

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

Our factions with the friendship of their chiefs.
 Let us in marriage, King and Queen, unite
 Claims ever hostile else; and set thy son—
 No more an exile fed on empty hopes,
 And to an unsubstantial title heir,
 But prince adopted by the will of power,
 And future king—before this people's eyes.
 Consider him; consider not old hates:
 Consider, too, this people, who were dear
 To their dead king, thy husband—yea, too dear,
 For that destroyed him. Give them peace; thou canst.
 O Merope, how many noble thoughts,
 How many precious feelings of man's heart,
 How many loves, how many gratuities,
 Do twenty years wear out, and see expire!
 Shall they not wear one hatred out as well?

MEROPE

Thou hast forgot, then, who I am who hear,
 And who thou art who speakest to me? I
 Am Merope, thy murdered master's wife . . .
 And thou art Polyphontes, first his friend,
 And then . . . his murderer. These offending tears
 That murder draws . . . this breach that thou wouldst
 close
 Was by that murder opened . . . that one child
 (If still, indeed, he lives) whom thou wouldst seat
 Upon a throne not thine to give, is heir
 Because thou slew'st his brothers with their father . . .
 Who can patch union here? . . . What can there be
 But everlasting horror 'twixt us two,
 Gulfs of estranging blood? . . . Across that chasm
 Who can extend their hands? . . . Maidens, take back
 These offerings home! our rites are spoiled to-day.

POLYPHONTES

Not so: let these Messenian maidens mark
 The fear'd and blacken'd ruler of their race,
 Albeit with lips unapt to self-excuse,
 Blow off the spot of murder from his name.—
 Murder!—but what *is* murder! When a wretch

For private gain or hatred takes a life,
We call it murder, crush him, brand his name:
But when, for some great public cause, an arm
Is, without love or hate, austere raised
Against a Power exempt from common checks,
Dangerous to all, to be but thus annulled—
Ranks any man with murder such an act?
With grievous deeds, perhaps; with murder—no!
Find then such cause, the charge of murder falls:
Be judge thyself if it abound not here.—
All know how weak the Eagle, Hercules,
Soaring from his death-pile on Cæta, left
His puny, callow Eaglets; and what trials—
Infirm protectors, dubious oracles
Construed awry, misplann'd invasions—used
Two generations of his offspring up;
Hardly the third, with grievous loss, regain'd
Their fathers' realm, this isle, from Pelops nam'd.—
Who made that triumph, though deferr'd, secure?
Who, but the kinsmen of the royal brood
Of Hercules, scarce Heracleidæ less
Than they? these, and the Dorian lords, whose king
Ægimius gave our outcast house a home
When Thebes, when Athens dared not; who in arms
Thrice issued with us from their pastoral vales,
And shed their blood like water in our cause?—
Such were the dispossessors: of what stamp
Were they we dispossessed?—of us I speak,
Who to Messenia with thy husband came—
I speak not now of Argos, where his brother,
Not now of Sparta, where his nephews reign'd:—
What we found here were tribes of fame obscure,
Much turbulence, and little constancy,
Precariously ruled by foreign lords
From the Æolian stock of Neleus sprung,
A house once great, now dwindling in its sons.
Such were the conquer'd, such the conquerors: who
Had most thy husband's confidence? Consult
His acts; the wife he chose was—full of virtues—
But an Arcadian princess, more akin
To his new subjects than to us; his friends
Were the Messenian chiefs; the laws he framed

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

MEROPE

Alas, how fair a colour can his tongue,
 Who self-exculpates, lend to foulest deeds.
 Thy trusting lord didst thou, his servant, slay;
 Kinsman, thou slew'st thy kinsman; friend, thy friend:
 This were enough; but let me tell thee, too,

Thou hadst no cause, as feign'd, in his misrule.
For ask at Argos, ask in Lacedæmon,
Whose people, when the Heracleidæ came,
Were hunted out, and to Achaia fled,
Whether is better, to abide alone,
A wolfish band, in a dispeopled realm,
Or conquerors with conquer'd to unite
Into one puissant folk, as he design'd?
These sturdy and unworn Messenian tribes,
Who shook the fierce Neleidæ on their throne,
Who to the invading Dorians stretch'd a hand,
And half bestow'd half yielded up their soil—
He would not let his savage chiefs alight,
A cloud of vultures, on this vigorous race;
Ravin a little while in spoil and blood,
Then, gorged and helpless, be assail'd and slain.
He would have saved you from your furious selves,
Not in abhorr'd estrangement let you stand;
He would have mix'd you with your friendly foes,
Foes dazzled with your prowess, well inclined
To reverence your lineage, more, to obey:
So would have built you, in a few short years,
A just, therefore a safe, supremacy.
For well he knew, what you, his chiefs, did not—
How of all human rules the over-tense
Are apt to snap; the easy-stretch'd endure.—
O gentle wisdom, little understood!
O arts, above the vulgar tyrant's reach!
O policy too subtle far for sense
Of heady, masterful, injurious men!
This good he meant you, and for this he died.
Yet not for this—else might thy crime in part
Be error deem'd—but that pretence is vain.
For, if ye slew him for supposed misrule,
Injustice to his kin and Dorian friends,
Why with the offending father did ye slay
Two unoffending babes, his innocent sons?
Why not on them have placed the forfeit crown,
Ruled in their name, and train'd them to your will?
Had *they* misruled? had *they* forgot their friends?
Forsworn their blood? ungratefully had *they*
Preferred Messenian serfs to Dorian lords?

No: but to thy ambition their poor lives
 Were bar; and this, too, was their father's crime.
 That thou might'st reign he died, not for his fault
 Even fancied; and his death thou wroughtest chief.
 For, if the other lords desired his fall
 Hotlier than thou, and were by thee kept back,
 Why dost thou only profit by his death?
 Thy crown condemns thee, while thy tongue absolves.
 And now to me thou tenderest friendly league,
 And to my son reversion to thy throne:
 Short answer is sufficient; league with thee,
 For me I deem such impious; and for him,
 Exile abroad more safe than heirship here.

POLYPHONTES

I ask thee not to approve thy husband's death,
 No, nor expect thee to admit the grounds,
 In reason good, which justified my deed:
 With women the heart argues, not the mind.
 But, for thy children's death, I stand assoil'd:
 I saved them, meant them honour: but thy friends
 Rose, and with fire and sword assailed my house
 By night; in that blind tumult they were slain.
 To chance impute their deaths, then, not to me.

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

Tyrants think him they murder not they spare.

POLYPHONTES

Not much a tyrant thy free speech displays me.

MEROPE

Thy shame secures my freedom, not thy will.

POLYPHONTES

Shame rarely checks the genuine tyrant's will.

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

Thou standest out, I see, repellst peace.

MEROPE

Thy sword repelled it long ago, not I.

POLYPHONTES

Doubtless thou reckonest on the hope of friends.

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

What Gods? the Gods of concord, civil weal?

MEROPE

No: the avenging Gods, who punish crime.

