught, what anguish has thy dying sown for me to reap! For whither can I go, to what folk,—I that never helped thee at thy need? A gracious welcome and a cheery smile, I trow, would Telamon,—my sire as well as thine,—be sure to have for me, when I returned without thee! He would, indeed,—a man whose way is not to smile the sweeter e'en in good fortune's hour! What will he not say? What bitter taunt will he spare me, the son of his spear-won bride,—his bastard-child, whose cowardice and craven heart betrayed thee, O Ajax best-beloved,—or else my guile, that by thy death thy sovereign power and house might fall to me as

¹ The simile must not be too hardly pressed. Tecmessa has lost her lion-like lord and is defenceless. Others render *κενῆς* "robbed of her young," but this would be redundant.

² Some read *ἐχθροῖσι* for *θανοῦσι*, after Herwerden.

³ Paley brackets ll. 994, 995 as spurious, and suggests that *ὦς* may be exclamatory "how!"

mine ! On this wise will he rail, quick-tempered erst, now unbearable in age, and angered to a quarrel without cause. And, at last, shall I be thrust from the land, a cast-away, made out a slave instead of free. Such will be my fate at home, while at Troy I have enemies in plenty, and little enough to help me. And all this have I won me by thy death ! Ah me ! what shall I do ? How draw thee, O unhappy wretch, from off this cruel gleaming point,—this murderous blade, which set thy spirit free, it seems ? Dost see now how Hector, e'en in death, was doomed at last to be thy ruin ? Mark you, pray, the fortune of these twain. Hector, to whom Ajax gave his belt,¹ lashed to the chariot-rail, was sawn² and mangled by that belt, even until he breathed his last. *This* was the gift that Ajax had from Hector, and by it he died in the fatal fall. Was it not, then, a vengeful fiend that forged this sword ? Was it not Hades, grim craftsman, who made that belt ? For my part, I would ever say, that it is Heaven which plans these things and all things else for man ; but whoso finds these views not pleasing to his mind, let him rest satisfied with his, as I with mine.³

CHO. Make not a lengthy speech, but consider how thou wilt bury the man, and what thou wilt say anon ; for lo ! I see an enemy, and maybe he comes to mock our woe, as is a villain's wont.

TEU. Whom of the host dost thou behold ?

CHO. 'Tis Menelaus,—he for whose sake we sailed hither.

TEU. I see him ; he is not hard to recognize, when near.

¹ Others render "by the very belt, with which he had been presented by Ajax."

² *πρισθεις* is strangely explained by the Schol., whom some follow, by the word *ἐξαφθεις*, an impossible rendering surely ! A verb of "tying" may be supplied from the context.

³ Some editors have suspected the genuineness of ll. 1028-1039 on internal evidence, but they may perhaps be defended.

MEN. Ho ! sirrah, lend no hand, I tell thee, in burying yonder corpse, but leave it as it is.

TEU. Wherefore hast thou wasted such big words ?

MEN. I speak my will, and his who rules the host.

TEU. Pray, tell us, then, the reason urged by thee for this.

MEN. The reason is,—we thought to bring him from his home as the Achæans' friend and ally, but found him, when we came to seek, more hostile than our Phrygian foes ; seeing that he plotted death for all the host and set forth by night against it, to slay us with the spear ;¹ and, had not some god quelled this attempt, we should have been most foully slain and left to lie,—the very fate that hath befallen him,—while he would have been living still. But, as it was, God turned from us the outrage he designed, to let it fall on sheep and herds. Wherefore, as for him, there is none so mighty as to give his body burial ; but he shall be cast forth on the yellow sand and become a prey for the birds of the sea. Ne'er suffer, then, dire rage to rise. For, if we could not rule him when alive, at least we will be masters of him dead, and force him to our way—e'en though thou like it not ; for while he lived, he ne'er would heed a word *I* said. And yet this argues villainy, when a man of the commons claims to disobey his rulers' hests. Never can the course of law be smooth in any state, where fear is not a principle ; nor, again, can an army any more be wisely ruled, if it have not a bulwark of reverence and fear. Nay, but a man, however great his bulk, should think that he yet may fall e'en by a trivial hurt. Be sure of this,—the one safe man is he with whom dwells fear, and, with it, sense of shame ; but where 'tis open to act frowardly and do what seemeth good to each, that state, believe me, though it have had a prosperous course, will sink, at last, one day,—down to the

¹ The Schol. records a var. lect. *ὡς ἐλοιδορεί*, of some authority.

depths. Nay, let me have also before me a certain timely fear; and let us not suppose that, when we do just what we please, we shall not pay it back in pain.¹ Pain and pleasure come by turns. Ajax was hot and froward once; now comes my turn to think high thoughts. So I tell thee before all,—bury not this man; lest, if thou do, thou find a grave thyself.

CHO. Menelaus, wise the precepts here laid down by thee; do not then, in spite of them, turn to insult the dead thyself.

TEU. Nevermore shall I wonder, friends, when a man of no birth goes astray for that reason, since those, who are accounted nobly born, err so deeply in their speech. Come, tell us once more from the beginning,—dost say that it was thou who didst find this man and broughtest him hither to help the Achæans? Did he not sail of his own accord, as his own master? What ground hast thou to captain him? Where is thy right to lord it o'er his folk, whom he brought² with him from his home? As Sparta's king thou camest, not as lord of us. I find no royal prerogative whereby thy right to govern him exceeds his own to govern thee. Subject to others thou sailedst hither, not as captain of us all, that thou should'st ever order Ajax. No! rule whom rule thou dost, and keep those haughty words to punish them; but this man will I bury, as in duty bound, fearing not that tongue of thine, whether it be thou, or that other chief, that forbids. Not for thy wife's sake, I trow, did Ajax join the host, like those who toil so sore,³ but by reason of the oath which bound him,—not for thee at all; for of those that

¹ Linwood would read *λυποίμεθα*, and so Paley.

² Reading *ἦγαγε*. So Dindorf with one MS., to avoid the cretic *ἦγείτ' οἴκοθεν*.

³ It is not clear who are intended. The Schol. suggests that mercenaries are meant, but perhaps it is only a sneer at those who were ready to obey every command like slaves.

were as naught he made no count. Wherefore come hither again with more heralds,—aye, with yon chief; but not for any noise of thine will I turn me about,¹ so long as² thou art what thou art.

CHO. Once more, such speech in trouble likes me not; harsh words sting, however just.

MEN. It seems our archer³ lacks not pride.

TEU. True; 'tis not a sordid art that I have made mine own.

MEN. Loud would thy boasting be, couldst thou but get a shield!

TEU. E'en without it, I were a match for thee with all thy harness.

MEN. How fierce the spirit that thy tongue maintains!

TEU. With justice on his side, a man may well be proud.

MEN. Is it just that he, my murderer, should fare so well?⁴

TEU. *Thy murderer?* This sounds strange;—thou livest, yet are dead!

MEN. Yea, 'tis God who keeps me safe; to Ajax⁵ I am dead.

TEU. If saved by gods, do not dishonour them.

MEN. Would I find fault with Heaven's laws?

TEU. Thou *dost*, if thou art here to stop the burying of the dead.

MEN. Of mine own foes,—yes; to bury them were wrong.

TEU. What! did Ajax e'er confront thee as a foe?

¹ *i.e.*, so as to heed what is said—a meaning more usually confined to ἐπιστρέφειν.

² Some follow Hermann in rendering “however much,” “for all thou art.”

³ Sophocles expresses the feeling of his own times, when archers and all ψιλοί, being mainly foreign mercenaries or poor citizens, were held in small estimation as compared with the heavy-armed.

⁴ *i.e.*, as to obtain burial.

⁵ *i.e.*, as far as his will and purpose went.

MEN. He hated me, I him ; and well thou knowest this.

TEU. Yes, thou wert found to have robbed him of votes by unfair means.¹

MEN. He owed that failure to the judges, not to me.

TEU. 'Tis like thee to be deep in secret roguery, and wear a specious mask.²

MEN. Some one shall rue that speech.

TEU. Not more, it seems, than we shall make some smart.

MEN. My last word is,—this man must not be buried.

TEU. And this my answer,³—buried he shall be, and at once.

MEN. Ere now have I seen one, bold of tongue, urge on the mariners to sail in stormy weather ; and yet, when he was caught in raging gales, thou wouldst have found no voice in him. No, huddled in his cloak, he would let any of the crew trample upon him. Even so with thee and that boisterous tongue of thine,—maybe a mighty storm, small though the cloud wherefrom it blows, will quench that blustering.

TEU. Yea, and I have seen a very fool, who would exult in his neighbours' troubles ; and a man like me, in mood the same, regarding him a moment, spake and said, "Friend, do the dead no wrong ; for, if thou dost, be sure that thou wilt suffer hurt." Thus did he warn the unhappy man to his face ; and lo ! I see him, and he is none other, methinks, than thyself. Have I spoken in riddles ?

MEN. I will away ; it were indeed disgrace, should any

¹ It is not clear what Menelaus did with regard to the votes, but it seems to be insinuated that he brought undue influence to bear by canvassing on behalf of Odysseus. Some think that it is meant that he tampered with votes actually recorded, and so falsified the result.

² Reading *καλῶς*, rather than *κακῶς*.

³ The Schol. records a variant *ὄδ' δ'* for *ἀλλ'* which is perhaps preferable.

learn that I corrected thee with words, when force was in my power.

TEU. Begone, then ; to me, too, is it dire disgrace to hearken to a babbler's words of folly. (*Exit MENELAUS.*)

CHO. Fierce the strife to be fought out ! Haste, then, Teucer, with what speed thou mayst, and find for this man some hollow grave, to rest there in his mouldering tomb, the memory whereof shall ever live with men.

TEU. (*as TECMESSA enters with EURYSACES.*) Lo ! hither come his wife and child, approaching just in time, to deck the hapless corpse for burial.

Come hither, child, and, stationed near, lay hold upon thy sire in suppliant wise,—on him who begat thee. Sit there, as suppliants use, holding in thy hands the while my hair, thy mother's, and thine own,—a suppliant's store. And if any of the host should drag thee from his corpse by force, may he be cast forth from the land unburied, villain by a villain's doom,—his whole race from the root cut off, e'en as I cut this lock of hair ! Take it,¹ child, and guard it well ; let no man move thee hence, but throw thyself upon the corpse, and cling to it.

(*To his followers.*) And ye,—quit you like men, no women prove ; stand by and succour him till I return from seeing to his tomb, in spite of all forbidding. (*Exit TEUCER.*)

CHO. Ah ! what will be the last, and when will end the tale of restless² years, bringing upon me evermore the ceaseless doom of toilsome war, along the far wide³ fields of Troy,—a piteous reproach to Hellas ? Would that he who showed the sons of Hellas how to league themselves in strife of hated arms had passed, ere that, into the wide air

¹ *i.e.*, the lock of hair. Others refer *αὐτὸν* to the corpse.

² Others "wide-ranging," *i.e.*, long and wearisome.

³ *εὐρώδης* is generally explained as a mere synonym of *εὐρύς* ; but the Schol. here paraphrases by *σκοτεινὴν καὶ ἀερώδη τοῖς Ἕλλησιν*, deriving it from *εὐρώς*, so "dank and dark."

above, or unto Hades who receiveth all! Alas, for toils whence toils have sprung!¹ For he it was that made the lives of men a waste. Yes, 'twas he, the ill-starred wretch, that grudged me share in joy of wreaths and cups drained deep, of sweet-voiced flutes and gladsome rest by night; 'twas he that made me cease from love,—from love, ah, woe is me! And here I lie, uncared for thus, my hair ever wet with the drenching dews,—remembrances of dismal Troy. Once, indeed, I had bold Ajax to screen me from alarms by night and foemen's darts; but now has he become a victim to a dismal fate. What joy, then, shall be mine henceforth? Oh, to be where the wooded foreland hangeth o'er the sea² amid the surging tides, sailing beneath Sunium's level heights, to greet our holy Athens thence!

TEU. Lo! I have made haste and come, for yonder I saw the general, even Agamemnon, hurrying hither, to our bane; 'tis clear to me he has some crooked words to vent.

AGA. 'Tis thou then, is it, as they tell, that hast dared to ope thy lips so wide against us, to utter these threats with impunity? Yes, thee I mean, thou captive's son! Surely hadst thou sprung from a mother of high degree, proud had been thy vaunts and delicate thy gait, seeing that, naught as thou art, thou hast stood up for one that is as naught, and hast sworn that we came not hither with power to rule the Achæans or thyself either by land or sea; nay, according to thee, Ajax sailed as chief himself. Are not such flouts too much to hear from slaves?³ What sort of man was this, of

¹ Reading *ἰὼ πόνοι πρόγονοι πόνων*. Dindorf conjectured *πόνοι πρόπονοι*, "toils beyond toils."

² Blaydes conjectures *πόντω* for *πόντου*, which depends on *πρόβλημα*—a probable emendation.

³ An undeserved taunt, for Teucer's mother, Hesione, though a captive, was a princess in her native Troy, whence Heracles had taken her and given her to Telamon.

whom thou makest such loud boast? Whither went he or where stood, that I did not? Have the Achæans, then, no men save him? To our cost, it seems, we proclaimed to the Argives the contest for Achilles' arms that day, if, whate'er betide, we are to be villains by Teucer's showing, and if ye will never be content, even when worsted, to submit to a verdict which the more approved, but must always be either girding at us, or dealing us some treacherous stab,—ye that came short of the prize! Why, such-like ways would put an end to all establishment of law, if we are to thrust aside the rightful winners and bring the hindmost to the front. No, there must be a check to this; for it is not your big, broad-shouldered men who stand most sure, but, in every case, 'tis good sense wins. An ox, for all his mighty bulk, needs but a little whip to keep him straight upon his way. And I perceive that this same remedy will come to thee ere long, unless thou get some store of sense,—thou that art so insolent and bold, so free of speech withal, for one who is a man no more, only a phantom now! Control thyself; remember what thou art by birth, and bring hither some other—a free-born man—to plead thy cause for thee before us; for when thou speakest, I shall no more catch the drift, since I understand not thy barbarous tongue.

CHO. Would ye might both grow wise and study moderation! Naught better can I say to both of you than this.

TEU. Alas! how soon doth gratitude towards the dead pass from men's hearts and prove untrue, seeing that this man hath no more memory of thee, Ajax,—no! not e'en on lesser counts;¹ though oft thou didst toil for him, exposing

¹ The meaning seems to be, "he denies thee even moderate virtues, ignoring altogether thy great services." Paley renders "even in matters of small import," viz., in such a trifling matter as permitting a burial! No Greek could have meant *this*, whatever else he meant. Wunder conjectures *σμηκρῶ λόγῳ*, "makes no mention of thee even in a few words," a meaning which Schneidewin gives the vulgate, rendering, "remembers not even with paltry words."

thine own life to the spear! But that, I trow, is all gone now, all flung away!

O thou whose words have lately flowed so fast and vain,¹ hast thou no memory now of the day when Ajax came and saved you single-handed, what time 'mid the rout ye were pent in your lines, as good as dead,—the fire already blazing round the rowers' seats, high in your ships,² and Hector leaping at a bound o'er the trenches on board them? Who kept that danger off? Was not *his* the hand that did it, of whom thou sayest that he ne'er so much as went to meet the foe with thee?³ Think you he did his duty there? And yet again, when, of his own free will, he went to meet Hector in single fight, not under orders, but because it fell to him; for 'twas no skulking lot that he cast in among the rest,—no lump of moistened clay,⁴—but one that was sure to leap lightly from the crested helm the first of all? This was the man who did these things, and I was with him at his side,—the slave, the son of the barbarian mother! Wretch, where can thine own eyes be when thou canst utter such taunts? Knowest thou not that thy father's father was Pelops, himself a barbarian, a Phrygian, to start with? While Atreus, thine own sire, who followed him, set before his brother a most impious⁵ feast, the flesh of his own children?⁶ And thou

¹ The MSS. vary between *ἀνόητα*, “silly, vain,” and *ἀνόνητα*, “to no purpose.”

² Bothe proposed *ναυτικοῖς θ' ἰδωλοῖς*, “the ships' sterns and seamen's seats,” but the change is scarcely warranted on the ground of tautology.

³ Others “planted foot by thine.”

⁴ The allusion here is to no Homeric incident; but it seems to be hinted that some of the nine chieftains, who answered the challenge of Hector, may have played the trick practised by Cresphontes at the division of Peloponnesus among the sons of Heracles, when, in order to ensure his lot being the last in the helmet, he threw in a lump of clay instead of a stone.

⁵ Others join *δυσεβέστατον* with *Ἀτρεία*.

⁶ *i.e.*, the children of Thyestes, his brother.

thyself wert born of a Cretan mother, whom her own father consigned as a prey to the dumb fishes, having caught her with a paramour.¹ Such being thine origin, dost taunt a man like me with mine? For father I have Telamon,—a man who, for his peerless prowess in the host, won my mother for his bride, a princess born, the daughter of Laomedon, whom Alcmena's son gave to my sire as a special gift. Am I then likely,—I thus nobly sprung from two such princely lines,—to bring disgrace upon my kin,² whom now thou art for thrusting away unburied, laid low in such sore plight,—and art not ashamed to say so? Now be assured of this,—if anywhere ye cast him forth, there must ye cast us three³ to lie along with him. Better that I should die while serving him, where all can see, than for *thy* wife's sake, —or should I say thy brother's?⁴—Wherefore look not to me, but to thyself also. For if thou do me any hurt, thou wilt wish one day to have played e'en the coward more than the bold braggart with me.

CHO. King Odysseus, know that thy coming is well-timed, if thou art here to help untie, not draw the knot still tighter.

ODY. What is it, friends? From afar I heard the voice of the Atreidæ raised loudly o'er this brave man's corpse.

¹ Aërope, daughter of Catreus, king of Crete; she was married to Atreus, but proved untrue to him. Atreus afterwards avenged his many wrongs on her paramour—who was no other than his own brother Thyestes—by serving up the flesh of his children at a banquet, and afterwards telling him what he had eaten.

² *i.e.*, born as I am, I am not likely to disgrace a kinsman in pleading his cause—an answer to Agamemnon's taunt, perhaps, when he tells Teucer to find some free-born man to speak for him. Others understand "let shame come to my kin," *i.e.*, by such an indignity as being left unburied.

³ Teucer, Tecmessa, and Eurysaces.

⁴ *τοῦ σοῦ γ'* is Hermann's conjecture for *τοῦ σοῦ θ'* of MSS. Teucer affects to treat it as a matter of perfect indifference to whom such a worthless woman belongs, and one on which he pretends not to be very clear himself.

AGA. True, King Odysseus; for have we not just been hearing words most shameful from this fellow?

ODY. What words? I can pardon a man, if, when called hard names, he retorts with like abuse.

AGA. I did revile him,—yes; 'twas only what he did to me.

ODY. Why, what hath he done to thee, that thou art really hurt?

AGA. He says he will not suffer yon corpse to miss the meed of burial, but will bury it in spite of me.

ODY. Well, may thy friend tell out the truth, yet rest thy friend no less than formerly?

AGA. Say on; else¹ were I devoid of sense; seeing that I hold thee my greatest friend among the Argives.

ODY. Hearken, then. In Heaven's name I pray thee, that thou harden not thy heart to cast forth so ruthlessly the corpse of yon man unburied; never let violence prevail with thee to make thy hate so bitter that thou trample on the right! To me, too, once was Ajax my most hated foe in all the host, from the day I made Achilles' arms mine own; yet, for all his hate of me, never² would I so dishonour him as to deny that he was the bravest man I ever saw among the Argives, of all of us who came to Troy,—save Achilles only. So it were not right that he should be dishonoured by thee; for 'tis not he at all, but Heaven's laws that thou wilt hurt. Now to harm the brave when dead is no righteous act;—no! hate them as one may.

AGA. Dost *thou*, Odysseus, fight his cause with me?

ODY. I do; and yet I hated him, so long as I might fairly hate.

AGA. Shouldst thou not trample on him, too, when dead?

ODY. Rejoice not, son of Atreus, in dishonour's gains.

¹ *i.e.*, if I refused to hear thee speak.

² Reading *οὐράν*, Elmsley's emendation for MSS. *οὐκ ἄν*.

AGA. No easy thing for kings to iive a pious life.¹

ODY. Yet easy to respect the good advice of friends.

AGA. The good man should obey the powers that be.

ODY. No more of this! To yield to friends is victory,—they say.

AGA. Remember what he was, to whom thou art granting the boon.

ODY. The man was once a foe, but a noble one.

AGA. What, pray, wilt thou do? Such reverence for a fallen foe?

ODY. Yea; with me his merits far outweigh our enmity.

AGA. And yet 'tis men like thee² whom the world³ calls fickle.

ODY. Full many, who are friends to-day, turn enemies anon.

AGA. Dost thou approve, then, of getting such men as friends?

ODY. 'Tis not my way to approve a stubborn soul.

AGA. Thou wilt make us seem cowards with this day's work.

ODY. Not so; men of justice rather,—in the sight of all Hellas.

AGA. Dost bid me, then, allow the burial of the dead?

ODY. I do; for I shall even come to this¹ myself.

¹ *i.e.*, kings have to keep up their authority; if I take no revenge on an enemy and evildoer like Ajax, I shall be looked upon as a weak ruler, however much divine law may enjoin his burial.

² Paley refers *τοιούδ᾽ε* to Ajax, but Agamemnon seems rather to mean those who let sentiment get the better of them, as Odysseus is doing; and this suits better with the brutal rancour of Agamemnon's character, as here depicted.

³ Reading *βροτοῖς*. Others give *βροτῶν*, "among mortals," with Schneidewin; but this introduces a somewhat awkward pleonasm.

⁴ *i.e.*, I shall one day be in need of burial myself. Campbell, however, thinks that the meaning is, "that is the course I intend to pursue," arguing that sentiment would have no weight with Agamemnon,

AGA. Verily, 'tis the same everywhere,¹—every man for himself.

ODY. Well, for whom should I work rather than myself?

AGA. Thine, then, shall the deed be called, not mine.

ODY. Do it how thou wilt, in any case thy goodness will be shown.

AGA. Nay, but of this at least be very sure,—although to thee I would grant e'en a larger boon than this, yet yonder man, as well on earth as in that under-world, will still be my most bitter foe ; but *thou* mayst have thy way.²

CHO. Whoso denies thy natural wisdom after this, Odysseus, is himself a fool.

ODY. Yea, and I declare to Teucer that henceforth I am as much his friend as I was then his enemy. And I would fain help bury this corpse, joining my service with yours, and leaving naught undone, which mortals ought to do for those their noblest sons.

TEU. Most noble Odysseus, I can but praise thee to the full for what thou sayest³ ; much hast thou belied my bodings. Thou wert this man's bitterest foe of all the Argives, yet thou alone hast stood by him with doughty aid, nor hadst the heart, in presence of this corpse, to heap loud insults on it,—the living on the dead,—like that infatuate chief who came,—he and his brother with him, eager, the pair of them, to cast him forth disgraced, without burial. Wherefore may the Father, who is lord in yon heaven above, and that Odysseus had sufficient influence with the host to dictate to him.

¹ Punctuating with Hermann and Dobree, after *ἄμωια*. Others render, "truly every man does all things like himself."

² Reading *χρης*, *i.e.*, *χρησεις*. Some retain *χρη* of MSS., and render, "do what is right," *i.e.*, according to the moral aspects of the question, which are not disputed.

³ *i.e.*, thy noble sentiments deserve nothing but the highest praise. Some have also understood, "I can wholly praise thee *in words*," *i.e.*, though I am precluded from doing more—a frigid sense.

may the mindful fiend of vengeance, and Justice, bringer of the end, destroy those villains by a villain's doom, even as they would fain have cast him forth, with outrage ne'er deserved!

For thee, O son of old Laertes,—I fear to let thee bear a hand in this man's burial, lest by this act I vex the dead; in all else¹ join with us thyself, and, if there is any other in the host whom thou wouldst bring, 'twill cause us no offence. For the rest will I make all provision; but be thou sure of this,—thou art a good man in our judgment.

ONDY. Well, 'twas my wish to help; but, if it please thee not that I do so, I will approve thy word and go. (*Exit ODYSSEUS.*)

TEU.² Enough: already has the time been protracted too much. Haste some of you to dig his hollow grave; others place the lofty caldron for the fire to lap, against the holy lustral rites; and let one band of comrades bring from the hut the harness that he wore.³ And thou, my child, with whatso strength thou hast, take hold upon thy sire with loving touch, and with me lift his body; for still the veins⁴ are warm, still spouting up the strong black tide. Come, each one here who claims to be his friend, haste, haste, away, and serve this man, the peerless dead, than whom a better never was,—better than Ajax none, I say, in the days when he was with us.⁵

¹ *i.e.*, raising a mound, etc. Schneidewin regards ll. 1396-97 as spurious, but they seem, on more than one ground, necessary to the context.

² There are reasons for thinking that this speech of Teucer is an interpolation, either wholly or in parts. Paley notices a variety of strange expressions, as, indeed, most previous commentators had done. (cf. his notes, *ad loc.*).

³ *i.e.*, all the armour except the shield, about which special instructions had previously been given by Ajax.

⁴ *σὺριγγες* has also been understood of "the nostrils."

⁵ Most editors reject l. 1417, though Hermann and Lobeck attempt to defend it. Paley brackets ll. 1416, 17 as feeble; their awkwardness

CHO. Aye, many a thing may mortals learn, once they have seen ; but, ere he see, none can read the future to say how he will fare.

is undeniable, and it is very hard to believe that so careful a writer as Sophocles produced them, at least in their present form.

PHILOCTETES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ODYSSEUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

PHILOCTETES.

CHORUS OF FIFTEEN SAILORS FROM THE SHIP
OF NEOPTOLEMUS.

MERCHANT.

HERACLES.

SCENE.—A lonely spot on the coast of Lemnos.

INTRODUCTION.

THE materials for his "Philoctetes" were probably drawn by Sophocles from the lost epics on the tale of Troy. The details of the story may be found in the "Posthomerica" of Quintus Smyrnæus, ix. 327 *sqq.*

Philoctetes, the son of Pœas, had inherited the famous bow and arrows of his friend Heracles, in return for the service he did that hero in kindling his funeral pyre on Mount Cœta. As one of the suitors of Helen, Philoctetes sailed with the other chieftains for Troy with seven ships from his native land of Malis, beneath the shadow of Cœta, by the streams of Spercheius; but, on the fleet stopping at Chryse, a small island near Lemnos, to sacrifice by divine command, Philoctetes was bitten in the foot by a snake, which guarded the sacred precinct of the nymph Chryse. His wound, seemingly incurable, caused him such awful agony and became so offensive to his comrades, that, to escape his piercing screams and the stench of his festering foot, they followed the advice of the crafty Odysseus and put him ashore, all alone, on Lemnos. But, in the tenth year of the siege of Troy, having learnt from their captive, the Trojan prophet Helenus, that the city could not be taken by them without the bow of Heracles being brought against it, they sent Odysseus with Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, to Lemnos to obtain it from Philoctetes.

It is at this point the play opens. Odysseus and his young comrade have landed on the desert shore of Lemnos, and Odysseus is describing the exact spot, where, in obedience to the general wish,—as he is careful to add,—he had put Philoctetes ashore ten years previously,—his presence in the Achæan host

having been rendered intolerable by the effects of the snake-bite in his foot. Neoptolemus, being unknown to Philoctetes, who would naturally resent any advances on the part of Odysseus, is sent on by the latter to find the sufferer's cave, while Odysseus remains hidden, after posting a scout to keep watch lest Philoctetes should come upon them unawares. The cave is easily found ; Philoctetes is not there, but the evidences of his fearful malady are only too manifest. (ll. 1-49.)

Odysseus then proceeds to unfold his plot for capturing Philoctetes ; it will be necessary, he says, to use guile ; Neoptolemus must say that he too has suffered at the hands of the Atreidæ and Odysseus, and so gain the confidence of Philoctetes ; the bow must be obtained somehow ; questions of right and wrong can wait ; everything, after all, *is* right which is expedient ; so argues Odysseus.

Neoptolemus at first indignantly refuses to dirty his lips with a lie, but at length he is persuaded into believing that the interests of the Achæans come first ; Troy cannot fall without the bow of Heracles, and Neoptolemus, its fated conqueror, will fail unless he can persuade Philoctetes to yield. (ll. 50-134.) Odysseus then disappears, and Neoptolemus instructs the Chorus how they are to help him. Meantime, Philoctetes is heard in the distance, heralded by moans of anguish. (ll. 135-217.) Entering with slow and painful steps, he learns on inquiry who his visitors are, Neoptolemus adding that he and his men are on their way to Scyros from Troy. Philoctetes rejoices to find they are from Hellas ; but do they not know him ? It seems not ; so he tells his story,—how he had been cast ashore by Odysseus, and the pitiful life he has since led on lonely Lemnos. (ll. 218-316.) Neoptolemus expresses his compassion and says that he too has good cause to loathe Odysseus and the Atreidæ for cheating him of his father's arms after entreating him to come to Troy to their aid (ll. 317-377) ; indignant at this treatment, he has left Troy and is on his way home. The Chorus confirm this story, and Philoctetes exhibits a generous sympathy.

Then ensues a long talk about the fate of various warriors at Troy ; after which Neoptolemus expresses his intention of sailing away. (ll. 378-465.) The thought of being left alone again calls forth an impassioned appeal from Philoctetes. "Will not

Neoptolemus spare him one passing thought? Has he nowhere he can stow him for the short voyage home? It is not much to grant, and a good deed is its own reward." The Chorus add their entreaties, and Neoptolemus is on the point of consenting, when two strangers are seen approaching. (ll. 466-541.) These are a merchant,—(really an emissary of Odysseus in disguise),—and a sailor. The former declares himself to be a trader between Peparethus and Troy with wine for the Achæan army; he has learnt something that may interest Neoptolemus, and has come out of his way to tell him that the Atreidæ have sent to bring him back by force; and, further, he adds incidentally that Odysseus and Diomedes are gone in quest of Philoctetes, whose presence at Troy is necessary for their success; this they have learnt from the Trojan prophet Helenus. (ll. 542-627.) After the exit of the merchant, Philoctetes is more anxious than ever to start, before Odysseus can reach Lemnos; and, though Neoptolemus points out that the wind is against them, he gains his point and enters his cave to collect his few treasures. (ll. 628-675.) The Chorus meantime chant an ode on the awful sufferings of this lonely man, contrasting them with the happier life now before him (ll. 676-729); but, before Philoctetes can start, he is attacked by a fearful paroxysm of pain; unable to control himself, he implores Neoptolemus to stay by him, at the same time handing him the bow and arrows to keep till the fit is past; at last he falls asleep from sheer exhaustion, and the Chorus, after singing a short hymn of exquisite beauty to the god of sleep (ll. 730-832), when they see him safely asleep, counsel departure without him; but Neoptolemus tells them that the bow without its master is useless. (ll. 833-864.)