POLYPHONTES

Beware! from thee upbraidings I receive
 With pity, nay, with reverence; yet, beware
 I know, I know how hard it is to think
 That right, that conscience pointed to a deed,
 Where interest seems to have enjoind it too.
 Most men are led by interest; and the few
 Who are not, expiate the general sin,
 Involved in one suspicion with the base.
 Dizzy the path and perilous the way
 Which in a deed like mine a just man treads,
 But it is sometimes trodden, oh! believe it.
 Yet how *canst* thou believe it? therefore thou

Hast all impunity. Yet, lest thy friends,
 Embolden'd by my lenience, think it fear,
 And count on like impunity, and rise,
 And have to thank thee for a fall, beware!
 To rule this kingdom I intend: with sway
 Clement, if may be, but to rule it: there
 Expect no wavering, no retreat, no change.—
 And now I leave thee to these rites, esteem'd
 Pious, but impious, surely, if their scope
 Be to foment old memories of wrath.
 Pray, as thou pour'st libations on this tomb,
 To be delivered from thy foster'd hate,
 Unjust suspicion, and erroneous fear.

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

THE CHORUS

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

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

MEROPE

What shall I bear, O lost *str. I*
 Husband and King, to thy grave?—
 Pure libations, and fresh
 Flowers? But thou, in the gloom,
 Discontented, perhaps,

Demandest vengeance, not grief?
Sternly requirest a man,
Light to spring up to thy race?

THE CHORUS

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

str. 2

MEROPE

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

ant. 1

THE CHORUS

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

ant. 2

MEROPE

She led the way of death.
And the plain of Tegea,
And the grave of Orestes—

str. 3

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

Thou tellest the fate of the last *str.* 4
 Of the three Heracleidæ.
 Not of him, of Cresphontes thou sharedst the lot.

A king, a king was he while he lived,
Swaying the sceptre with predestined hand.
And now, minister loved,
Holds rule —

MEROPE

Ah me . . . Ah . . .

THE CHORUS

For the awful Monarchs below.

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

There rose up a cry in the streets *ant.* 4
From the terrified people.
From the altar of Zeus, from the crowd, came a wail.
A blow, a blow was struck, and he fell,
Sullyng his garment with dark-streaming blood:
While stood o'er him a Form—
Some Form—

MEROPE

Ah me . . . Ah . . .

THE CHORUS

Of a dreadful Presence of fear.

MEROPE

More piercing the second cry rang, *ant.* 5
Wail'd from the palace within,

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

THE CHORUS

Not to thee only hath come *str. 6*
 Sorrow, O Queen, of mankind.
 Had not Electra to haunt
 A palace defiled by a death unavenged,
 For years, in silence, devouring her heart?
 But her nursling, her hope, came at last.
 Thou, too, rearest in joy,
 Far 'mid Arcadian hills,
 Somewhere, in safety, a nursling, a light.
 Yet, yet shall Zeus bring him home!
 Yet shall he dawn on this land!

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

Give not thy heart to despair. *ant. 6*
 No lamentation can loose
 Prisoners of death from the grave:
 But Zeus, who accounteth thy quarrel his own,
 Still rules, still watches, and numbers the hours

Till the sinner, the vengeance, be ripe.
 Still, by Acheron stream,
 Terrible Deities throned
 Sit, and make ready the serpent, the scourge.
 Still, still the Dorian boy,
 Exiled, remembers his home.

MEROPE

Him if high-ruling Zeus *ant.* 7
 Bring to his mother, the rest I commit,
 Willing, patient, to Zeus, to his care.
 Blood I ask not. Enough
 Sated, and more than enough,
 Are mine eyes with blood. But if this,
 O my comforters! strays
 Amiss from Justice, the Gods
 Forgive my folly, and work
 What they will!—but to me give my son!

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

Forgive me, maidens, if I seem too slack
 In calling vengeance on a murderer's head.

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

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

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

No certain news if like the rest it run.

MEROPE

Certain in this, that 'tis uncertain still.

THE CHORUS

What keeps him in Arcadia from return?

MEROPE

His grandsire and his uncles fear the risk.

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

Discovery of a visit made by stealth.

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

I doubt their caution little suits their ward.

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

I augur thou wilt hear some bold resolve.

MEROPE

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

[MEROPE goes in.

THE CHORUS

Much is there which the Sea *str. 1*
 Conceals from man, who cannot plumb its depths.
 Air to his unwing'd form denies a way,
 And keeps its liquid solitudes unscal'd.
 Even Earth, whereon he treads,
 So feeble is his march, so slow,
 Holds countless tracts uptrod.

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

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

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

The most are bad, wise men have said. *str. 3*
Let the best rule, they say again.
 The best, then, to dominion have the right.
 Rights unconceded and denied,
 Surely, if rights, may be by force asserted—
 May be, nay should, if for the general weal.
 The best, then, to the throne may carve his way,
 And hew opposers down,
 Free from all guilt of lawlessness,
 Or selfish lust of personal power:
 Bent only to serve Virtue,
 Bent to diminish wrong.

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

Who blindly follow ever
Blind leaders, to their bane.

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

str. 4

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

ant. 4

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

epode[ÆPYTUS *comes in.*

ÆPYTUS

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

THE CHORUS

Rightly they told thee, and thou art arrived.

ÆPYTUS

Here, then, it is, where Polyphontes dwells?

THE CHORUS

He doth: thou hast both house and master right.

ÆPYTUS

Might some one straight inform him he is sought?

THE CHORUS

Inform him that thyself, for here he comes.

[POLYPHONTES comes forth, with ATTENDANTS and GUARDS.]

ÆPYTUS

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

POLYPHONTES

Speak them, that I may judge their kind myself.

ÆPYTUS

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

POLYPHONTES

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

ÆPYTUS

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

POLYPHONTES

Instruct me of the manner of his death.

ÆPYTUS

That will I do, and to this end I came.
 For, being of like age, of birth not mean,
 The son of an Arcadian noble, I
 Was chosen his companion from a boy;
 And on the hunting-rambles which his heart,
 Unquiet, drove him ever to pursue,
 Through all the lordships of the Arcadian dales,
 From chief to chief, I wander'd at his side,
 The captain of his squires, and his guard.
 On such a hunting-journey, three morns since,
 With beaters, hounds, and huntsmen, he and I
 Set forth from Tegea, the royal town.
 The prince at start seem'd sad, but his regard
 Clear'd with blithe travel and the morning air.
 We rode from Tegea, through the woods of oaks,
 Past Arnê spring, where Rhea gave the babe
 Poseidon to the shepherd-boys to hide
 From Saturn's search among the new-yea'd lambs,
 To Mantinea, with its unbaked walls;
 Thence, by the Sea-God's Sanctuary, and the tomb
 Whither from wintry Mænalus were brought
 The bones of Arcus, whence our race is named,
 On, to the marshy Orchomenian plain,
 And the Stone Coffins;—then, by Caphyæ Cliffs,
 To Pheneos with its craggy citadel.
 There, with the chief of that hill-town, we lodged
 One night; and the next day, at dawn, fared on
 By the Three Fountains and the Adder's Hill
 To the Stymphalian Lake, our journey's end,
 To draw the coverts on Cyllene's side.
 There, on a grassy spur which bathes its root
 Far in the liquid lake, we sate, and drew
 Cates from our hunters' pouch, Arcadian fare,
 Sweet chestnuts, barley-cakes, and boar's flesh dried:
 And as we ate, and rested there, we talk'd
 Of places we had pass'd, sport we had had,
 Of beasts of chase that haunt the Arcadian hills,
 Wild hog, and bear, and mountain-deer, and roe:
 Last, of our quarters with the Arcadian chiefs.
 For courteous entertainment, and welcome warm,