Philoctetes awakes and thanks his watchers in pathetic language for having stayed loyally by him in his helplessness; he is anxious to be going without more delay, but now it is Neoptolemus who hangs back; there is something on his mind; he parries the other's questions feebly for awhile, but finally confesses that Troy, not Scyros, is their destination. (ll. 865-915.) The despair and indignation of Philoctetes are terrible. To think that he has trusted this youth, who seemed so guileless, only to find himself heartlessly duped! His bow is gone; he is helpless. Abuse, remonstrance, entreaty succeed one another,—

and not without effect. Neoptolemus is ashamed of himself, and is on the point of giving back the bow and renouncing the *rôle* he is playing, when Odysseus suddenly appears from a place of concealment and forbids any such sentimental weakness (ll. 916-980), adding that Philoctetes must come to Troy whether he will or no. "It is the will of Zeus." Hereupon Philoctetes tries to throw himself over a precipice, but Odysseus prevents his design; failing in this, he curses the son of Laertes bitterly and taunts him with cowardice in days gone by. To this Odysseus deigns no reply, beyond retorting mockingly that Philoctetes shall have his own way and remain in Lemnos; there is no need of *him* now that they have his bow. This is of course merely a feint to frighten Philoctetes, for they know they cannot dispense with him.

Pretending now to leave him for good, Odysseus retires, taking Neoptolemus and the bow with him; while the Chorus remains awhile, in the hope that Philoctetes may change his mind, before they actually sail. (ll. 981-1080.) The poor wretch now resigns himself to despair; but the Chorus points out that it is he, after all, who is to blame for prolonging his own sufferings; a chance of escape is offered him; Odysseus is merely the envoy of others. But Philoctetes can only dwell on his wrongs, and all entreaties to him to yield are fruitless; so they begin to withdraw, when he suddenly recalls them (ll. 1081-1190), craving their pardon for any hasty words he may have let fall, and at the same time imploring them to give him some weapon, with which to destroy his miserable life. They are still arguing with him, when Neoptolemus enters hurriedly, closely pursued by Odysseus. The young man has come to make amends, if possible, for the past,—to restore the bow, and fulfil his promise to carry Philoctetes home. Odysseus expostulates and blusters, but eventually quits the stage, vowing to tell the host of this treachery. (ll. 1191-1262.)

Philoctetes, having heard their loud tones, is coming out from his cave, when he sees Neoptolemus, and, suspecting further villainy, begins to hurry back. Neoptolemus reassures him, and at last overcomes his incredulity and indignation by restoring him his bow, just as Odysseus, suddenly reappearing, makes a vain attempt to prevent the restitution; but he is too

late this time, and, except for the prompt interference of Neoptolemus, would have paid the forfeit of his life to one of the fatal shafts of Philoctetes. (ll. 1263-1304.) His lucky escape fills the latter with vexation, and in this irritable state Neoptolemus makes a last effort to persuade him to come to Troy, where his wound shall be cured and his glory assured. But Philoctetes is obdurate ; he fears the future even more than he resents the past, and he claims the fulfilment of the promise Neoptolemus had given to take him home. Neoptolemus consents ; and it seems as if oracles and destiny are to be set at defiance, when the divine form of Heracles is seen hovering above them ; and from the god's lips they learn that it is indeed heaven's will that Philoctetes should go to Troy, there to find health and fame immortal. Thus is a reconciliation effected ; Philoctetes accepts his destiny ; and the play closes as all are preparing to start for the ship. (ll. 1305-1471.)

PHILOCTETES.

ODY. This is the shore of the sea-girt land of Lemnos, untrodden of mortals, uninhabited. Here, long ago, O Neoptolemus,—thou son of Achilles, sprung of noblest sire in Hellas,—I landed that Malian, the son of Pœas,—commissioned to this deed by those who were my chiefs,—his foot discharging from a gnawing sore ; seeing that we could neither engage in drink-offering or sacrifice undisturbed, but he, with his wild curses, would ever fill the whole camp, crying out and uttering moan. But why need I tell of this? Enough! 'tis no time for us to make long speeches, lest he even learn that I am come, and so I spoil the whole clever scheme, whereby I think to take him out of hand. Nay, 'tis thy task now to help in what remains, and to seek where hereabouts there is a rocky cave with two-fold mouth, so placed that there in winter's cold there is a seat at either door to catch the sun, while in summer-time a breeze wafts slumber through the rock-pierced cave. A little way below, upon the left, thou mayst chance to spy a drinking-fount, if haply it is still unchoked.

Prithee, make thy way in silence thither and give me a signal whether he still inhabits the same¹ spot or has his home elsewhere, that so thou mayest hear what I have still

¹ Reading *χωρον τὸν αὐτὸν τὸνδ' ἔτ, ἔτ'* a joint emendation of Blaydes and Elmsley for the MSS. *πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸνδ', ἦτ'.*

to say, while I explain it to thee, and the matter proceed from both of us in concert.

NEO. King Odysseus, the task thou namest lies close by ; for I see, methinks, a cave that answers thy description.

ODY. Above thee or below ? I see it not.

NEO. There it is, above me ; no sound of footsteps, no.

ODY. Take care he be not quartered there asleep.

NEO. I see an empty habitation, no man in it.

ODY. And no provision either for human habitation inside ?

NEO. Yes, a bed of leaves, pressed down, as for a man who lodgeth here.

ODY. Is all else desolate ? nought but this beneath the roof ?

NEO. There is a cup of mere rough wood, fashioned by some indifferent craftsman, and here with it the means for kindling fire.

ODY. 'Tis his ! this store thou art describing.

NEO. (*With a gesture of disgust.*) Ha ! here are rags likewise, drying in the sun, tainted by some grievous running sore.

ODY. Our man dwells here in this spot undoubtedly, and he is somewhere not far hence ; for how could a man go any way with that long-standing disease in his foot ?

No, either he has gone forth in quest of food, or to find some easeful leaf, which he mayhap hath somewhere noted. So send him, that is with thee, to keep an outlook, lest he even surprise me unawares ; for he would rather catch me than all the Argives.

NEO. Well, there he goes, and the path shall be guarded ; and now, if thou art anxious to tell me aught, say on.

ODY. Son of Achilles, thou must show thy noble spirit on this quest, not with body only, but, if thou hear aught new, of which thou hast not heard before, thou must assist in it ; for thou art here to help.

NEO. What can thy bidding be?

ODY. 'Tis thy duty to beguile the heart of Philoctetes with words, in talking to him. When he asks thee who thou art and whence thou camest, say, "I am Achilles' son;" there must be no deception here; but thou art sailing homeward, and hast left Achæa's naval host, filled with mighty hate of them, for that they made thee leave thy home by urgent prayers,—their only means of capturing Ilium,—and yet deigned not to give thee the arms of Achilles at thy coming, though thou didst claim them by right; but they handed them over to Odysseus. Of me say what thou wilt, the foulest of abuse; thou wilt not pain me thus at all. But if thou do not this, thou wilt fling the brand of sorrow into each Argive heart; for unless yon sufferer's bow be captured, thou canst never waste the land of Dardanus. And now attend; there is a reason why thy intercourse with him deserves his trust and keeps thee safe, while mine would not. *Thou* didst sail unfettered by oath to any, and without compulsion, not sharing in that first-sent armament; while *I* cannot say no to aught of this. Wherefore, should he mark me here, whilst still the bow is in his power, I am undone, and I shall be thy ruin too if found with thee. Nay, this is the very point our craft must compass, how thou art to steal those arms invincible.

Full well, my son, I know 'tis not thy nature to utter or contrive a sorry trick like this; yet, since the prize of victory is something sweet to win, constrain thyself; hereafter will we show the world our honesty; but now give up thyself to me for one brief day of roguery; and then, for all the days to come, be called the world's most upright son.

NEO. Son of Laertes, I abhor to carry out proposals I am pained to hear; mine is no nature to do anything by evil means; I am not such myself, nor was my sire, they say. Nay, I am ready to carry off our man by force, not by fraud; yea, for he will not master all our number by force,

with his one foot. Still, as I was sent to share thy task, I shrink from the name of traitor; but I would rather do the right, O king, and fail, than win the day by wrong.

ODY. Scion of a gallant sire, I too was once as young myself, and then I had a sluggard tongue, a ready hand; but now, when I step forth to test the world, I find it is the tongue, not deeds, that men let take the lead in everything.

NEO. Thou bid'st me tell a *lie*,—a lie, what else?

ODY. Take Philoctetes by guile is what I tell thee.

NEO. And why need we lead him hence by guile rather than by persuasion?

ODY. He will never hearken; nor couldst thou take him by force.

NEO. Has he then such strange reliance in his strength?

ODY. Arrows he hath that none may 'scape, messengers of death.

NEO. May no one even venture to approach him then?

ODY. None, save he catch him thus by guile, as I tell thee.

NEO. Pray dost thou deem it no disgrace to utter lies?

ODY. None, if but the falsehood carries safety.

NEO. Well, but how shall a man dare to look his fellow in the face and boldly say such things?

ODY. It is not well to shrink, when thou art doing aught for gain.

NEO. What gain to me is his coming to Troy?

ODY. That bow and that alone takes Troy.

NEO. Then 'tis not *I* who am to sack the town, as ye were used to say?

ODY. Not thou without that bow, nor yet the bow apart from thee.

NEO. Why then, if that is really so, the bow were worth the quest.

ODY. Know that by doing only this, thou gainest two rewards.

NEO. What are they? When I know that, I will not refuse the deed.

ODY. Thou wilt win the name of good and wise at once.

NEO. So be it: farewell to every sense of shame! I'll do the deed.

ODY. Well then, dost thou remember the advice I gave thee?

NEO. Rest well assured I do, when once I have agreed.

ODY. Abide then here thyself and wait for him, and I will go away that I be not seen with thee, and I will send our watcher back to the ship. Likewise, if ye seem to me to tarry at all beyond the time, I will send back to thee here this self-same man, craftily disguising him to represent the master of a ship, that ignorance of who he is may also aid our plan; and then, my son, when he tells a crafty tale, take what suits thy purpose ever and anon from what he says.

I will to the ship away, committing this to thee; and may Hermes, lord of guile, men's guide upon their way, be leader to us twain, and Victory, Athena Polias,¹ my never-failing saviour. (*Exit ODYSSEUS.*)

CHO. Pray tell me, master, what I needs must hide, what tell to him whose mind suspecteth all,—a stranger I in strangers' land; for his art exceeds all other art, his judgment is the best, who sways the godlike sceptre, gift of Zeus; and on thee, my son, hath this descended,—sovereign rule that dates from earliest days; wherefore tell me, prithee, what service I must render thee.

NEO. Maybe thou wouldst fain see the spot where he makes his lair upon the island's edge; take courage then, survey it now; but when he comes again, that dreaded pilgrim who hath gone forth from yonder cave, step forward,

¹ Πολιάς, "guardian of the city," strictly an epithet of Athena in her oldest temple on the Acropolis of Athens, though she had the same title in many other Greek towns. Of course it is an anachronism to make Odysseus, an epic hero, address her by this title.

as from time to time I beckon thee, and try to serve the present need.

CHO. This has been my earnest thought from earliest time, my lord, to keep a watchful eye on times and seasons that will suit thee best. But tell me now, what kind of lodging has he for his dwelling-place, and where is he at present? This knowledge were, I take it, not ill-timed, that he may not fall on me unawares from some dark spot. Where is he? what resting-place is his? his footsteps,—whither wend they? inside his den or forth from it?

NEO. This is his home thou seest, a rocky lair, with doors at either end.

CHO. Ah! and where is the wretched owner gone?

NEO. Doubtless not far hence he trails his weary way in quest of food; for 'tis said this is the way he lives, shooting wild creatures with his wingèd shafts in wretched sort, poor wretch,¹ and no man brings to him a healer of his agony.²

CHO. Indeed I pity him! Without one human hand to care for him, without a single comrade's face, in misery, alone for ever more, he suffers from his cruel disease, in blank dismay to meet each call of want as it confronts him. How, ah! how does he endure, poor sufferer? Ah, the wondrous way of God!³ Ah, the hapless tribes of man, all such whose life knows not the mean.⁴

This man, whom none, perhaps, of noblest line surpassed, lies here alone, apart from other folk, reft of all that life contains, herding with beasts dappled and shaggy, in pain and in hunger alike a piteous object, holden in anguish of

¹ *στυγερὸν στυγερώς*. So the MSS., altered by Brunck, needlessly perhaps, to *στυγερὸν στυγερώς*, "with toil and pain."

² *οὐδέ τιναὐτῷ . . . ἐπινομαῖν*. Others make this verb intransitive, "nor does any healer approach him," or reading *αὐτῷ*, "nor brings he to his own relief any healer."

³ *θεῶν*, so Lachmann for *θητηῶν*.

⁴ *i.e.*, always at the extremes of happiness or misery, which are alike dangerous.

heart incurable ; while Echo, babbling gossip of the hills,¹ from out some distant haunt, hears his bitter wails and answers them.²

NEO. There is naught in this to stir my wonder ; nay, if I may have my fancy too, those sufferings of his are even heaven-sent, and have come upon him from Chryse, the relentless nymph ; and needs must it be some god's contriving that he now suffers, as he does, far from all tending care, that so he might not aim 'gainst Troy those shafts divine, unconquerable, until the hour be fully come, wherein 'tis said that Troy must yield to them.

CHO. Hush, hush ! my son.

NEO. What is it ?

CHO. A sudden sound uprose, as it had come from one worn out with pain, the genius of his life ; methought 'twas there, or there. Again, again it stabs my ear, the voice indeed of one that crawls upon his path with toilsome tread ; it 'scapes me not, that distant note of grievous wasting³ pain ; ah, no ! it is too clear and loud.

Come, then, my son, direct thy thoughts——

NEO. Well ?

CHO. —To new schemes ; for our man is not far from his abode, but close at hand ; no music his of piping reed, as shepherds in the meadows use, but far in the distance he moaneth aloud for very anguish, as he stumbleth maybe or eyeth the haven that welcomes no barque ; with fearful cry he heralds his approach.

PHI. Strangers, what ho ! Who can ye be and from what

¹ Reading *ὄρεϊα δ'*, Mekler's correction of *βαρεῖα δ'* and *βαρεῖ· ἄ δ'*.

² *ὑπακούει* is perhaps now the most generally accepted of the numerous emendations of the MSS. *ὑποκείται*, which was taken in the sense either of "forms an undernote to," or "follows close upon."

³ *τρυσάνωρ*, literally "wearing out men," and so possibly "grievous to the hearers," though here probably to be taken passively, "the voice of one wasted with pain."

land have ye put in your ship at this drear, desert shore? What country or what race shall I be right in naming yours? The fashion of your dress is clearly that of Hellas, which I love the best, but I fain would hear you speak; shrink not away in terror from me, affrighted at my savage look, but in pity for a lonely sufferer, so desolate and friendless in his misery,¹ speak, if ye are really come as friends. Oh, answer me! This at least I should not fail to win from you, or you the same from me.

NEO. Enough, good sir; we are from Hellas; know that first, since that is what thou wouldest learn.

PHI. Most welcome speech! Oh, the joy of e'en being greeted once by one like thee after so long a while!

What quest, my son, hath brought thee to this port, or directed thy course hither? What made thee start? What wind, the kindest of them all? Oh, tell me clearly everything, that I may know who thou art.

NEO. By birth I am of sea-girt Scyros; homeward bound am I; my name is Neoptolemus, Achilles' son; there! thou hast it all.

PHI. Son of a sire most dear to me, child of a land I love, O fosterling of aged Lycomedes,² what mission has brought thee to land here? Whence art thou sailing?

NEO. Why then it is from Ilium I am sailing now.

PHI. How now? *Thou* wert not aboard with us, I know, at the beginning of the voyage to Ilium.

NEO. What! thou too hadst a part in that quest of toil?

PHI. My child, dost thou not really know the man thou now beholdest?

¹ Reading with Brunck *κακούμενον*. The MSS. *καλούμενον* has been rendered "appealing to you," (middle), or "called" (passive), both doubtful explanations.

² Neoptolemus was brought up by Lycomedes, his mother's father, at Scyros, which island is no great distance from the Malian or Trachinian coast, the home of Philoctetes.

NEO. Know thee, how should I? whom I ne'er have seen before,

PHI. So thou hast not ever heard even my name or one word of rumour about those sufferings of mine, whereby I was perishing meantime?

NEO. Believe me, I know nought of what thou art asking.

PHI. Ah me, most miserable am I, an offence in heaven's eyes, that no report of this my plight hath yet¹ reached my home or anywhere in Hellas! But those, who cast me out so impiously, still hold their peace and laugh, while my disease hath ever grown more virulent, and still is gaining strength.

My child, thou son of Achilles' begetting, in me thou beholdest the man of whom thou hast heard, I trow, as the lord of the weapons of Heracles,—yes, Philoctetes, the son of Pœas, whom those chieftains twain and the Cephallenians' king basely cast ashore, deserted, as thou seest, wasting away with a fierce disease, sore stricken by the savage bite the deadly snake imprinted; all alone with my disease, my son, those chieftains put me forth here and went their way, having touched here with their fleet of ships, after leaving the sea-girt isle of Chryse. And when, to their joy, they saw me fall asleep, after much tossing on the sea, laid in a rock-roofed cave upon the shore, they went away and left me, after they had put ashore a handful of rags, such as wretched wight might get, and of food too somewhat, a meagre store; be theirs a lot like this!

Canst picture to thyself, my son, my awakening from sleep that day, when they were gone? Think what bitter tears I shed, what wailing o'er my woes was mine,² when I saw the ships, with which I was voyaging, all gone, and not a man

¹ Reading $\pi\omega$, "yet," for $\pi\omicron\nu$, "I suppose," of the MSS., which comes in awkwardly at the end of the sentence.

² Another rendering possible but not equally pointed in this connexion is "what reproaches I shrieked aloud."

about,—not one to aid, not one to help a sufferer bear the burden of his sickness ; but as I scanned each spot, I found nought there but suffering only ; of that, my son, I found good store with ease. And so I saw the days advancing, as the years dragged on ; and all alone 'neath this cramped roof I had to do each menial office for myself. Yon bow would aye procure sufficient for my belly, shooting the feathered doves ; but whatever my shaft on the tightened string might shoot me, to this I would crawl myself, unhappy wretch, dragging my suffering foot so far ; likewise, if I needed a draught of water, or, haply, when the hoar-frost was spread abroad, as happeneth in the winter, if there was firewood to break, I would creep out, ah me ! and compass it ; next there would be no fire, but by long rubbing of two stones together I made the light appear at last, which lurks unseen therein ; and this is e'en what keeps me living on for truly a shelter for dwelling and a fire withal supply all wants, save freedom from disease in my case.

Come now, my son, thou next shalt learn the nature of the island. Hither draws no sailor nigh of his own free-will ; for there is no roadstead here, nor any port of call where he will drive a gainful trade or be a welcome guest ; such as are prudent amongst mortals make no voyages hither. Maybe a man hath put in here perforce ; for such things might often happen in the long course of human history ; well, these, when they arrive, my son, have words of pity for me, and maybe give me e'en a dole of food or somewhat to wear in compassion ; but that one thing, whene'er I mention it, will no man do,—conduct me safely to my home ; not they ; and this is now the tenth year that sees me wasting miserably away in hunger and wretchedness, food for my insatiate plague.

Such the treatment Atreus' sons and lordly Odysseus have meted out to me, my son ; such may the gods of Olympus one day make them suffer themselves in quittance for my fate !

CHO. I too, it seems, am pitying thee, O son of Pœas, even as did those who have come ere now to visit thee.¹

NEO. I am myself a living witness to these words, knowing they are true; my dealings with the sons of Atreus and lordly Odysseus have shown me their evil nature.

PHI. What, hast thou, like me, complaints to urge against that damnèd pair, the sons of Atreus,—good cause for rage at sufferings undergone?

NEO. Oh, that I might one day sate my wrath by deeds, that Mycenæ and Sparta might learn that Scyros too is a mother of valiant men!

PHI. Bravely said, my son! Say why thou art come, denouncing thy fury thus fiercely against them.

NEO. Son of Pœas, I will tell thee all,—and hard that tale will be,—the cruel despite I suffered at their hands on my arrival. 'Twas thus: when fate o'ertook Achilles, dooming him to die——

PHI. Ah me! No more, I pray, until I know this first; can he be dead,—the son of Peleus dead?

NEO. Aye, dead; slain not by man, but by a god; the victim of a shaft which Phœbus aimed;—so runs the tale.

PHI. Ah! noble the slayer and the slain no less. I am in doubt, my son, whether first to question thee about thy own woes or mourn for him.

NEO. Thine own troubles alone, poor sufferer, are enough for thee, I trow, without mourning for those of thy neighbours.

PHI. Thou art right; tell me, then, thy own story once again, how they insulted thee.

NEO. Godlike Odysseus and my own father's foster-sire came to fetch me in a gay-prowed ship, saying, either truly or it might be falsely after all, that, now my father was no more, none but I was destined to take the towers of Troy.

¹ The Chorus, aware of the sorry part they are playing as regards Philoctetes, purposely employ language capable of a double meaning.

This, good sir, was how they told the tale, causing me no long delay ere I started in haste on my voyage, first because I yearned towards my dead sire, to see him ere his burial, for I had never seen him yet; and then, no doubt, the tale they told had added its glamour, if by my going I should take Troy's coronal of towers. My voyage was entering on its second day, when I, with oar and breeze to help, was running into cruel Sigeum; and, straightway when I landed, all the host came thronging round to welcome me, swearing that they saw Achilles, who was dead, alive again. Nay, there he lay, a corpse; and I, his luckless son, when I had shed a tear for him, without delay went to the sons of Atreus,—to friends, as I had right to think, and claimed from them my father's arms and whatso else was his. But they answered—(Out upon their brazen words!): “Offspring of Achilles, all else that was thy sire's thou art free to take, but those famed arms of his,—another chieftain is lord of them now, even the son of Laertes.”

The tears sprang to my eyes as I leapt to my feet in a fury of passion; and, stung to the quick, “Thou wretch!” I cried. “What, have ye dared to give the arms, that are mine, to some other instead of me, ere ye had learnt my will?”

Then spake Odysseus,—for he stood near by chance,—“Yea, boy, they have done rightly in giving me these arms; for it was I who saved both them and yonder corpse by being there.” At once then, with a burst of fury, I flung at him a torrent of abuse, leaving nought I knew unsaid, if he should rob me of the arms that were my own. Then he, thus put to it, stung at what he heard, albeit slow to wrath, made answer thus: “Thou wert not there with us, but thou wert absent at no proper time;¹ and for these arms,—since thou hast e'en so pert a tongue,—be sure thou shalt ne'er sail away with them to thy Scyros.”

¹ *i.e.*, when Odysseus and Ajax together rescued the body of Achilles from the Trojans.

Now, having heard such taunts and been so rudely flouted, I am sailing home, robbed of that which is mine own by that arch-knave of knavish stock,¹ Odysseus. And yet I blame him not so much as those in power; for city and army alike are wholly of their leaders' making; and they, who are disorderly amongst the mass, are made bad men by what their teachers tell them.

There ends my tale; and whoso hates the sons of Atreus, may Heaven love him as much as I!

CHO. O Earth,² that givest food to all, queen of the mountains, mother of Zeus himself, whose is the mighty Pactolus rich with sands of gold, there as here, dread mother Earth, I called thee to my aid, what time the insults of the sons of Atreus were being rained upon this youth, when they were handing over his father's harness, surpassing miracle, to the son of Laertes; hearken, O goddess, who ridest on lions,³ the slayers of bulls.

PHI. Good sirs, it seems ye have sailed hither to me with clear credentials to commend you,⁴—this your grief; and ye touch an answering chord in me, so that I am sure this was the work of the Atreidæ and Odysseus. For I know well, his tongue would advocate any vile scheme or villainy, whereby he might perhaps achieve in the end something dishonest. No, that is no cause of wonderment to me, but this, that the greater Aias,⁵ if he was present, endured to see it.

¹ One legend made Odysseus the son of Sisyphus, his mother Anticleia being already pregnant when Laertes, his reputed father, married her.

² Cybele or Mother Earth, the Phrygian deity.

³ Cybele is often thus represented in works of art.

⁴ *σύμβολον*, "a sign by which one knows or infers something." In a more technical sense, the *σύμβολα* were the two pieces of a bone or a coin which two *ξενοί*, or any two contracting parties, broke between them and preserved—"tallies." Lat. "tesseræ hospitales." (L. & S.)

⁵ Aias, son of Telamon, thus distinguished from the son of Oileus.

NEO. He was no longer living, good sir; nay, had he been alive, I should never have been robbed of these arms.

PHI. How sayest thou? Is he, too, really dead and gone?

NEO. Aye, think of him no more as one who sees the light.

PHI. Ah me, alas! But the son of Tydeus, and he who was bought by Laertes of Sisyphus, *they* are not dead,—no fear of that, for they are the men who ought to die.

NEO. Not they, indeed; of *that* be sure; no, they are e'en flourishing mightily to-day in the Argive host.

PHI. Well, what of Nestor of Pylos, a good old man and one that was my friend, is not ¹ he alive? *He* would shield us from such men's villainy by his clever counsels.

NEO. Alive, yes; but in evil case now, for he has lost Antilochus, the son who was his stay.²

PHI. Alas! here again thou hast told of two,³ whose death I would least have wished to learn. Ah! then, to what must we look, now these are dead, while Odysseus here again is left, and that, too, when the news of his death instead of theirs should have been told?

NEO. A clever wrestler he; but even clever plans are oft-times balked, O Philoctetes.

PHI. Come, prithee, say, where was Patroclus to help thee at this crisis,—Patroclus, thy father's bosom friend?

NEO. He too was dead. In brief I will declare this truth to thee: 'tis not from choice that war takes any wicked man, no, but the good always.

PHI. I add my testimony to thine; and on that very head

¹ Reading *τί δ'*; *οὐ* with Burges and Meineke, followed by Jebb.

² Reading Musgrave's conjecture *ὄς παρήν γόιος*.

³ Jebb's conjecture, also made by Blaydes, *δύ' αὐ τώδ' ἀνδρ' ἔλεξας*, is followed in preference to the usually received *δύ' αὐτως δειν' ἔλεξας*, which is somewhat doubtfully rendered "in those few words thou hast told me a twofold calamity about . . ." or "sad news of two about whose . . ."

I will ask thee of the present state of one, who, though a worthless knave, was clever with his tongue and shrewd withal.

NEO. Whom canst thou mean by this, unless it be Odysseus?

PHI. It was not he I meant; but there was one Thersites, who would never choose to say his all at once, though none would have had him speak:¹ dost know him? is he yet alive?

NEO. I did not see him, but I heard that he was still alive.

PHI. No doubt he was; for no evil thing ever perished yet; no, the gods are very tender of such, and they seem to have a joy in turning back from Hades hardened sinners, but the good and upright—these they ever send from us. How am I to class these things? or how commend them, when, even as I praise the gods' designs, I find those gods unjust?

NEO. O offspring of Cætaean sire, for my part I will take good heed henceforth to see Ilium and the sons of Atreus from a distance; and where the worse prevaleth o'er the good, where virtue languishes, and the coward² is master, with such men will I never rest content; but rocky Scyros will henceforth suffice to make me glad it is my home. Now must I to my ship. Farewell to thee, thou son of Pœas—farewell and all good luck! and may heaven rid thee of thy sickness, e'en as thou wouldst thyself! But let us away; that, whenever the god allows us to sail, we may start that hour.

¹ *i.e.*, everyone was impatiently waiting for him to stop speaking when he *was* tolerated, and yet he never could be content with a single brief speech, but wanted to be heard again and again.

² *δαίμων* is Brunck's correction of MSS. *δαίμων*, which by itself can scarcely bear the meaning of "trickster" assigned to it by its supporters.

PHI. Are ye starting at once, my son?

NEO. Yea, the time invites that we should watch our chance to sail, not from a distance, but from close at hand.

PHI. Oh! by thy father, mother, and by aught thou holdest dear at home, with suppliant voice I pray thee, O my son, leave me not thus alone, here in my dreary home amid the woes thou seest and the many thou hast heard me tell! Make me a mere accessory. Full well I know a freight like this is far from being welcome; still bear with me; to the noble is baseness as hateful as virtue is of fair report. If thou leave this undone, my son, a foul disgrace awaits thee; but if thou perform it, a full meed of glory, if I live to reach the land of Cæta. Come, 'tis but the labour of a day, nay, not of one whole day; bring thyself to it; throw me in, where thou wilt; only take me; in hold, or prow, or stern, wherever I shall cause my mates the least offence. Say yes, my son; by Zeus himself, who is the suppliants' god, oh be persuaded! Upon my knees I do implore thee, weak though I am, and lame, poor wretch! Oh, leave me not deserted thus, out of the track of my fellows! But either carry me safely hence to thine own home, or to Chalcodon's resting-place, Eubœa;¹ thence shall I have no lengthy voyage to Cæta and the mountain-spurs² of Trachis, and to the fair river Spercheius; that so thou mayest show me to my father dear, though I have long since³ feared that he may have been taken from me; for oft would I send for him by those who came hither, despatching prayers of entreaty that he should send a ship himself and take me

¹ Chalcodon was the father of Elephenor, who is mentioned in the "Iliad" as the leader of the Eubœans at Troy.

² Jebb's conjecture, *δειράδ' ἡδ' ἐς* for MSS. *δειράδα καὶ τὸν*, gets rid of some very harsh versification, unparalleled in Sophocles.