Sad, reverential homage, had our prince
From all, for his great lineage and his woes:
All which he own'd, and praised with grateful mind.
But still over his speech a gloom there hung,
As of one shadow'd by impending death;
And strangely, as we talk'd, he would apply
The story of spots mention'd to his own:
Telling us, Arnê minded him, he too
Was saved a babe, but to a life obscure,
Which he, the seed of Hercules, dragg'd on
Inglorious, and should drop at last unknown,
Even as those dead unepitaph'd, who lie
In the stone coffins at Orchomenus.
And, then, he bade remember how we pass'd
The Mantinean Sanctuary, forbid
To foot of mortal, where his ancestor,
Named Æpytus like him, having gone in,
Was blinded by the outgushing springs of brine.
Then, turning westward to the Adder's Hill—
*Another ancestor, named, too, like me,
Died of a snake-bite, said he, on that brow:
Still at his mountain tomb men marvel, built
Where, as life ebb'd, his bearers laid him down.*
So he play'd on; then ended, with a smile—
This region is not happy for my race.
We cheer'd him; but, that moment, from the copse
By the lake-edge, broke the sharp cry of hounds;
The prickers shouted that the stag was gone:
We sprang upon our feet, we snatch'd our spears,
We bounded down the swarded slope, we plunged
Through the dense ilex-thickets to the dogs.
Far in the woods ahead their music rang;
And many times that morn we coursed in ring
The forests round which belt Cyllene's side;
Till I, thrown out and tired, came to halt
On the same spur where we had sate at morn.
And resting there to breathe, I saw below
Rare, straggling hunters, foil'd by brake and crag,
And the prince, single, pressing on the rear
Of that unflagging quarry and the hounds.
Now, in the woods far down, I saw them cross
An open glade; now he was high aloft

On some tall scar fringed with dark feathery pines,
Peering to spy a goat-track down the cliff,
Cheering with hand, and voice, and horn his dogs.
At last the cry drew to the water's edge—
And through the brushwood, to the pebbly strand,
Broke, black with sweat, the antler'd mountain stag,
And took the lake: two hounds alone pursued;
Then came the prince—he shouted and plunged in.—
There is a chasm rifted in the base
Of that unfooted precipice, whose rock
Walls on one side the deep Stymphalian Lake:
There the lake-waters, which in ages gone
Wash'd, as the marks upon the hills still show,
All the Stymphalian plain, are now suck'd down.
A headland, with one aged plane-tree crown'd,
Parts from the cave-pierced cliff the shelving bay
Where first the chase plunged in: the bay is smooth,
But round the headland's point a current sets,
Strong, black, tempestuous, to the cavern-mouth.
Stoutly, under the headland's lee, they swam:
But when they came abreast the point, the race
Caught them, as wind takes feathers, whirl'd them round
Struggling in vain to cross it, swept them on,
Stag, dogs, and hunter, to the yawning gulph.
All this, O King, not piecemeal, as to thee
Now told, but in one flashing instant pass'd:
While from the turf whereon I lay I sprang,
And took three strides, quarry and dogs were gone;
A moment more—I saw the prince turn round
Once in the black and arrowy race, and cast
One arm aloft for help; then sweep beneath
The low-brow'd cavern-arch, and disappear.
And what I could, I did—to call by cries
Some straggling hunters to my aid, to rouse
Fishers who live on the lake-side, to launch
Boats, and approach, near as we dared, the chasm.
But of the prince nothing remain'd, save this,
His boar-spear's broken shaft, back on the lake
Cast by the rumbling subterranean stream;
And this, at landing spied by us and saved,
His broad-brimm'd hunter's hat, which, in the bay,
Where first the stag took water, floated still.

And I across the mountains brought with haste
 To Cypselus, at Basilis, this news:
 Basilis, his new city, which he now
 Near Lycosura builds, Lycaon's town,
 First city founded on the earth by men.
 He to thee sends me on, in one thing glad
 While all else grieves him, that his grandchild's death
 Extinguishes distrust 'twixt him and thee.
 But I from our deplored mischance learn this—
 The man who to untimely death is doom'd,
 Vainly you hedge him from the assault of harm;
 He bears the seed of ruin in himself.

THE CHORUS

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

POLYPHONTES

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

[ATTENDANTS *conduct* ÆPYTUS *within the palace.*

THE CHORUS

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

POLYPHONTES

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

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

[POLYPHONTES goes out.

THE CHORUS

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

Not decried by my voice *ant.*
 He who restores thee shall be,
 Not unfavour'd by Heaven.
 Surely no sinner the man,
 Dread though his acts, to whose hand
 Such a boon to bring hath been given.
 Let her come, fair Peace! let her come!
 But the demons long nourish'd here,
 Murder, Discord, and Hate,
 In the stormy desolate waves
 Of the Thracian Sea let her leave,
 Or the howling outermost Main.

[MEROPE comes forth.

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

Ah me! the wrong expectant got his news.

THE CHORUS

The message brought was for the King design'd.

MEROPE

How so? was Arcas not the messenger?

THE CHORUS

A younger man, and of a different name.

MEROPE

And what Arcadian news had he to tell?

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

His tale was meeter for that ear than thine.

MEROPE

Why dost thou falter, and make half reply?

THE CHORUS

O thrice unhappy, how I groan thy fate!

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

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

[ARCAS comes in.]

MEROPE

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

ARCAS

Faithful, not welcome, when my tale is told.
O that my over-speed and bursting grief
Had on the journey choked my labouring breath,
And lock'd my speech for ever in my breast!
Yet then another man would bring this news.—
O honour'd Queen, thy son, my charge, is gone.

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

Ah . . . Ah . . . Ah me!

THE CHORUS

And I, too, say, ah me!

ARCAS

Forgive, forgive the bringer of such news!

MEROPE

Better from thine than from an enemy's tongue.

THE CHORUS

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

ARCAS

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

THE CHORUS

A youth arrived but now, the son, he said,
Of an Arcadian lord, our prince's friend,
Jaded with travel, clad in hunter's garb.
He brought report that his own eyes had seen
The prince, in chase after a swimming stag,
Swept down a chasm broken in the cliff
Which hangs o'er the Stymphalian Lake, and drown'd.

ARCAS

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

THE CHORUS

And how then runs this true and private tale?

ARCAS

As much to the King's wish, more to his shame.
This young Arcadian noble, guard and mate

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

THE CHORUS

And this perfidious murder who reveal'd?

ARCAS

The faithless murderer's own, no other tongue.

THE CHORUS

Did conscience goad him to denounce himself?

ARCAS

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

THE CHORUS

But not a word appears of murder here.

ARCAS

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

THE CHORUS

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

ARCAS

He comes to tell his prompter he hath sped.

THE CHORUS

Still he repeats the drowning story here.

ARCAS

To thee—that needs no Œdipus to explain.

THE CHORUS

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

ARCAS

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

THE CHORUS

Suspicion grave I see, but no clear proof.