³ Reading *παλαιῶν*, a simple emendation of Triclinius for the *παλαι'* *ἄν* of several MSS., which those, who read it, usually couple with *βεβήκηγ*, "may be long since gone."

safe back home. But either he is dead, or my messengers, I trow, as was but likely, made light of my business, whilst hastening their homeward voyage. But now, since I have chanced on thee, at once my convoy and my messenger, be thou my saviour,—thou the one to pity me; seeing how all is fraught with fear, and mortal men are ever in danger, e'en though they have been fortunate, of meeting a reverse. Wherefore he, who is out of trouble's range, should have an eye to dangers, and when a man's lives happily, that is the very time for him to watch his life most closely, for fear that ruin o'ertake it, ere he know.

CHO. Pity him, my prince; he has told the story of a hard struggle with many a desperate trouble; may none of those I love e'er meet the like! And if, my prince, thou hatest the cruel Atreidæ, were I in thy place I would turn the evil they have done thee to this man's profit, and carry him aboard thy trim swift barque to his home, where he craves to be, thereby avoiding Heaven's resentment.

NEO. Beware lest thou, though now and here, so very ready to assent, be found no more consistent with these words, in the day that thou art sick of his complaint from having it so near.

CHO. Never! this reproach shalt thou never have just cause to cast at me.

NEO. Well, but it were shame that I should be found to fail a stranger, any more than thou, in efforts to meet his case. So, if thou art minded, let us forth on our voyage, and let him start at once; the ship, I trow, will carry him as well as us, and none shall say him nay. May the gods but give us a safe voyage from this shore and bring us hence to the haven we would reach!

PHI. Most welcome day! O best of friends! kind mariners! would I could prove to you by deeds how grateful ye have made me! Let us hence, my son, after one farewell visit to yon homeless dwelling in the rock,

that thou mayst even learn on what I kept myself alive and how brave was the heart within me; for methinks that none but I would have endured what I have, after one single glance thereat; but I have slowly learnt by hard necessity to bear with ill.

CHO. Hold! let us learn what comes; two men approach, the one a seaman from thy ship, the other a stranger; hear what they have to say, and afterwards go in.

MER.¹ Son of Achilles, I bade this man, my comrade on the way, who with two others was in charge of thy ship, tell me of thy whereabouts; since I have crossed thy path, not indeed by design, but by the mere accident of having anchored off the same shore. Sailing as a merchant with a small crew homeward from Ilium, to Peparethus rich in vines, on hearing that the sailors were all thy shipmates,² I thought it good not to continue my voyage in silence, before I had had speech of thee, and obtained due recompense.³ Thou knowest nought, it seems, of what concerns thee, of those new schemes the Argives have concerning thee,—not merely schemes, but deeds already doing, no longer left untried.

NEO. Thy kind forethought, friend, will merit my lasting gratitude, unless mine is a sorry nature; but pray explain exactly what thou saidst, that I may learn what unexpected scheme of Argive minds thou hast for my hearing.

MER. Aged Phœnix and the sons of Theseus have gone forth with a fleet in pursuit of thee.

¹ The merchant is apparently trading in wine with the army at Troy, and so his intimate knowledge of recent events there need excite no surprise.

² *συννεναυστοληκότες*, Dobree's conjecture, which is now generally accepted.

³ Others connect *προστυχόντι* with *σοι*, "after thou hadst had due notice," or, with Nauck, understand by it "since I have met with the same chance," *i. e.*, "since accident has brought us to the same port."

NEO. Meaning to bring me back by force or persuasion?

MER. I know not; I am here to tell thee what I heard.

NEO. What, are Phoenix and his fellow-voyagers so eager to pleasure the Atreidæ?

MER. Be well assured, this is doing, no longer waiting to be done.

NEO. How comes it, then, that Odysseus was not ready to sail for this purpose, and be his own messenger? Was it some fear that kept him back?

MER. Why, he and the son of Tydeus were starting to fetch another, when I was putting out to sea myself.

NEO. And who was this, that Odysseus himself was sailing to fetch?

MER. Know, then, there was a man——But first tell me who that is; and whatever thou sayest, speak low.

NEO. There thou hast the far-famed Philoctetes, friend.

MER. Enough! ask me no more, but take thyself hence with what thou mayest from this land.

PHI. What saith he, my son? pray, what is the secret bargain this seaman is urging on thee respecting me?

NEO. As yet I know not what he saith; but he must tell his tale, whate'er it be, openly to thee and me and these.

MER. Seed of Achilles, accuse me not to the host as saying what I should not; many are the benefits I receive from them in return for service done, as a poor man may.

NEO. I bear the sons of Atreus no goodwill; and this man is my best of friends, because he hateth them. Wherefore, if thou hast come as my friend, thou must not hide a word of what thou hast heard respecting us.

MER. Beware what thou doest, my son.

NEO. I thought of that myself long ago.

MER. I shall let thee bear the blame in this matter.

NEO. Well, do so, but speak.

MER. I will. It is to fetch this man that that pair, whose names thou hast heard,—the son of Tydeus and lordly

Odysseus,—are sailing, having taken a mighty oath to bring him back either by words of persuasion or by exercise of force. This all the Achæans heard Odysseus say distinctly ; for he felt more confident of succeeding than his fellow.

NEO. But why, after this long while, were the sons of Atreus troubling themselves so exceedingly about this man, seeing that they have cast him forth these many years? What strange longing came to them, or what constraint and vengeance from those gods, who requite ill deeds?

MER. Myself will tell thee that in full ; for maybe thou hast not heard it. There was a certain prophet, nobly born, a son of Priam, Helenus by name ; him this fellow captured, going forth alone by night,—crafty Odysseus, who is called by every shameful and insulting name ; and, bringing him in a prisoner, he displayed him in the sight of the Achæans, a fine prize. He it was who, after foretelling everything to his cantors, added this as well : “ Ye shall never sack the towers that look o’er Troy, unless ye first persuade yon man by argument and bring him with you from that isle, whereon he dwells to-day.”

And the son of Laertes, as soon as he had heard the seer’s words, forthwith engaged to bring this man and show him to the Achæans ; “ probably, I think,” said he, “ taking him of his own freewill ; if not,—why, then, against it ;” and, should he fail in this, who would might take his head with his full leave.

I have told thee all, my son ; “ make haste ” is the warning I give, no less to thee thyself than to any thou carest for.

PHI. Ah, woe is me ! Hath he, that utter bane, sworn to beguile and bring me to the Achæans ? No ! were that to be, persuasion ¹ will e’en bring me up from Hades to the light when dead, like that man’s father.²

¹ *i.e.*, I am as likely to be persuaded to return to Troy as I am to be called out of my tomb ; both are equally impossible.

² Sisyphus, before his death, instructed his wife to leave him un-

MER. As for that, 'tis not for me to say ; but I must to my ship, and may Heaven help you both with its best aid !

[*Exit* MERCHANT.]

PHI. Strange, boy, is it not, for the son of Laertes to have hoped that his soft words would ever be the means of taking me hence and bringing me forth from his ship to show amongst the Argives? No ! sooner would I hearken to my most deadliest of foes, the snake which crippled me thus. But that man can say anything, dare anything ; he will be here e'en now, I know. Let us away, my son, that there may be a broad stretch of sea parting us from the ship of Odysseus. Forward ! timely haste brings sleep and rest, when toil is over.

NEO. Well, then, we will put out as soon as ever the head-wind drops, for now it is dead against us.

PHI. 'Tis ever fair sailing, when one is fleeing from evil.

NEO. Nay, but this is equally against them.

PHI. Pirates find no wind against them, when it is possible to steal or plunder by force.

NEO. Well, if it seems good to thee, let us be going, after thou hast taken from thy cave aught that thou specially needest or desirest.

PHI. There *are* some things I want, though small the stock from which to draw.

NEO. What is there that is not aboard my ship?

PHI. There is a certain leaf I have by me, with which from time to time I best can still this festering sore, even to soothing it entirely.

NEO. Well, bring it out. What else art thou anxious to take ?

PHI. Any of these arrows that may have fallen from my

buried, which she did ; Sisyphus, on reaching the other world, obtained permission to return to earth and rebuke her impiety. By this ruse he secured a second term of life.

quiver without being noticed, that I may not leave them for any chance-comer to find.

NEO. Is this really the famous bow thou art now holding?

PHI. This is the bow, no other; yea, this that I am carrying.

NEO. Might I take a view of it quite close, and hold it in my hands, and pay my homage as to a god?

PHI. Yes, *thou*, my son, shalt win this boon and any other I can give, that may profit thee.

NEO. Indeed, I do desire it, but my desire is even thus: if I may lawfully do so, fain I would; if not, why, let it pass.

PHI. A reverent speech, my son; thou mayest have thy wish, seeing that thou, and thou alone, hast given me the power of gazing on yon sun-god's light, of seeing the Cætaean land, my aged father, and my friends, and hast raised me up from beneath my enemies' feet beyond their reach. Fear not; thou shalt have the bow to handle withal and then restore to the giver, and thine shall the proud boast be, that, for thy goodness, thou alone of mortal men hast touched it; for it was e'en by a kind service that I obtained it myself.¹

NEO. Right glad am I to have seen thee and found thee a friend; yea, for whoso knoweth how to repay kindness with kindness will prove a friend beyond all other getting. Prithee, go within.

PHI. Yea, and I will lead thee in; for my complaint yearns to have thee at my side to help. (*PHILOCTETES enters the cave, supported by NEOPTOLEMUS.*)

CHO. True, I have heard it told, though certainly I have not seen, how the almighty son of Cronos chained on the rim of a circling wheel him,² who, in days gone by, approached

¹ *i.e.*, by consenting to kindle the funeral-pyre of Heracles on Mt. Cæta.

² Ixion, who, having been purified of the blood of his father-in-law

the couch of Zeus ; but I know not, by hearsay or sight, of any mortal man, that hath met with a fate more cruel than this man's, who, though he hath not wronged or robbed any, but was fair in dealing with his fellows,¹ has been wasting away thus undeservedly. Truly I marvel at this, however he in his solitude, with the sound of the billows breaking round him, held fast, as it seems he has, to a life so pitiable ; where he had no neighbour but himself,² without the power of walking, and not a dweller in the land to sit beside the sufferer ;³ none in whose ear he could moan his fill and hear an answering echo, as he wailed the gnawing anguish of his bleeding sore ;⁴ none to staunch with soothing herbs that fiery flow of blood oozing from angry ulcers in his foot, whenever it came on,⁵ gathering⁶ thereof from the fruitful earth. But he would crawl, now here, now there, dragging himself along, like a babe without a kind nurse near, to any spot that would supply his wants, whene'er the pain, that gnawed his heart, relaxed awhile ; gathering as his food no produce of the holy earth, nor aught whereon we feed ourselves,—we men who earn our bread,⁷—

by Zeus, when all mortals shrank from him, showed his ingratitude by tempting Hera's honour.

¹ Reading

οὐτ' ἔρξας τιν', οὐ τι νοσφίσας
ἀλλ' ἴσος ὦν ἴσοις ἀνὴρ.

So Jebb, from the emendations of Schneidewin, F. Schultz, and Lachmann.

² *πρόσουρος*, so MSS. Bothe reads *πρόσουρον* to go with *βάσιν*, but no change is necessary.

³ Another rendering, given by the Scholiast, makes *κακογείτονα* also an epithet of *στόνον* in the sense of "his evil neighbour."

⁴ Following Jebb's text, *παρ' ᾧ στόνον ἀντίτυπον βαρυβρῶτ' ἀποκλαύσειεν αἱματηρόν*.

⁵ Reading *εἴ τις ἐμπέσοι*, the MSS. reading restored by Schneidewin.

⁶ *ἐκ γαίας ἐλών*, the reading adopted by Schneidewin and Nauck after Reiske, is here followed.

⁷ *ἀλφησταί*. This much-disputed word is variously interpreted as

unless perchance he could get him a meal by the winged arrows¹ of his lightning bow. Alas! a piteous life was his, never once in ten long years to have cheered himself with draughts of wine, but ever he would wend his way to stagnant pool, where'er his eye had noted it.

But now shall he win him happiness and renown after those his woes, since he hath met with the son of a noble house, who, in the fulness of many months, is carrying him aboard his ship across the sea to the home of his fathers, the haunt of Malian nymphs, to the banks of the Spercheius, where the hero of the shield of bronze² approached the gods in a blaze of heaven-sent fire, of his father's kindling,³ above the hills of Ceta.

NEO. Forward, if thou wilt. Why thus so silent without reason? why dost thou stop as though paralyzed?

PHI. Ah me! ah me!

NEO. What ails thee?

PHI. 'Tis nothing to fear.—Lead on, my son.

NEO. Art thou in pain from the disease, that is ever with thee?

PHI. No, not I; methinks the pain is now assuaging. O ye gods!

NEO. Why callest thou the gods with such loud groans?

PHI. To appear with healing and to soothe my pain. Ah me! ah me!

NEO. Why, what is wrong with thee? Speak out; nay, be not dumb like this; 'tis clear thou art in some distress.

PHI. I am lost, my son; I shall not e'en be able to hide my anguish in thy presence; ah me! through and through it
(α) "gain-getting," from ἀλφαίνω; (β) "bread-eating," ἄλφιτον, and root ἐδ, "eat."

¹ Reading *ἰοῖς*, Brunck's correction of *πτανῶν*, where *πτανοῖς* was understood as "with birds."

² Heracles, the glories of whose shield are described in the poem Ἄσπις Ἡρακλείου, ascribed to Hesiod.

³ *πατρὸς*, so Jebb for *πᾶσι*.

stabs. Unhappy sufferer that I am! I am undone, my son; gnawed by the tooth of pain. (PHILOCTETES *bursts out into loud cries of agony.*) Oh! oh!

In Heaven's name, my son, if thou hast a sword ready to thy hand, strike at my heel; with one sweep, off with it at once; spare not my life. Come, come, my son!

NEO. Why, what fresh woe hath come so suddenly, causing thee to bewail and mourn thyself so loudly?

PHI. Thou knowest, my son.

NEO. Why, what is it?

PHI. Thou knowest, boy.

NEO. What ails thee? I know not.

PHI. Oh, thou dost. (*Another paroxysm causes him to cry out again.*) Oh! oh!

NEO. Fearful is the burden of thy sickness.

PHI. Aye, fearful truly, past all telling. Oh, pity me!

NEO. Pray, what am I to do?

PHI. Desert me not through fear; for this torment cometh but at intervals,¹ when tired maybe of wandering.

NEO. Alas! alas, unhappy wretch! unhappy indeed in all suffering, as thou art seen to be. Wouldst have me, then, take hold of thee or touch thee at all?

PHI. Nay, do not so; but, prithee, take this bow, as thou didst just now ask me, and, until this present spasm of my disease is over, keep and guard it safe. For, whene'er this torment is departing, sleep steals over me; and it cannot end ere that; but ye must suffer me to sleep in peace. And if meantime those others² come, I charge thee by the gods, give not up this bow to them willingly or unwillingly, nor by any trickery, lest thou prove the slayer of thyself, no less than of me, thy suppliant.

¹ Others understand "once it is sated, it only comes back at long intervals, in wandering wise maybe," or, "it has come back after an interval, satisfied, I suppose, with roaming."

² Odysseus and Diomedes; cf. *supra*, ll. 570-1.

NEO. Trust me for watchfulness. It shall not be given to any save to me and thee; so, with God's blessing, give it me.

PHI. (*handing him the bow.*) There, take it, boy; and humbly pray the jealousy of Heaven that it be not fraught with woe for thee, e'en as it has proved to me and to him who owned it before me.

NEO. Pray God this be the lot of both of us!¹ Be ours a fair and easy voyage, whithersoever Heaven thinks fit and our course holds!

PHI. Ah, but I fear,² my son, thy prayer is all in vain; for see yon crimson tide oozing once more in bloody drops from its deep fount in me; and I look for some horror yet unseen. Oh, the pain! the agony! Oh! my foot, what anguish thou wilt cause me! On it creeps; nearer still, behold it comes. Ah, woe is me! Ye know it all now; oh, fly not from me! (*He screams with pain.*)

Ah, my Cephallenian friend, would that this agony might pierce thy breast and fasten upon thee! Oh! oh! the pain, the pain! Ah, ye two chieftains, Agamemnon, Menelaus, would that ye might take my place, and feed, as long as I have, this malady! Ah me! ah me!

O Death, Death, why canst thou never come, though ever called from day to day, as now? O my son, my noble boy, pray catch me up and burn me in yonder blaze, the far-famed fire of Lemnos,³ yes! there, my gallant son; even so I too once deemed it right to act for the son of Zeus, in return for these very arms, which are now in thy safe keep-

¹ The words of Neoptolemus are purposely ambiguous, his prayer having a very different meaning for himself and Philoctetes respectively.

² The MSS. ἀλλὰ δέδοικ' ὦ παῖ, μή, μ' ἀτελής εὐχή, is untranslatable, but the sense is clear. Jebb emends thus, ἀλλ ὄκνος, ὦ παῖ, μή ἀτέλεστ' εὐχῆ μ' ἔχει.

³ The volcano on Mt. Mosychlus in Lemnos, which may have existed when Sophocles wrote, but can no longer be identified.

ing. What sayest thou, my son? Ah, what? Why so dumb? Where art thou now,¹ my son?

NEO. Mourning and grieving this long time past for the evils that oppress thee.

PHI. Come then, my son, take heart as well; for sharply this sickness comes and quickly goes. But leave me not alone, I beseech thee.

NEO. Be of good cheer, we will remain.

PHI. Remain, wilt thou?

NEO. Rest assured.

PHI. Ah well! I do not claim to bind thee by an oath, my son.

NEO. Know, then, that I am forbidden to go without thee.

PHI. Give me thy hand as a guarantee.

NEO. There, as a pledge to stay.

PHI. (*relapsing into half-consciousness.*) Now take me yonder, yonder.

NEO. Whither dost thou mean?

PHI. Up there

NEO. Why this new madness? Why art thou gazing up at heaven's vault?

PHI. Let me, let me go.

NEO. Let thee go, whither?

PHI. Let me go, I say.

NEO. Nay, I will not.

PHI. Thou wilt kill me with thy touch.

NEO. Well then, I leave go, if indeed thou knowest better than I.

PHI. (*throwing himself on the ground.*) O Earth, receive me as I am, a dying man; for this agony no longer suffers me to stand upright.

¹ Philoctetes, being half-unconscious from pain, may well be unaware whether Neoptolemus is still at his side; he has good reason to fear he may be deserted, as in previous cases. Others understand, "where are thy thoughts?"

NEO. A little while, and sleep, methinks, will possess him ; there ! his head is sinking back ; and see, the beads of sweat are breaking out all over his body, and a thin dark jet of blood hath burst from his heel. Come, friends, let us leave him in quiet, that he may fall asleep.

CHO. Sleep, that knowest neither pain nor anguish, come, we pray thee, softly breathing ; happy be thine advent, prince ; and keep before his eyes the light that is spread there now.¹ Come, oh ! come, thou healing god !

My son, consider, pray, where thou wilt stand, and what shall be thy next move.² He sleeps,³ thou seest. Why should we wait to act ? Opportunity, having understanding of all things,⁴ oft in a moment gains the mastery.

NEO. He heareth not, 'tis true ; but yet I see, that, if we sail without him, it is in vain we make this bow our prize. His is the victor's crown ; him the god said, "Bring." And to boast of deeds not done, and lie to boot, is foul reproach.

CHO. The god will see to this, my son. But in all thy answers to me, softly, softly speed thy accents, O my son ; for sick men's wakeful sleep is ever quick to see. But as far as ever thou canst, see well to it, I pray thee, how thou wilt accomplish that,⁵ unseen by him. For if thou keep towards him thy present purpose,—thou knowest the purpose

¹ Considerable difficulty has been experienced with these lines from a failure to regard the language of the poet in a poetical spirit. Professor Jebb, with his usual felicity of expression, says that by *τάνδε αἴγλαν* is to be understood the *ὄναρ*, not the *ὑπαρ*, of light,—the dreamlight which lightens the visions of sleep.

² The MSS. here exhibit some confusion. Jebb reads with Wecklein (only inserting *μοι*), *ποῦ δὲ μοι τάνθενδε βάσει φροντίδος*.

³ Following the conjecture of Herwerden and Wecklein, *ὄρᾳς, εὔδει*. If *ἦδη* be preserved,—and it seems very abrupt and not very pointed,—it apparently means "thou seest how things are now."

⁴ *γνώμαν ἴσχων*. Other interpretations are, (α) "holding the decision of all things," (β) "combined with judgment" (*πάντων* to be joined with *κράτος*).

⁵ *i.e.*, the carrying off of the bow while Philoctetes is asleep.

I mean,¹—verily the wise can see therein troubles exceeding difficult.²

'Tis a fair, fair wind we have, my son : there lies our man, without the power to see or help himself, wrapped in gloom ; secure³ his sleep, and sound ; he is not master of his hands or feet,—of nought, indeed,—but is even as one who lies near Death.

Look to it ; see whether thy words are in season. As far as thought of mine can grasp a point, my son, the labour, void of fear, is best.⁴

NEO. Silence ! I command you ; keep your wits about you ; for he is opening his eyes and raising his head.

PHI. Ah, light that takes the place of sleep ! Ah, friends, that have here watched over me, beyond the dreams of hope ! For never, my son, could I have boldly made this boast, that thou wouldst thus have brought thyself to wait upon my sufferings out of pity, staying by me and lending me thy help. Not thus did the sons of Atreus endure this trial with patience,—those gallant chiefs ! But thine is a noble nature, my son, and thou comest of noble stock ; that is the reason thou hast made light of all this, though sickened by my cries and stench.

And now since, as it seems, I may at last forget awhile

¹ *ἄν ἀνδῶμαι*—*ἄν* is Hermann's correction of *ὦν* or *ὄν* of the MSS. Retaining *ὦν*, some render "thou knowest whose servant I am," an apologetic remark of the Chorus for dissenting, while *ὄν ἀνδῶμαι* would mean "thou knowest whom I speak of."

² *Or*, "one may see therein troubles hard even for the wise to cope with."

³ Reading *ἀδειῆς* with Dobree and Wecklein. Those who retain the very doubtful word *ἀλειῆς* of the MSS., explain "sleep in the sun is sound," a somewhat meaningless exclamation. Possibly the words are a mere gloss.

⁴ Like much of what the Chorus say, these words seem intentionally vague, being capable of two meanings : (*α*) the best course is that which, involving no risk, need cause no fear to those engaged ; (*β*) that is best which causes Philoctetes no alarm, *i. e.*, craft rather than violence.

this pain, and have some respite from it, lift me, my son, thyself; help me to stand, that, as soon as ever the weariness releases me, we may start for the ship and delay not our sailing.

NEO. Indeed I am rejoiced to see thee free from pain beyond all hope, still breathing the breath of life; for, to judge by thy sufferings just now,¹ thy symptoms seemed to argue death. Now raise thyself (*offering him a hand*); or, if thou wouldst rather, these shall carry thee; for none will shrink from the trouble, since thou and I alike are so minded.

PHI. For this I thank thee, boy; yes, help me rise, as thou art minded; but let these stand excused, that they be not vexed with the evil smell, before it is necessary; for they will have enough to put up with on board in having my company.

NEO. So shall it be; but rise, and with thy hand take mine.

PHI. Be assured; habit, second nature now, will help me to rise.

NEO. Ah me! and I—what *am* I to do next?

PHI. What is it, my son? thy words wander,—oh, whither?

NEO. I know not into what channel I am to turn my difficult story.

PHI. What is thy difficulty? Speak not thus, my son.

NEO. Ah, but I find myself at that pass now.

PHI. Has the annoyance of my malady indeed induced thee to refuse me a passage on thy ship any longer?

NEO. Everything is cause of annoyance, when a man forsakes his own true nature and doth unseemly deeds.

PHI. Nay, but thou, at least, in helping a worthy man, art not leaving thy father's path either by word or deed.

¹ *i.e.*, anyone, after seeing the frightful intensity of thy sufferings and the torpor succeeding, might have feared that thou wouldst not rally from thy sleep, but pass away from exhaustion without waking.

NEO. I shall be proved a villain ; this it is that has long been tormenting me.

PHI. Not in deed at any rate ; in words,—I have my fears.

NEO. O Zeus, what can I do ? Am I to be proved a villain a second time, first by wrongful secrecy and then by most disgraceful speech ?

PHI. This man, unless I am a false prophet, seems likely to betray and leave me behind, and sail away.

NEO. Leave thee behind ? no, not that ; but I fear I am conveying thee on a still more bitter quest ; that is what has long been troubling me.

PHI. What *dost* thou mean, my son ? I do not understand.

NEO. I will hide nought from thee. Thou must sail to Troy to join the Achæans and the host led by the sons of Atreus.

PHI. Ah me ! what hast thou said ?

NEO. Spare thy lamentations, till thou understand.

PHI. What have I to understand ? What canst thou mean to do to me ?

NEO. First, to save thee from this suffering, and then to go and waste the plains of Troy with thee.

PHI. So this is thy real intention ?

NEO. There is a stern necessity that constrains it ; be not thou then wroth at hearing it.

PHI. Ah, woe is me ! lost ! betrayed ! What hast thou done to me, thou stranger ? Give back my bow at once.

NEO. Impossible ; fairness and advantage alike compel me to hearken to those in power.

PHI. O thou fire, thou fiend of utter terror, most hateful masterpiece of awful villainy, how hast thou dealt with me, how deceived me ! Art thou not even ashamed to face me, thy humble suppliant, hardened wretch ? Thou hast taken my bow ; thou hast robbed me of my means of life. Give it back, I implore thee ; give it back, my son, I do

beseech. By the gods thy fathers worshipped, rob me not of life.

Ah, woe is me ! He speaks to me no more ; no ! not a word ; see, how he turns his face away, as if he never would give it up !

O harbours and headlands, ye beasts of the hills my fellows, and ye jagged cliffs, to you, my wonted company,—for I know none else I can address,—to you I make my loud lament of what Achilles' son hath done to me. He swore to take me home : to Troy he carries me. He gave me his right hand upon it to boot ; and he hath taken my bow,—the sacred bow of Heracles, the son of Zeus,—and is keeping it, meaning to show it to the Argives as his prize. By violence he takes me hence, as if he had captured a man of might ; he cannot see it is a dead man, phantom smoke, a wraith, and nothing more, that he is slaying ; yea, for in my strength had he never taken me, since even in this sorry plight he would not have succeeded save by guile. But now, poor wretch, I am his dupe. What must I do ?

Oh, give it back ! oh, be thyself, e'en now, again !

What sayest thou ? Thou art silent. Woe is me ! I am no more.

Ah, my old rocky home with double entrance, once more shall I return to thee, stripped of all,—my means of living gone. Yes, there alone in yonder cave shall I wither away, slaying no winged bird or mountain-ranging beast with yonder bow ; nay, I shall be slain myself, poor wretch, and make a feast for those that were my food ; and those, whom I once hunted, will now hunt me. Ah me ! blood for blood, I shall pay them quittance now, thanks to one, who, as I thought, was ignorant of guile.

Perdition seize thee—no ! not till I learn if thou wilt change thy mind ; if not, die and curse thee !

CHO. What are we to do ? Henceforth it rests with thee, master, whether we sail or comply with this man's words.

NEO. Long, long ago, not now for the first time, a feeling of wondrous pity for him came over me.

PHI. In God's name have pity, boy, and suffer not men to upbraid thee as my deceiver.

NEO. Alas! what must I do? Would I ne'er had left my Scyros! so grieved I am by these events.

PHI. No villain thou, but as one that hath come with a shameful lesson pat from villains' teaching.

Resign the part, e'en now, to others whom it suits, and sail away, after giving me up my arms.

NEO. What are we to do, my men?

ODY. (*springing on them from a place of concealment.*) O thou craven, how now? Back at once, and give that bow to me!

PHI. Alack! who is this? is it Odysseus I hear?

ODY. Odysseus, be sure of it—myself whom thou seest.

PHI. Ah me! I am bought and sold, lost utterly! So it *was* this man, who caught me and reft me of my arms.

ODY. Yes, I; be sure of it, and no other; I confess it.

PHI. (*turning to NEOPTOLEMUS.*) Give up my bow; restore it, boy.

ODY. That he never shall, no! not if he fain would; nay, thou must thyself come with it; else will they bring thee by force.

PHI. Thou chiefest of villains, in daring unmatched, shall these men hale me hence,—*me?*

ODY. Yes, if thou refuse to walk thyself.

PHI. O land of Lemnos and yon tremendous blaze of fire, lit by Hephæstus, is this really to be borne, that this fellow should hale me hence from thy own precincts?

ODY. It is Zeus, let me tell thee, Zeus, that is lord of this land; Zeus, whose will this is; his servant am I.

PHI. Abhorred wretch, the lies thou dost thyself invent! Thou puttest gods forward as pretexts, and so makest those gods liars.

ODY. Not so, but true. We must start.

PHI. No, I say.

ODY. But yes, say I. Thou must obey in this.

PHI. Ah, woe is me! It seems quite clear my father begat me to be a slave, not a free man.

ODY. Not so, but to rank with our best, with whom thou art to take Troy and raze it utterly.

PHI. That I never shall,—no! not if I must suffer every evil,—while I have this steep place to stand on.

ODY. What is thy purpose?

PHI. I will throw myself at once down from the rock and dash my head to pieces by my fall.

ODY. Aye, seize him; ¹ let not that be in his power.

PHI. O hands, what treatment ye endure, for want of your own good bowstring, made prisoners by this fellow! O thou, who never hast a single honest, generous impulse, how craftily thou hast come upon me once again, ² how thou hast hunted me down, taking this youth, whom I knew not, to screen thyself behind,—too good for thee, but a right good friend for me,—whose only thought was obedience to thy hests, but who already shows how bitterly he feels his own deep errors and my sufferings. But that bad soul of thine, whose eye is ever peeping through some hidden chink, trained him well and step by step to subtlety in evil, albeit he was no adept and no willing pupil. And now, thou wretch, thy purpose is to bind me fast and take me from this strand, whereon thou hadst me cast forth, friendless, lone, and outlawed, a corpse among the living. Ah me!

¹ Reading *ξυλλάβετέ γ' αὐτόν*, we must assume that the attendants are on the point of seizing Philoctetes before Odysseus actually orders them to do so.

Other possible corrections are: (α) *ξυλλάβετον αὐτόν*, the dual implying that an attendant is to seize him on each side; (β) *ξυλλάβετε ναῦται*.

² Reading *δι' αὐ μ'*, Hermann's correction. Odysseus had previously caused Philoctetes to be left on Lemnos.