MEROPE

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

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

*But down thou fleest here, and leav'st our scourge
Triumphant, and condemnest all our race
To lie in gloom for ever unappeased.*

What shall I have to answer to such words?—
No, something must be dared; and, great as erst
Our dastard patience, be our daring now!
Come, ye swift Furies, who to him ye haunt
Permit no peace till your behests are done;
Come Hermes, who dost watch the unjustly kill'd,
And canst teach simple ones to plot and feign;
Come, lightning Passion, that with foot of fire
Advancest to the middle of a deed
Almost before 'tis plann'd; come, glowing Hate;
Come, baneful Mischief, from thy murky den
Under the dripping black Tartarean cliff
Which Styx's awful waters trickle down—
Inspire this coward heart, this flagging arm!
How say ye, maidens, do ye know these prayers?
Are these words Merope's—is this voice mine?
Old man, old man, thou hadst my boy in charge,
And he is lost, and thou hast that to atone.
Fly, find me on the instant where confer
The murderer and his impious setter-on:
And ye, keep faithful silence, friends, and mark
What one weak woman can achieve alone.

ARCAS

O mistress, by the Gods, do nothing rash!

MEROPE

Unfaithful servant, dost thou, too, desert me?

ARCAS

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

[ARCAS goes out.]

THE CHORUS

I have heard, O Queen, how a prince,
Agamemnon's son, in Mycenæ,

str. 1

Orestes, died but in name,
Lived for the death of his foes.

MEROPE

Peace!

THE CHORUS

What is it?

MEROPE

Alas,

Thou destroyest me!

THE CHORUS

How?

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

Whereso'er men are, there is grief.
In a thousand countries, a thousand
Homes, e'en now is there wail;
Mothers lamenting their sons.

ant. I

MEROPE

Yes——

THE CHORUS

Thou knowest it?

MEROPE

This,

Who lives, witnesses.

THE CHORUS

True.

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

Ah me!

str. 2

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

None can truly claim that
 Mournful pre-eminence, not
 Thou.

MEROPE

Fate *gives* it, ah me!

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

ant. 2

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE (*with a start*)

How say'st thou? within? . . .

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

What is this?

MEROPE

Ye knew,

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

Swear by the Gods henceforth to obey me!

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

From the altar, the unavenged tomb,
Fetch me the sacrifice-axe!—

[THE CHORUS goes towards the tomb of CRES-
PHONTES, and their leader brings back the axe.]

O Husband, O clothed
 With the grave's everlasting,
 All-covering darkness! O King,
 Well mourn'd, but ill-avenged!
 Approv'st thou thy wife now?—
 The axe!—who brings it?

THE CHORUS

'Tis here!

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

MEROPE

Thrust back now the bolt of that door!

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

Throw the door open!

THE CHORUS

'Tis done! . . .

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

MEROPE

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

The short proud lip showing thy race, thy cheeks
Brown'd with thine open-air, free, hunter's life.
Ah me! . . .

And where dost thou sleep now, my innocent boy?—
In some dark fir-tree's shadow, amid rocks
Untrodden, on Cyllene's desolate side;
Where travellers never pass, where only come
Wild beasts, and vultures sailing overhead.
There, there thou liest now, my hapless child!
Stretched among briars and stones, the slow, black gore
Oozing through thy soak'd hunting-shirt, with limbs
Yet stark from the death-struggle, tight-clench'd hands,
And eyeballs staring for revenge in vain.
Ah miserable! . . .

And thou, thou fair-skinned Serpent! thou art laid
In a rich chamber, on a happy bed,
In a king's house, thy victim's heritage;
And drink'st untroubled slumber, to sleep off
The toils of thy foul service, till thou wake
Refresh'd, and claim thy master's thanks and gold.—
Wake up in hell from thine unhallow'd sleep,
Thou smiling Fiend, and claim thy guerdon there!
Wake amid gloom, and howling, and the noise
Of sinners pinion'd on the torturing wheel,
And the stanch Furies' never-silent scourge.
And bid the chief-tormentors there provide
For a grand culprit shortly coming down.
Go thou the first, and usher in thy lord!
A more just stroke than that thou gav'st my son,
Take—

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

ARCAS (*to the Chorus*)

Not with him to council did the King
Carry his messenger, but left him here.

[Sees MEROPE and ÆPYTUS.

O Gods! . . .

MEROPE

Foolish old men, thou spoil'st my blow!

ARCAS

What do I see? . . .

MEROPE

A murderer at death's door.

Therefore no words!

ARCAS

A murderer? . . .

MEROPE

And a captive

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

ARCAS

Hold, O Queen, hold!

Thou know'st not whom thou strik'st . . .

MEROPE

I know his crime.

ARCAS

Unhappy one! thou strik'st—

MEROPE

A most just blow.

ARCAS

No, by the Gods, thou slay'st—

MEROPE

Stand off!

ARCAS

Thy son!

MEROPE

Ah! . . . [*She lets the axe drop, and falls insensible.*]ÆPYTUS (*awaking*)Who are these? What shrill, ear-piercing scream
Wakes me thus kindly from the perilous sleep

Wherewith fatigue and youth had bound mine eyes,
Even in the deadly palace of my foe?—
Arcas? Thou here?

ARCAS (*embracing him*)

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

ÆPYTUS

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

ARCAS

Messenian maidens, friends.

ÆPYTUS

And, Arcas!—but I tremble!

ARCAS

Boldly ask.

ÆPYTUS

That black-robed, swooning figure? . . .

ARCAS

Merope.

ÆPYTUS

O mother! mother!

MEROPE

Who upbraids me? Ah! . . .

[*seeing the axe.*]

ÆPYTUS

Upbraids thee? no one.

MEROPE

Thou dost well: but take . . .

ÆPYTUS

What wav'st thou off?

MEROPE

That murderous axe away!

ÆPYTUS

Thy son is here.

MEROPE

One said so, sure, but now.

ÆPYTUS

Here, here thou hast him!

MEROPE

Slaughter'd by this hand! . . .

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

What, thou?—I dream——

ÆPYTUS

May'st thou dream ever so!

MEROPE (*advancing towards him*)

My child? unhurt? . . .

ÆPYTUS

Only by over joy.

MEROPE

Art thou, then, come? . . .

ÆPYTUS

Never to part again.

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

MEROPE

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

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

Fearst thou now?

ÆPYTUS

I fear not, but I think on my design.

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

Remember, to revenge his death I come!

MEROPE

Ah . . . revenge!
 That word! it kills me! I see
 Once more roll back on my house,

ant.

Never to ebb, the accurs'd
All-flooding ocean of blood.

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

Sorrowful peace!

ÆPYTUS

And yet the only peace to us allow'd.

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

Approves my brother Laias this design?

ÆPYTUS

Yes, and alone is with me here to share.

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

Proof, not surmise, shows him in commerce close—

ÆPYTUS

With this Messenian tyrant—that I know.

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

This commerce for my best behoof he plies.

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

Too dear his secret wiles have cost our house.

MEROPE

And of his unsure agent what demands he?

ÆPYTUS

News of my business, pastime, temper, friends.

MEROPE

His messages, then, point not to thy murder?

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

And what Arcadian helpers bring'st thou here?

ÆPYTUS

Laias alone; no errand mine for crowds.

MEROPE

On what relying, to crush such a foe?

ÆPYTUS

One sudden stroke, and the Messenians' love.

MEROPE

O thou long-lost, long seen in dreams alone
 But now seen face to face, my only child!
 Why wilt thou fly to lose as soon as found
 My new-won treasure, thy beloved life?
 Or how expectest not to lose, who comest
 With such slight means to cope with such a foe?
 Thine enemy thou know'st not, nor his strength.
 The stroke thou purposest is desperate, rash—
 Yet grant that it succeeds;—thou hast behind
 The stricken king a second enemy
 Scarce dangerous less than him, the Dorian lords.
 These are not now the savage band who erst
 Follow'd thy father from their northern hills,
 Mere ruthless and uncounsell'd tools of war,
 Good to obey, without a leader nought.
 Their chief hath train'd them, made them like himself,
 Sagacious, men of iron, watchful, firm,
 Against surprise and sudden panic proof:
 Their master fall'n, these will not flinch, but band
 To keep their master's power: thou wilt find
 Behind his corpse their hedge of serried spears.
 But, to match these, thou hast the people's love?
 On what a reed, my child, thou leanest there!
 Knowest thou not how timorous, how unsure,
 How useless an ally a people is
 Against the one and certain arm of power?
 Thy father perish'd in this people's cause,
 Perish'd before their eyes, yet no man stirr'd:
 For years, his widow, in their sight I stand,
 A never-changing index to revenge—
 What help, what vengeance, at their hands have I?—
 At least, if thou wilt trust them, try them first:
 Against the King himself array the host
 Thou countest on to back thee 'gainst his lords:

First rally the Messenians to thy cause,
 Give them cohesion, purpose, and resolve,
 Marshal them to an army—then advance,
 Then try the issue; and not, rushing on
 Single and friendless, throw to certain death
 That dear-belov'd, that young, that gracious head.
 Be guided, O my son! spurn counsel not:
 For know thou this, a violent heart hath been
 Fatal to all the race of Hercules.

THE CHORUS

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

ÆPYTUS

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

Their loyal passion tow'rd my father's house?
 Electrify their hearts? make them no more
 A craven mob, but a devouring fire?
 Then might I use them, then, for one who thus
 Spares not himself, themselves they will not spare.
 Haply, had but one daring soul stood forth
 To rally them and lead them to revenge,
 When my great father fell, they had replied:—
 Alas! our foe alone stood forward then.
 And thou, my mother, hadst thou made a sign—
 Hadst thou, from thy forlorn and captive state
 Of widowhood in these polluted halls,
 Thy prison-house, raised one imploring cry—
 Who knows but that avengers thou hadst found?
 But mute thou sat'st, and each Messenian heart
 In thy despondency desponded too.
 Enough of this!—though not a finger stir
 To succour me in my extremest need;
 Though all free spirits in this land be dead,
 And only slaves and tyrants left alive—
 Yet for me, mother, I had liefer die
 On native ground, than drag the tedious hours
 Of a protected exile any more.
 Hate, duty, interest, passion call one way:
 Here stand I now, and the attempt shall be.

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

And to what friends should I for aid apply?

MEROPE

The royal race of Temenus, in Argos—

ÆPYTUS

That house like ours, intestine murder maims.

MEROPE

Thy Spartan cousins, Procles and his brother——

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

My father, then, and his Arcadian chiefs——

ÆPYTUS

Mean still to keep aloof from Dorian broil.

MEROPE

Wait, then, until sufficient help appears.

ÆPYTUS

Orestes in Mycenæ had no more.

MEROPE

He to fulfil an order raised his hand.

ÆPYTUS

What order more precise had he than I?

MEROPE

Apollo peal'd it from his Delphian cave.

ÆPYTUS

A mother's murder needed hest divine.

MEROPE

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

ÆPYTUS

The Gods command not where the heart speaks clear.

MEROPE

Thou wilt destroy, I see, thyself and us.

ÆPYTUS

O suffering! O calamity! how ten,
 How twentyfold worse are ye, when your blows
 Not only wound the sense, but kill the soul,
 The noble thought, which is alone the man!
 That I, to-day returning, find myself
 Orphan'd of both my parents—by his foes
 My father, by your strokes my mother slain!—
 For this is not my mother, who dissuades,
 At the dread altar of her husband's tomb,
 His son from vengeance on his murderer;
 And not alone dissuades him, but compares
 His just revenge to an unnatural deed,
 A deed so awful, that the general tongue
 Fluent of horrors, falters to relate it—
 Of darkness so tremendous, that its author,
 Though to his act empower'd, nay, impell'd,
 By the oracular sentence of the Gods,
 Fled, for years after, o'er the face of earth,
 A frenzied wanderer, a God-driven man,
 And hardly yet, some say, hath found a grave—
 With such a deed as *this* thou matchest mine,
 Which Nature sanctions, which the innocent blood
 Clamours to find fulfill'd, which good men praise,
 And only bad men joy to see undone?
 O honour'd father! hide thee in thy grave
 Deep as thou canst, for hence no succour comes;
 Since from thy faithful subjects what revenge
 Canst thou expect, when thus thy widow fails?
 Alas! an adamant strength indeed,
 Past expectation, hath thy murderer built:
 For this is the true strength of guilty kings,
 When they corrupt the souls of those they rule.

THE CHORUS

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

LAIAS

Break off, break off your talking, and depart
 Each to his post, where the occasion calls;

Lest from the council-chamber presently
 The King return, and find you prating here.
 A time will come for greetings; but to-day
 The hour for words is gone, is come for deeds.

ÆPYTUS

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

LAIAS

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

MEROPE

Brother, it seems thy sister must present,
 At this first meeting after absence long,
 Not welcome, exculpation to her kin:
 Yet exculpation needs it, if I seek,
 A woman and a mother, to avert
 Risk from my new-restored, my only son?—
 Sometimes, when he was gone, I wished him back,
 Risk what he might; now that I have him here,
 Now that I feed mine eyes on that young face,
 Hear that fresh voice, and clasp that gold-lock'd head,
 I shudder, Laias, to commit my child
 To Murder's dread arena, where I saw
 His father and his ill-starr'd brethren fall;
 I loathe for him the slippery way of blood;
 I ask if bloodless means may gain his end.
 In me the fever of revengeful hate,
 Passions's first furious longing to imbrue
 Our own right hand in the detested blood
 Of enemies, and count their dying groans—
 If in this feeble bosom such a fire
 Did ever burn—is long by time allay'd,
 And I would now have Justice strike, not me.
 Besides—for from my brother and my son
 I hide not even this—the reverence deep,
 Remorseful, tow'rd my hostile solitude,
 By Polyphontes never fail'd-in once
 Through twenty years; his mournful anxious zeal

To efface in me the memory of his crime—
 Though it efface not that, yet makes me wish
 His death a public, not a personal act,
 Treacherously plotted 'twixt my son and me;
 To whom this day he came to proffer peace,
 Treaty, and to this kingdom for my son
 Heirship, with fair intent, as I believe:—
 For that he plots thy death, account it false;

[to ÆPYTUS.

Number it with the thousand rumours vain,
 Figments of plots, wherewith intriguers fill
 The enforced leisure of an exile's ear:—
 Immersed in serious state-craft is the King,
 Bent above all to pacify, to rule,
 Rigidly, yet in settled calm, this realm;
 Not prone, all say, to useless bloodshed now.—
 So much is due to truth, even tow'rds our foe.

[to LAIAS.