Curse thee ! That, indeed, have I oft prayed might be thy lot ; but Heaven has nothing sweet to give me, and so thou art alive and happy ; while to me this very life is woe, because I share it with a host of troubles. Woe is me ! a laughing-stock to thee and those two chiefs, the sons of Atreus, whom thou servest herein. And yet thou didst only sail with them, when tricked and forced to bear their yoke ;¹ while I, the man of sorrows, though I joined the fleet with seven ships of my own and willingly, found myself cast forth with contumely by *them*, as *thou* assertest, though *they* say by *thee*.

And now, why take me hence ? why carry me away with you ? wherefore ? seeing I am nought, and dead, these many years, for all ye cared. Ah, thou villain, god-detested, how comes it I am no longer lame and noisome in thy eyes ? How can² ye offer blazing sacrifice to the gods, if I sail with you ? how pour libations any more ? Remember, that was the pretext thou hadst for casting me out.

Curse you bitterly ! and cursèd shall ye be, after the wrong ye have done me,—if Heaven recks of justice ; and well I know it must ; for ye would ne'er have sailed, as ye have done, to fetch this luckless wight, had not some god been goading you to think of me.

O land of my fathers, and ye gods, whose eye is over all, vengeance, vengeance on them all at last, though slow it come, if indeed ye pity me at all ! For piteous though this

¹ According to a legend, which however is not recorded in Homer, Odysseus feigned madness in order to escape going to Troy. Palamedes, who was sent to fetch him from Ithaca, outwitted him and proved his sanity. The story is told at some length by Ovid, *Metam.* xiii. *ad init.*, where the outwitted chieftain is further accused of having had Palamedes put to death on a false charge in revenge.

² Reading πῶς θεοῖς ἔξεσθ', ὁμοῦ for the εὐξεσθ', ἰμοῦ of the MSS., ἔξεσθ' being given as a correction in one MSS

Others prefer ἔξεστ', ἰμοῦ. If εὐξεσθ' be retained, it must be rendered either "vow" or "vaunt."

life of mine, yet, could I once see these men destroyed, I could deem myself rid of my sickness.

CHO. Stern the stranger, O Odysseus, and stern this speech of his; not submissive to suffering.

ODY. There is much I could say in answer to his words, did time permit me; as it is, I can only say this: I am such as occasion requires; and where there is a trial of good and upright men, thou wilt not find a man more loyal to duty than myself. In every case, however, I would fain win, except as touching thee;¹ to thee I will now willingly give way.

(*To his sailors.*) Loose him then; lay not hands on him any longer; let him stay here.

We have not even further need of thee, seeing we have these arms; for we have Teucer at Troy to help us, who has this skill, and myself, too, who think that I should be no worse a master of these weapons than thou, nor aim a shaft less truly. Then, pray, what need of thee? Go, pace thy Lemnos, and farewell! Let us be going; and maybe thy prize will give me the honour, which thou shouldst have had.

PHI. Ah me! what can I do, poor wretch? Shalt thou show thyself amongst the Argives decked with my arms?

ODY. Answer me not a word, for I am going even now.

PHI. Offspring of Achilles, shall I not hear thee speak to me again? wilt thou depart e'en thus?

ODY. (*to NEOPTOLEMUS.*) Forward! look not at him, for all thy noble nature, lest thou spoil our luck.

PHI. (*to the CHORUS.*) Will ye too, sirs, indeed, leave me thus deserted? will ye not pity me?

CHO. Lo! here is the master of our ship, this youth; whatsoever he tells thee, that is our answer too.

NEO. (*to the CHORUS.*) I shall be told by Odysseus here

¹ *i.e.*, as far as staying in Lemnos goes, I am willing to let thee have thy way.

that I am too full of compassion ; still, stay awhile, if it is this man's pleasure, until such time as the crew have made all taut aboard, and we have prayed to the gods. It may be, he, meantime, will think better of us. So let us be starting, thou and I ; and do ye set out at once, when we call. (*Exeunt ODYSSEUS and NEOPTOLEMUS.*)

PHI. O chamber in the hollow rock, first hot, then cold as ice ! so it was then my fate, poor wretch, never to leave thee, but e'en at my death thou wilt be with me to see it.¹ Ah, woe is me ! O cave, that, to thy sorrow, hast been polluted by my suffering, what shall henceforth be my daily portion ? What hope of finding food shall I have in my misery, and whence ? Above my head the cowering doves² will wing their way through the whistling wind ; henceforth I stop them not.

CHO. 'Tis thou, yes, thou thyself, that wouldst have it so, poor wretch ; it is not by another's will or by some mightier hand, that thou art thus holden in misfortune ; nay, when it *was* in thy power to use thy wits, thou didst choose the worse instead of the better³ for thy acceptance.

PHI. Alas ! a hapless man I am, it seems, and one whom outrage flouts ; henceforth shall I dwell here in my misery, till I die, without a single friend, for all the days to come,—

¹ Reading *συνείσει*, the almost certain conjecture of Porson and Reiske for the MSS. *συνοίσει*, which has been variously understood as (α) "thou wilt be good enough for me," (β) "thou wilt be with me."

² Jebb's masterly emendation of this very corrupt passage is as follows :

πέλειαι δ' ἄνω (MSS. *εἶθ' αἰθήρος ἄνω*)

πτωκάδες ὄξυτόνου διὰ πνεύματος

ἐλῶσιν· οὐκέτ' ἴσχω. (MSS. *ἔλωσί μ'· οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' ἴσχύω.*)

A full account of the numerous attempts, that have been made to explain or amend the passage, may be found in his note *ad loc.*

³ The meaning seems clear, but the scansion is against *λόγονος*, and some have adopted *πλέονος* from a hint of a scholiast.

ah me! ah me!—no more can I bring in food shot by my wingèd shafts, holding my bow 'twixt my sturdy hands; but the unsuspected and secret imaginings of a treacherous heart beguiled me. Would I might see him, who devised it, with my anguish for his portion, for no less a time.

CHO. 'Tis fate, the fate that Heaven sends, and no treachery aided by my hand, that hath o'ertaken thee in this; direct thy bitter, baleful curse at others! For truly this is all my care, that thou shouldst not thrust my kindness from thee.

PHI. Ah, woe is me! Yes, there he sits, no doubt, upon the foam-flecked beach and laughs at me, brandishing in his hand the bow that won this sufferer food, which no man else had ever borne. O bow so dear, wrested from my loving hands, surely, if thou hast any feeling, 'tis with pity thou must see the comrade¹ of Heracles thus debarred from ever using thee again. Thou hast changed hands; another² wields thee now, a man of many wiles; and thou seest base trickery and that detested foe of mine, who hath devised to my undoing troubles past number, arising from shameful sources, O Zeus.³

CHO. Ever to assert the right is manly,⁴ yes! but not, when one has spoken, to shoot out words of rancorous hate.

¹ Reading τὸν Ἡράκλειον ἄρθμιον, with Erfurdt, for MSS. ἄθλιον.

Professor Campbell, conjecturing ἄθλον ἐμ', renders "me thus destined to use thee no more in the Heracleian exercise," *i. e.*, archery.

² ἄλλου δ' ἐν μεταλλαγῆ—so Hermann for ἀλλ' ἐν, in order to make this verse correspond with the verse in the antistrophe.

³ Reading ἀνατέλλονθ' ὅς ἐφ' ἡμῖν κάκ' ἐμήσατ', ὦ Ζεῦ, the joint emendation of Bothe and Dindorf for MSS. ὅσ' . . . ὀδυσσεύς. For the last word, which is clearly a gloss, Campbell reads οὔτος; Arndt οὐδεῖς; if either be adopted, ὅσ' may be retained, whilst ἀνατέλλονθ must be taken transitively, *i. e.*, "causing ills to arise."

⁴ Reading ἀνδρός τοι τὰ μὲν ἔνδικ' αἶεν εἰπεῖν,—Arndt's correction of the vulgate, ἀνδρός τοι τὸ μὲν εὖ δίκαιον εἰπεῖν, which yields no intelligible sense, without great violence to the Greek.

Yon man was but one chosen by the many, and it is at their behest¹ he hath wrought a common deliverance for his friends.

PHI. Ah, my wingèd prey, and ye tribes of bright-eyed beasts, denizens of this place, that feed upon the hills,² start³ no more from your dens in flight; for my hands no longer hold the shafts, their former might,—poor wretch that now I am! Nay, range at will; the place has no longer any terrors for you, I trow.⁴ A fine chance now to glut your jaws, to your heart's content, on my discoloured⁵ flesh, in vengeance for the blood I have shed; for I shall soon be dead. Where can I find means to live? Who lives on air, as I must, if he is no more master of aught that the life-giving earth produces?

CHO. If thou hast any regard for a stranger, who draws nigh thee in all goodwill, in Heaven's name, come meet him. Oh! think, think well, that it rests⁶ with thyself to escape this sickness, so piteous to feed, so all untaught to bear the countless gangs which follow in its train.⁷

¹ Reading τῶνδ' ἐφημοσύνα, which is now generally preferred to τοῦδ' ὑφημοσύνα ("using him *i.e.*, Neoptolemus as his minister"), a var. lect. of some authority, retained by Hermann and Campbell.

Blaydes reads τάνδ' ἐφημοσύναν, cognate acc. after ταχθείς.

² οὔρεσιβώτας, (α) acc. plur. "that feed upon the hills," (β) nom. sing. "place with mountain pastures."

³ Reading μηκέτ' ἀπ' αὐλίων φυγᾶ πηδᾶτ' (Jebb). The MSS. give φυγᾶ μ' οἰκέτ' ἀπ' αὐλίων πελάτ', explained by Hermann as "no more in your flight will you draw me after you from my cave." Canter proposed μηκέτ' . . . ἐλάτ', "no longer rush" (imperat.). Erfurd read μ' οἰκέτ' . . . ἐλάτ', "no longer will ye cause me to leave" (fut. indic.). (Cf. Jebb's critical appendix.)

⁴ For the MSS. ὄδε χῶρος ἐρύκεται, usually explained as "this place is guarded carelessly," Jebb gives ὁ δὲ χῶρος ἄρ' οὐκέτι, and follows Linwood in joining ἀνέδην with ἔρπετε.

⁵ αἰόλας, (α) "discoloured" from disease, (β) "quivering."

⁶ Reading ἐπι σοί, Seyffert's correction of the vulgate ὅτι σοί.

⁷ *i.e.*, the disease is fearful, and admits not thy learning to bear it

PHI. Again hast thou reminded me of former anguish,¹ once again, O best of those who erst have trod these shores! Why slay me? why hast thou treated me thus?

CHO. What meanest thou by this?

PHI. 'Tis even so, if it was indeed thy hope to take me to that Trojan land, so hateful in my eyes.

CHO. It was; for this I hold is best.

PHI. Then leave me at once.

CHO. Welcome, very welcome this thy order to me; I readily perform it.

Away, away to our appointed posts on board!

PHI. Go not, I adjure thee, by Zeus, the suppliant's god!

CHO. Calm thyself.

PHI. O stay, good sirs, in Heaven's name!

CHO. Why dost thou call so loud?

PHI. Ah me, ah me! my fate, my fate! I am undone, alas! O my foot, my foot, what am I to do with thee, unhappy wretch, in my life henceforth? Come back, good sirs, again!

CHO. For what purpose, with plan so completely at variance with thy first directions?

PHI. No cause for anger surely, if a man beside himself with raging pain utters words as wild.

CHO. Come then, poor wretch, as we bid thee.

PHI. Never, never! rest assured of that; no! not if the lord of fire, the lightning god, shall come to consume me with his flashing thunderbolts!

Perish Ilium, perish all those beneath its walls, who were cruel enough to thrust aside this poor foot of mine!

One boon, good sirs, pray grant; and only one!

CHO. What will this favour be?

with patience. Poetically the disease,—not the patient,—is said to be incapable of learning.

¹ *i.e.*, the anguish he had felt at the first mention of a return to Troy.

PHI. A sword,—no matter whence,—an axe, or any kind of weapon ; oh, furnish it !

CHO. What violent deed to help thee to ?

PHI. Utterly to hew my flesh¹ and carve my limbs with my own hand. To kill myself, aye, kill—is now my thought.

CHO. Why, what is this ?

PHI. 'Tis thus I seek my sire.

CHO. Whither goest thou ?

PHI. To Hades' halls ; for in the light he lives no more.

O land where my fathers lived, would I could see thee ! Unhappy wretch that I was, ever to have left thy sacred stream² and gone to help the hateful Danai ! Henceforth I am as nought.

CHO. Long, long ere this hadst thou seen me on my way to rejoin my ship, were it not that we had seen Odysseus drawing nigh and the son of Achilles coming hither towards us.³

ODY. (*as they enter hurriedly.*) Wilt thou not then tell me why thou hast turned again, and art retracing thy steps in such eager haste ?

NEO. To undo my sins in the past.

ODY. Strange words indeed ! What was this sin ?

NEO. When, in obedience to thee and the whole host——

ODY. Thou didst—well, what that became thee not ?

NEO. I basely tricked and deceived a man.

ODY. Why, who was that ? Ah ! is it some strange scheme thou hast ?

NEO. Nothing strange at all, but to the son of Pœas——

¹ χρω̄τ'—so Hermann for κρᾶτ'. Wunder reads κρᾶτ' ἀπὸ πάντα τε τᾶρθρα, but the position of κρᾶτα before ἄρθρα is undoubtedly harsh.

² The Spercheius, the only river of any size in the neighbourhood of Trachis.

³ Nauck and other critics regard these lines as suspicious, and would either rewrite or reject them ; but perhaps the difficulties found in them merely evince a want of care, and, as they are not insuperable, it is better to retain them than resort to violent alterations in the text.

ODY. Well, what? Ha! there steals o'er me a certain fear!

NEO. —from whom I took this bow, once more——

ODY. Great Zeus, what wilt thou say? Thou never wilt return it, surely?

NEO. Indeed I will; for it is by baseness and injustice I have taken it.

ODY. In Heaven's name, art thou saying this in mockery? 4

NEO. If it be mockery to tell the truth.

ODY. How now, thou son of Achilles? what is it thou hast said?

NEO. Wouldst have me repeat the same words twice and thrice?

ODY. I had rather not have heard them at all,—not even once.

NEO. Now be very sure thou hast heard all I have to say.

ODY. Believe me, there is one who will prevent thee doing this.

NEO. What sayest thou? Who is there that shall hinder me herein?

ODY. The whole Achæan host,—myself amongst the number.

NEO. Wise though thy nature, there is no wisdom in thy words.

ODY. As for thee, there is none either in thy words or purposed deeds.

NEO. Well, if there be justice, better that than wisdom.

ODY. And how can it be just to give these weapons back, seeing it was by my scheming thou didst win them?

NEO. The sin I committed was shameful; I will try to retrieve it.

ODY. Dost thou not fear the Achæan host in this attempt?

NEO. With justice on my side, I fear not thy terrors.

ODY. * * * * *

NEO. Nay, I am not to be persuaded into it even by thy violence.

ODY. So it is not Trojans we are to fight, but thee.

NEO. Let come what will.

ODY. Dost see my hand fingering my hilt?

NEO. Aye, aye, and thou shalt see mine do the same and tarry not.

ODY. After all, I will let thee be; but I will go and tell this to the whole host, and they will punish thee.