Do I, then, give to usurpation grace,
 And from his natural rights my son debar?
 Not so: let him—and none shall be more prompt
 Than I to help—raise his Messenian friends;
 Let him fetch succours from Arcadia, gain
 His Argive or his Spartan cousins' aid;
 Let him do this, do aught but recommence
 Murder's uncertain, secret, perilous game—
 And I, when to his righteous standard down
 Flies Victory wing'd, and Justice raises *then*
 Her sword, will be the first to bid it fall.
 If, haply, at this moment, such attempt
 Promise not fair, let him a little while
 Have faith, and trust the future and the Gods.
 He may—for never did the Gods allow
 Fast permanence to an ill-gotten throne.—
 These are but woman's words;—yet, Laias, thou
 Despise them not! for, brother, thou, like me,
 Were not among the feuds of warrior-chiefs,
 Each sovereign for his dear-bought hour, born;
 But in the pastoral Arcadia rear'd,
 With Cypselus our father, where we saw
 The simple patriarchal state of kings,
 Where sire to son transmits the unquestion'd crown,

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

THE CHORUS

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

LAIAS

O Merope, the common heart of man
 Agrees to deem some deeds so horrible,
 That neither gratitude, nor tie of race,
 Womanly pity, nor maternal fear,
 Nor any pleader else, shall be indulged
 To breathe a syllable to bar revenge.
 All this, no doubt, thou to thyself hast urged—
 Time presses, so that theme forbear I now:
 Direct to thy dissuasions I reply.
 Blood-founded thrones, thou say'st, are insecure;
 Our father's kingdom, because pure, is safe.
 True; but what cause to our Arcadia gives
 Its privileged immunity from blood,
 But that, since first the black and fruitful Earth
 In the primeval mountain-forests bore
 Pelagus, our forefather and mankind's,
 Legitimately sire to son, with us,
 Bequeaths the allegiance of our shepherd-tribes,
 More loyal, as our line continues more?—
 How can your Heracleidan chiefs inspire
 This awe which guards our earth-sprung, lineal kings?
 What permanence, what stability like ours,
 Whether blood flows or no, can yet invest
 The broken order of your Dorian thrones,
 Fix'd yesterday, and ten times changed since then?—
 Two brothers, and their orphan nephews, strove
 For the three conquer'd kingdoms of this isle:
 The eldest, mightiest brother, Temenus, took
 Argos: a juggle to Cresphontes gave
 Messenia: to those helpless Boys, the lot
 Worst of the three, the stony Sparta, fell.
 August, indeed, was the foundation here!

What followed?—His most trusted kinsman slew
 Cresphontes in Messenia; Temenus
 Perish'd in Argos by his jealous sons;
 The Spartan Brothers with their guardian strive:—
 Can houses thus ill-seated—thus embroil'd—
 Thus little founded in their subjects' love,
 Practise the indulgent, bloodless policy
 Of dynasties long-fix'd, and honour'd long?
 No! Vigour and severity must chain
 Popular reverence to these recent lines;
 If their first-founded order be maintain'd—
 Their murder'd rulers terribly avenged—
 Ruthlessly their rebellious subjects crush'd.—
 Since policy bids thus, what fouler death
 Than thine illustrious husband's to avenge
 Shall we select?—than Polyphontes, what
 More daring and more grand offender find?
 Justice, my sister, long demands this blow,
 And Wisdom, now thou seest, demands it too:
 To strike it, then, dissuade thy son no more;
 For to live disobedient to these two,
 Justice and Wisdom, is no life at all.

THE CHORUS

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

MEROPE

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

LAIAS

Meantime on thee the task of silence only
 Shall be imposed; to us shall be the deed.
 Now, not another word, but to our act!
 Nephew! thy friends are sounded, and prove true:
 Thy father's murderer, in the public place,

Performs, this noon, a solemn sacrifice:
 Go with him—choose the moment—strike thy blow!
 If prudence counsels thee to go unarm'd,
 The sacrificer's axe will serve thy turn.
 To me and the Messenians leave the rest,
 With the Gods' aid—and, if they give but aid
 As our just cause deserves, I do not fear.

[ÆPYTUS, LAIAS, and ARCAS, go out.]

THE CHORUS

* O Son and Mother, *str. 1*
 Whom the Gods o'ershadow,
 In dangerous trial,
 With certainty of favour!
 As erst they shadow'd
 Your race's founders
 From irretrievable woe:
 When the seed of Lycaon
 Lay forlorn, lay outcast,
 Callisto and her Boy.

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

But the sweet-smelling myrtle, *str. 2*
 And the pink-flower'd oleander,
 And the green agnus-castus,
 To the West-Wind's murmur,
 Rustled round his cradle;
 And Maia rear'd him.
 Then, a boy, he startled
 In the snow-fill'd hollows
 Of high Cyllene
 The white mountain-birds;

Or surprised, in the glens,
 The basking tortoises,
 Whose striped shell founded
 In the hand of Hermes
 The glory of the lyre.

But his mother, Callisto, *ant. 2*
 In her hiding-place of the thickets
 Of the lentisk and ilex,
 In her rough form, fearing
 The hunter on the outlook,
 Poor changeling! trembled.
 Or the children, plucking
 In the thorn-choked gullies
 Wild gooseberries, scared her,
 The shy mountain-bear.
 Or the shepherds, on slopes
 With pale-spiked lavender
 And crisp thyme tufted,
 Came upon her, stealing
 At day-break through the dew.

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

Turning, with piteous *ant. 3*
 Distressful longing,
 Sad, eager eyes,

Mutely she regarded
 Her well-known enemy.
 Low moans half utter'd
 What speech refused her;
 Tears coursed, tears human,
 Down those disfigured
 Once human cheeks.
 With unutterable foreboding
 Her son, heart-stricken, eyed her.
 The Gods had pity, made them Stars.
 Stars now they sparkle
 In the northern Heavén;
 The guard Arcturus,
 The guard-watch'd Bear.

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

epode[POLYPHONTES *comes in.*]

POLYPHONTES

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

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

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

And thou shalt have it! Yes, because thou *hast*
 For twenty years forborne to interrupt
 The solitude of her whom thou hast wrong'd—
 That scanty grace shall earn thee this reply.—
 First, for our union. Trust me, 'twixt us two
 The brazen-footed Fury ever stalks,
 Waving her hundred hands, a torch in each,
 Aglow with angry fire, to keep us twain.
 Now, for thyself. Thou com'st with well-cloak'd joy,
 To announce the ruin of my husband's house,

To sound thy triumph in his widow's ears,
 To bid her share thine unendanger'd throne:—
 To this thou would'st have answer.—Take it: Fly!
 Cut short thy triumph, seeming at its height;
 Fling off thy crown, supposed at last secure;
 Forsake this ample, proud Messenian realm:
 To some small, humble, and unnoted strand,
 Some rock more lonely than that Lemnian isle
 Where Philoctetes pined, take ship and flee:
 Some solitude more inaccessible
 Than the ice-bastion'd Caucasean Mount,
 Chosen a prison for Prometheus, climb:
 There in unvoiced oblivion hide thy name,
 And bid the sun, thine only visitant,
 Divulge not to the far-off world of men
 What once-famed wretch he hath seen lurking there.
 There nurse a late remorse, and thank the Gods,
 And thank thy bitterest foe, that, having lost
 All things but life, thou lose not life as well.

POLYPHONTES

What mad bewilderment of grief is this?

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

I pity thee, and wish thee calmer mind.

MEROPE

Pity thyself; none needs compassion more.

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

And in my turn I wish the same for thee.

POLYPHONTES

All I could do to soothe thee has been tried.

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

Thy crime: that were enough to make one fear.

POLYPHONTES

My deed is of old date, and long atoned.

MEROPE

Atoned this very day, perhaps, it is.

POLYPHONTES

My final victory proves the Gods appeased.