NEO. That shows thy sense; and if thou show the same henceforth, haply thou wilt keep out of harm's way.

[Exit ODYSSEUS.

But thou, son of Pœas,—Philoctetes I mean,—come forth, leaving thy shelter in yonder rock.

PHI. (*from within.*) What sound of voices rises once more by my cave? Why do ye call me forth to you? What is it ye want, good sirs? (*coming to the mouth of the cave.*) Ah me! this is an evil business.² Are ye come to bring me some new trouble³ besides the old?

NEO. Take heart, and listen to the message I bring thee.

PHI. I have my fears; yea, for even before it was after fair words I was ill-treated, through listening to what thou saidst.

NEO. Can I not even repent, then, again?

PHI. Such wert thou even then; in words; when thou wert for stealing my bow,—a man to trust, and find one's secret bane.

¹ Hermann's view, that a line is lost here, seems eminently tenable, involving as it does less change than any of the other numerous proposals for the proper distribution of the lines.

² Philoctetes here catches sight of Neoptolemus, having expected only to see the Chorus, whom he regards as sympathetic.

³ Reading with Schneidewin *νέον . . . κακόν* for the *μέγα . . . κακόν* usually written.

NEO. Well, but not so now at all; and I wish to hear from thee, whether thy purpose is to stay here stubbornly, or to sail with us.

PHI. Stop, not another word! 'twill be all said in vain,—aught that thou canst say.

NEO. This is thy fixed resolve?

PHI. Aye, beyond all words of mine, be sure.

NEO. Well, though I had fain thou hadst listened to my words, still, if I am speaking out of season, there's an end.

PHI. Yea, thy words will all prove vain; for thou wilt never make my heart thy friend, seeing that thou hast taken my means of life by fraud and robbed me of it, and after that, comest to advise me, most hateful son of peerless sire! Curses on you,—on the sons of Atreus first, and then on the son of Laertes and thee!

NEO. Carry thy cursing no further; but take from my hand these shafts.

PHI. What sayest thou? Am I being duped a second time?

NEO. By the supreme majesty of holy Zeus I swear it is not so.

PHI. Most welcome words! if thou art speaking the truth.

NEO. The reality will soon be there for thee to see. Come, stretch forth thy right hand, and make thy bow thine own.

ODY. (*suddenly springing forward.*) I forbid it—be the gods my witnesses!—on behalf of the sons of Atreus and the whole army.

PHI. My son, whose voice is that? Was it Odysseus I heard?

ODY. Be sure of that; yea, and thou seest him near thee, and I will carry thee hence by force to those plains of Troy, whether the son of Achilles will or no.

PHI. (*about to shoot him.*) But not without ruing it, if this arrow is aimed straight.

NEO. (*catching his arm.*) Ha! do not so; in Heaven's name, let not the arrow fly!

PHI. Let go my hand, in Heaven's name, my dearest son!

NEO. I will not.

PHI. Ah! why hast thou taken from me the chance of slaying him I loathe and hate with my arrows?

NEO. Nay, this is no credit to me or thee.

PHI. (*as ODYSSEUS flies.*) Be sure of this much, at any rate,—those leaders of the host, those lying heralds of the Achæans, are too cowardly to face the fray, albeit braggarts in speech.

NEO. Enough! Thou hast thy bow now, and thou hast no reason¹ for wrath or complaint against me.

PHI. Agreed. Thou hast shown, my son, the stock thou art sprung from,—no child of Sisyphus, but of Achilles, whose praises all men sang, as well when he was amongst the living as now amongst the dead.

NEO. To hear thee praise my father and myself is joy to me; but hear what I desire to win from thee. The strokes of fortune Heaven deals out to man, he needs must bear; but all they who are in love with injuries of their own choosing, as thou art, these deserve not pardon or pity from any one. Now, thou art as a wild beast, accepting no man's counsel, and if one advise thee with words of kind intent, thou hatest him, thinking him a foe and ill-disposed. Still will I speak; be witness, Zeus, the lord of oaths; and do thou learn this and write it within thy heart. This anguish thou sufferest is of Heaven's sending, because thou didst approach the guardian of Chryse, the serpent which keepeth secret watch and ward o'er her roofless precinct. Learn, too, that thou wilt never win relief from this grievous disease, so long as that same sun riseth here and setteth there,² till of

¹ Reading *ἄτον* rather than the vulgate *ἄπου*.

² The actor would point east and west.

thine own free will thou seek the plains of Troy, and, meeting with the sons of Asclepius, who are there with us, find ease from this complaint; when, aided by this bow and me, thou wilt appear as the sacker of Troy's towers.

How I know that is so, I will tell thee. We have with us a prisoner from Troy, Helenus, a prince of prophets; he tells us clearly that so it must be, and, what is more, that Troy must be utterly o'erthrown this very summer; if not, he willingly puts his life in our hands, in case his words prove false.

So then, since thou now knowest this, consent to yield; for the further gain is an honourable one,—first, after being judged the very best of the sons of Hellas, to come into healing hands, and then, by taking Troy, that town of tears, to win a fame beyond compare.

PHI. O hated life, why, oh! why art thou keeping me alive on earth, instead of letting me go hence to Hades' halls? Ah me! what can I do? How can I mistrust his words? He counsels me with good intent. Well, am I then to yield? How, if I do, shall I face the public gaze, poor wretch? By whom shall I be greeted? O eyes¹ that have witnessed all that has happened to me, how will ye endure the sight of me consorting with the sons of Atreus, my destroyers, or with that child of perdition, the son of Laertes? Nay, it is not the pain of the past that pricks me, but the kind of treatment I think I yet foresee at their hands; for where the heart hath once given birth to iniquity, it teaches the rest of its brood to be evil.² In thy case, too, I am filled with wonder at this; for thou shouldst never have gone to Troy thyself, and have hindered my going too; seeing that they insulted thee,

¹ κύκλοι is now generally explained as "orbs" of the eye rather than as "the orbs of heaven," or "the orbs of day and night," or "years," the old explanations.

² Jebb prefers to read *κακούς*, with Dobree and Döderlein; but the MSS. *κακά* seems defensible, and is here followed.

robbing thee of thy father's honours; [men who, in the awarding of thy father's arms, judged the hapless Aias second to Odysseus;]¹ wilt thou, after that, go to join their warring, and dost thou seek to compel me to do this? Do not so, my son; but convey me home in accordance with thy oath to me; and abide thou in Scyros thyself and leave them, villains as they are, to die a villain's death. And thus wilt thou gain double gratitude from me, and from my sire the same; and thou wilt not seem to resemble these villains in nature by helping them.

NEO. Thy words have reason; but still I would fain have thee trust Heaven and my promises, and sail hence with me who am thy friend.

PHI. What! to the plains of Troy, and to the son of Atreus, my most hated foe,—with this poor foot of mine?

NEO. Say rather to those who will ease thee and that festering foot of thine from pain, and will save thee from thy sickness.

PHI. O direful counsellor, what meanest thou?

NEO. That which I perceive to be best for us both, if brought to pass.

PHI. And thou art not ashamed before Heaven of having said this?

NEO. No; why should one be ashamed of serving friends?²

PHI. Dost thou call this a gain to the sons of Atreus, or to me?³

¹ Most editors since Brunck agree in rejecting these lines as interpolated; on these grounds mainly: (a) they refer to what is unknown to Philoctetes; (β) a comparison between the merits of Aias and Odysseus is wholly irrelevant.

² Reading *ώφελών φίλους*, Buttmann's conjecture for the MSS. *ώφελούμενος*, which could only give an inappropriate meaning—"when receiving a service."

³ *ή π' έμοι*, which may be right, has given rise to several conjectures; *ή κάμοι* (Hermann) is the simplest.

NEO. To thee, surely, seeing I am thy friend; and my words are like myself?

PHI. How so? thou wouldst deliver me to my foes.

NEO. Friend, learn submission in misfortune.

PHI. Thou wilt be my ruin with these words,—I know thou wilt.

NEO. Not I, indeed; but thou understandest not, I say.

PHI. Do I not know that the sons of Atreus cast me out?

NEO. Well, if they did, see to it whether they will not take thee safely back.

PHI. No! never, if I can help it, so as to gaze on fatal Troy.¹

NEO. What, then, are we to do, if we cannot persuade thee by argument to aught that I propose? My easiest course were to cease speaking, and leave thee living, e'en as now, without deliverance.

PHI. Leave me to suffer this my fated lot; but the promise thou didst make me, with my right hand in thine, even to convey me home, I pray thee fulfil, my son, and that without delay or any further thought of Troy; for I have had my fill of tearful lamentation.

NEO. If it seems good to thee, let us away.

PHI. Nobly said!

NEO. Now plant thy footsteps firmly.²

PHI. Aye, as firmly as I may.

NEO. But how shall I escape the Achæans' blame?

PHI. Give it not one thought.

NEO. What if they lay waste my country?

PHI. My presence——

NEO. What wilt thou do to help?

¹ Jebb follows Wunder in placing the comma after *οὐδέποτε*, understanding *ἄσπε* as "on condition that."

² Others render "Lean now thy footsteps on mine," which is plausible at first sight, but less easy, perhaps, to reconcile with the answer of Philoctetes.

PHI. —with the shafts of Heracles——

NEO. What meanest thou?

PHI. —will prevent their near approach.

NEO. One last obeisance to the land, and then away.

HER. (*appearing over their heads.*) Not yet, not yet, son of Pœas, till thou hast heard me speak. Bethink thee, 'tis the voice of Heracles thou hearest, his face thou beholdest. For thy sake have I left the seats of Heaven and come hither to tell thee the purposes of Zeus and so prevent the journey on which thou art starting. Now hear and heed my words. And first will I tell thee how it fared with me, —of all the labours I endured, from first to last, to win immortal fame, as thine eyes now see. And this is thy lot too, be well assured, to make thy life a life of splendid fame through these thy sufferings.

Thou shalt go with this man to the Trojan citadel, and there, first of all, be released of thy grievous disease, and then, being adjudged the champion of the host, thou shalt, with this bow of mine, require his life of Paris, who was the cause of these troubles; and thou shalt sack Troy, and send its spoils to thy own home,—receiving from the army the meed of valiancy,—e'en to the hills of Cœta, thy native land, for Pœas thy father to see. But of all the spoils thou gettest thyself from yonder¹ host, of these bring somewhat to my pyre as memorials of my bow. To thee, too, son of Achilles, I give this counsel; for neither canst thou conquer the land of Troy without this man nor he without thee; but like two lions, that seek their meat together, keep guard upon each other, thou on him and he on thee.

And I will send Asclepius to Ilium to end thy sickness; for the city is doomed to be the prey of my archery a second time.² But take good heed of this, that ye reverence

¹ *i.e.*, the army of the Achæans. Others, however, understand the Trojan army.

² Heracles had sacked Troy because Laomedon refused to give him

what concerns the gods, what time ye ravage the land ; for father Zeus esteems all else of less account. For piety dieth not¹ with men : whether they live or die, for it there is no death.

PHI. O herald of words I have yearned to hear, appearing now at last, I will not disobey thy bidding.

NEO. To this I, too, agree.

HER. Delay not, then, for any time to act ; for your chance presses and the fair breeze yonder behind you.

[HERACLES *vanishes*.

Come, then, let me call upon this land as I am starting. Farewell, O roof that hast watched with me ; ye nymphs who haunt the watery meads, farewell ; farewell, thou deep bass voice of sea-beat promontory,² where full oft in thy deepest recess my head has been drenched by the south-wind beating upon it, and oft has the Hermæan hill sent me back an echo to my groaning, when the tempest of anguish went o'er me.

But now, O founts and Lycian spring, I am leaving, leaving you at last ! This was a dream I ne'er indulged.

Farewell, O sea-girt land of Lemnos, and waft me with fair voyage, in blameless wise, to that bourn, whither great Destiny alike is guiding me, and the advice of friends, and that all-mastering god, who hath accomplished this.

CHO. Let us be going now, all together ; after we have prayed to the nymphs of the sea to come and make our journey safe.

the horses he had promised in return for the slaying of a sea-monster, which harassed the country.

¹ Reading *οὐ γὰρ ἠύσέβεια*. Those who retain the MSS. *ἡ γὰρ εὐσέβεια*, explain "piety abides with men in death," *i.e.*, follows them to the other world to influence their fate.

² Reading *προβολῆς*, Hermann's correction of MSS. *προβλής*.



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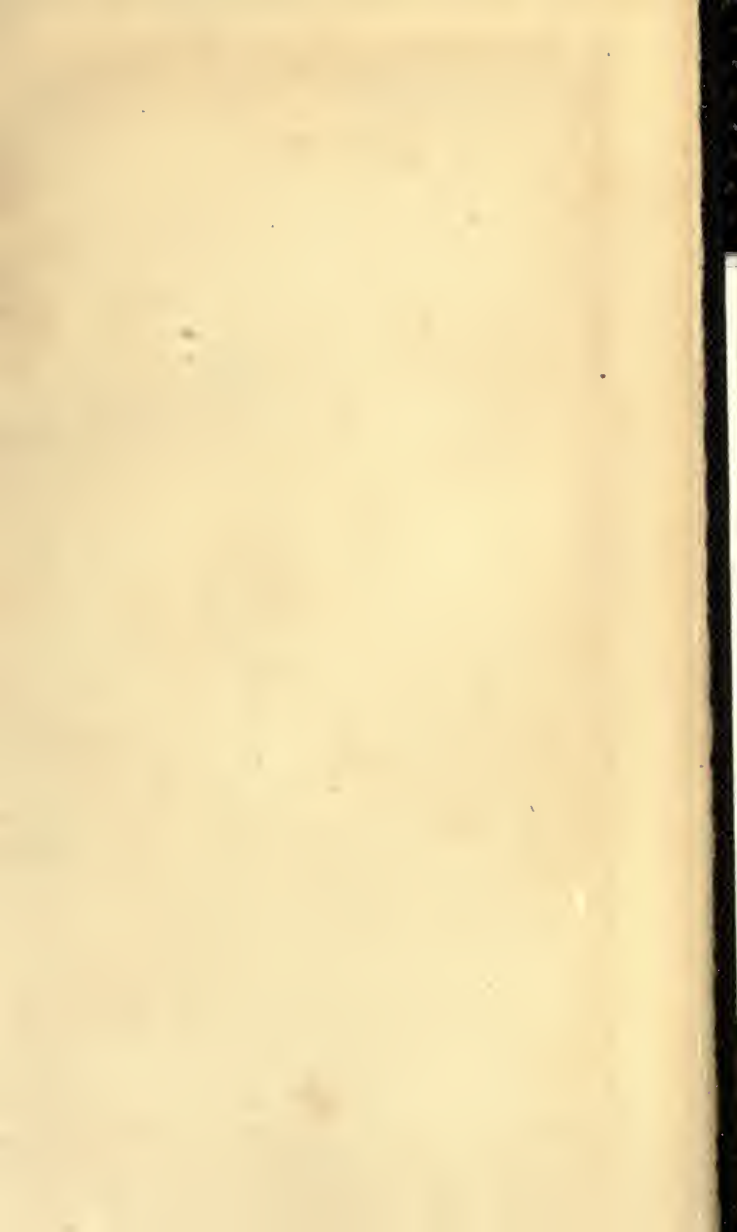
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