MEROPE

O victor, victor, trip not at the goal!

POLYPHONTES

Hatred and passionate Envy blind thine eyes.

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

I think on what the future hath in store.

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

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

POLYPHONTES

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

MEROPE

Fate seals my lips, and drags to ruin thee.

POLYPHONTES

Enough! enough! I will no longer hear
 The ill-boding note which frantic Envy sounds
 To affright a fortune which the Gods secure.
 Once more my friendship thou rejectest: well!
 More for this land's sake grieve I, than mine own.
 I chafe not with thee, that thy hate endures,
 Nor bend myself too low, to make it yield.
 What I have done is done; by my own deed,
 Neither exulting nor ashamed, I stand.
 Why should this heart of mine set mighty store
 By the construction and report of men?
 Not men's good-word hath made me what I am.
 Alone I master'd power; and alone,
 Since so thou wilt, I will maintain it still.

[POLYPHONTES goes out.]

THE CHORUS

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

str. I

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

ant. I

But the signal example
 Of invariableness of justice
 Our glorious founder
 Hercules gave us,
 Son loved of Zeus his father: for he err'd.

str. 2

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

ant. 2

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

str. 3

O heritage of Neleus,
 Ill-kept by his infirm heirs!
 O kingdom of Messenê,
 Of rich soil, chosen by craft,
 Possess'd in hatred, lost in blood!
 O town, high Stenyclaros,
 With new walls, which the victors
 From the four-town'd, mountain-shadow'd Doris,
 For their Hercules-issued princes
 Built in strength against the vanquish'd!

ant. 3

Another, another sacrifice on this day
 Ye witness, ye new-built towers!
 When the white-robed, garland-crowned Monarch
 Approaches, with undoubting heart,
 Living, his own sacrifice-block,
 And stands, shouting for a slaughterous axe;
 And the stern, Destiny-brought Stranger,
 The inheritor of the realm,
 Coming swiftly through the jocund Dorians,
 Drives the axe to its goal:
 That the blood rushes in streams to the dust;
 Bearing with it, to Erinnyes,
 To the Gods of Hades,
 To the dead unavenged,
 The fiercely-required Victim.

Knowing he did it, unknowing pays for it.
 Unknowing, unknowing,
 Thinking atoned-for
 Deeds unatonable,
 Thinking appeas'd
 Gods unappeasable,
 Lo, the Ill-fated One,
 Standing for harbour,
 Right at the harbour-mouth,
 Strikes, with all sail set,
 Full on the sharp-pointed
 Needle of ruin!

epode

[A MESSENGER comes in.]

MESSENGER

O honour'd Queen, O faithful followers
 Of your dead master's line, I bring you news
 To make the gates of this long-mournful house
 Leap, and fly open of themselves for joy!

[noise and shouting heard.]

Hark how the shouting crowds tramp hitherward
 With glad acclaim! Ere they forestall my news,
 Accept it:—Polyphontes is no more.

MEROPE

Is my son safe? that question bounds my care.

MESSENGER

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

MEROPE

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

MESSENGER

Not little, if thou saw'st what love, what zeal,
At thy dead husband's name the people show.
For when this morning in the public square
I took my stand, and saw the unarm'd crowds
Of citizens in holiday attire,
Women and children intermix'd; and then,
Group'd around Zeus's altar, all in arms,
Serried and grim, the ring of Dorian lords—
I trembled for our prince and his attempt.
Silence and expectation held us all:
Till presently the King came forth, in robe
Of sacrifice, his guards clearing the way
Before him—at his side, the prince, thy son,
Unarm'd and travel-soil'd, just as he was:
With him conferring the King slowly reach'd
The altar in the middle of the square,
Where, by the sacrificing minister,
The flower-dress'd victim stood, a milk-white bull,
Swaying from side to side his massy head
With short impatient lowings: there he stopp'd,
And seem'd to muse a while, then raised his eyes
To Heaven, and laid his hand upon the steer,
And cried—*O Zeus, let what blood-guiltiness
Yet stains our land be by this blood wash'd out,
And grant henceforth to the Messenians peace!*
That moment, while with upturn'd eyes he pray'd,
The prince snatched from the sacrificer's hand
The axe, and on the forehead of the King,
Where twines the chaplet, dealt a mighty blow
Which fell'd him to the earth, and o'er him stood,
And shouted—*Since by thee defilement came,
What blood so meet as thine to wash it out?
What hand to strike thee meet as mine, the hand*

Of Æpytus, thy murder'd master's son ?—
 But, gazing at him from the ground, the King . . .
Is it, then, thou ? he murmur'd; and with that,
 He bow'd his head, and deeply groan'd, and died.
 Till then we all seem'd stone: but then a cry
 Broke from the Dorian lords: forward they rush'd
 To circle the prince round: when suddenly
 Laias in arms sprang to his nephew's side,
 Crying—*O ye Messenians, will ye leave*
The son to perish as ye left the sire ?
 And from that moment I saw nothing clear:
 For from all sides a deluge, as it seem'd,
 Burst o'er the altar and the Dorian lords,
 Of holiday-clad citizens transform'd
 To arm'd warriors: I heard vengeful cries;
 I heard the clash of weapons; then I saw
 The Dorians lying dead, thy son hail'd king.
 And, truly, one who sees, what seem'd so strong,
 The power of this tyrant and his lords,
 Melt like a passing smoke, a nightly dream,
 At one bold word, one enterprising blow—
 Might ask, why we endured their yoke so long:
 But that we know how every perilous feat
 Of daring, easy as it seems when done,
 Is easy at no moment but the right.

THE CHORUS

Thou speakest well; but here, to give our eyes
 Authentic proof of what thou tell'st our ears,
 The conquerors, with the King's dead body, come.
 [*ÆPYTUS, LAIAS, and ARCAS come in with the dead*
body of POLYPHONTES, followed by a crowd of the
MESSENIANS.

LAIAS

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

ÆPYTUS

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

MEROPE

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

And make it stand indeed the will of Heaven.
 Thy father's passion was this people's ease,
 This people's anarchy, thy foe's pretence;
 As the chiefs rule, indeed, the people are:
 Unhappy people, where the chiefs themselves
 Are, like the mob, vicious and ignorant!
 So rule, that even thine enemies may fail
 To find in thee a fault whereon to found,
 Of tyrannous harshness, or remissness weak:
 So rule, that as thy father thou be loved;
 So rule, that as thy foe thou be obey'd.
 Take these, my son, over thine enemy's corpse
 Thy mother's prayers: and this prayer last of all,
 That even in thy victory thou show,
 Mortal, the moderation of a man.

ÆPYTUS

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

THE CHORUS

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

THE END

EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA

A DRAMATIC POEM

PERSONS

EMPEDOCLES.

PAUSANIAS, a Physician.

CALLICLES, a young Harp-player.

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

FIRST ACT: FIRST SCENE

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

CALLICLES

THE mules, I think, will not be here this hour.
They feel the cool wet turf under their feet
By the stream side, after the dusty lanes
In which they have toil'd all night from Catana,
And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan!
How gracious is the mountain at this hour!
A thousand times have I been here alone
Or with the revellers from the mountain towns,
But never on so fair a morn:—the sun
Is shining on the brilliant mountain crests,
And on the highest pines: but further down
Here in the valley is in shade; the sward
Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs:
One sees one's foot-prints crush'd in the wet grass,
One's breath curls in the air; and on these pines
That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey tufts,
Which the goats love, are jewell'd thick with dew.
Here will I stay till the slow litter comes.
I have my harp too—that is well.—Apollo!
What mortal could be sick or sorry here?
I know not in what mind Empedocles,
Whose mules I follow'd, may be coming up,
But if, as most men say, he is half mad
With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs,
Pausanias, his sage friend, who mounts with him,
Could scarce have lighted on a lovelier cure.

The mules must be below, far down: I hear
 Their tinkling bells, mix'd with the song of birds,
 Rise faintly to me—now it stops!—Who's here?
 Pausanias! and on foot? alone?

PAUSANIAS

And thou, then?

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

CALLICLES

The night was hot,
 And the feast past its prime: so we slipp'd out,
 Some of us, to the portico to breathe:
 Pisianax, thou know'st, drinks late: and then,
 As I was lifting my soil'd garland off,
 I saw the mules and litter in the court,
 And in the litter sate Empedocles;
 Thou, too, wert with him. Straightway I sped home;
 I saddled my white mule, and all night long
 Through the cool lovely country follow'd you,
 Pass'd you a little since as morning dawn'd,
 And have this hour sate by the torrent here,
 Till the slow mules should climb in sight again.
 And now?

PAUSANIAS

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

CALLICLES

No—and yet

I would fain stay and help thee tend him: once
 He knew me well, and would oft notice me.
 And still, I know not how, he draws me to him,
 And I could watch him with his proud sad face,

His flowing locks and gold-encircled brow
 And kingly gait, for ever: such a spell
 In his severe looks, such a majesty
 As drew of old the people after him,
 In Agrigentum and Olympia,
 When his star reign'd, before his banishment,
 Is potent still on me in his decline.
 But oh, Pausanias, he is changed of late:
 There is a settled trouble in his air
 Admits no momentary brightening now;
 And when he comes among his friends at feasts,
 'Tis as an orphan among prosperous boys.
 Thou know'st of old he loved this harp of mine,
 When first he sojourn'd with Pisianax:
 He is now always moody, and I fear him;
 But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,
 Dar'd one but try.

PAUSANIAS

Thou wert a kind child ever.

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

CALLICLES

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

PAUSANIAS

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

CALLICLES

Bah! Thou a doctor? Thou art superstitious.
 Simple Pausanias, 'twas no miracle.
 Panthea, for I know her kinsmen well,
 Was subject to these trances from a girl.

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

PAUSANIAS

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

SCENE SECOND

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

EMPEDOCLES. PAUSANIAS

PAUSANIAS

The noon is hot: when we have crossed the stream
 We shall have left the woody tract, and come

Upon the open shoulder of the hill.
 See how the giant spires of yellow bloom
 Of the sun-loving gentian, in the heat,
 Are shining on those naked slopes like flame.
 Let us rest here: and now, Empedocles,
 Panthea's history.

[A harp note below is heard.]

EMPEDOCLES

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

PAUSANIAS

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

EMPEDOCLES

That? and to what end?

PAUSANIAS

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

EMPEDOCLES

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

PAUSANIAS

But thy own words?

“The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
 Troubles confuse the little wit he has.”
 Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
 To lead those false who trust it.

[*The harp sounds again.*]

EMPEDOCLES

Hist! once more!

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

CALLICLES *sings unseen, from below*

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

In such a glen, on such a day,
 On Pelion, on the grassy ground,
 Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay;
 The young Achilles standing by.
 The Centaur taught him to explore
 The mountains: where the glens are dry,

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will not judge: that man,
 Howbeit, I judge as lost,

Whose mind allows a plan
Which would degrade it most:
And he treats doubt the best who tries to see least ill.

Be not, then, Fear's blind slave.
Thou art my friend; to thee,
All knowledge that I have,
All skill I wield, are free.

Ask not the latest news of the last miracle;

Ask not what days and nights
In trance Panthea lay,
But ask how thou such sights
Mayst see without dismay.

Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus.

What? hate, and awe, and shame
Fill thee to see our day;
Thou feelest thy Soul's frame
Shaken and in dismay:

What? life and time go hard with thee too, as with us;

Thy citizens, 'tis said,
Envy thee and oppress,
Thy goodness no men aid,
All strive to make it less:

Tyranny, pride, and lust fill Sicily's abodes:

Heaven is with earth at strife,
Signs make thy soul afraid,
The dead return to life,
Rivers are dried, winds stay'd:

Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the Gods:

And we feel, day and night,
The burden of ourselves?—
Well, then, the wiser wight
In his own bosom delves,

And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can.

The Sophist sneers—Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong.—
The pious wail—Forsake
A world these Sophists throng.—

Be neither Saint nor Sophist led, but be a man.

These hundred doctors try
 To preach thee to their school.
 We have the truth, they cry.
 And yet their oracle,

Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
 And thou hast done with fears.
 Man gets no other light,
 Search he a thousand years.

Sink in thyself: there ask what ails thee, at that shrine.

What makes thee struggle and rave?

Why are men ill at ease?

'Tis that the lot they have

Fails their own will to please.

For man would make no murmuring, were his will obeyed.

And why is it that still

Man with his lot thus fights?

'Tis that he makes this *will*

The measure of his *rights*,

And believes Nature outraged if his will's gainsaid.

Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn

How deep a fault is this;

Couldst thou but once discern

Thou hast no *right* to bliss,

No title from the Gods to welfare and repose;

Then, thou wouldst look less mazed

Whene'er from bliss debarr'd,

Nor think the Gods were crazed

When thy own lot went hard.

But we are all the same—the fools of our own woes.

For, from the first faint morn

Of life, the thirst for bliss

Deep in Man's heart is born,

And, sceptic as he is,

He fails not to judge clear if this is quench'd or no.

Nor is that thirst to blame.

Man errs not that he deems

His welfare his true aim.

He errs because he dreams

The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

We mortals are no kings
 For each of whom to sway
 A new-made world up-springs
 Meant merely for his play.

No, we are strangers here: the world is from of old.

In vain our pent wills fret
 And would the world subdue,
 Limits we did not set
 Condition all we do.

Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

Born into life: who lists
 May what is false maintain,
 And for himself make mists
 Through which to see less plain:

The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life: in vain,
 Opinions, those or these,
 Unaltered to retain
 The obstinate mind decrees.

Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in.

Born into life: 'tis we,
 And not the world, are new.
 Our cry for bliss, our plea,
 Others have urged it too.

Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.

No eye could be too sound
 To observe a world so vast:
 No patience too profound
 To sort what's here amassed.

How man may here best live no care too great to explore.

But we,—as some rude guest
 Would change, where'er he roam,
 The manners there profess'd
 To those he brings from home;—

We mark not the world's ways, but would have *it* learn *ours*.

The world proclaims the terms
 On which man wins content.
 Reason its voice confirms.

We spurn them: and invent
 False weakness in the world, and in ourselves false powers.

Riches we wish to get,
 Yet remain spendthrifts still;
 We would have health, and yet
 Still use our bodies ill:

Bafflers of our own prayers from youth to life's last scenes.

We would have inward peace,
 Yet will not look within:
 We would have misery cease,
 Yet will not cease from sin:

We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means;

We do not what we ought;
 What we ought not, we do;
 And lean upon the thought
 That Chance will bring us through.

But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

Yet, even when man forsakes
 All sin,—is just, is pure;
 Abandons all that makes
 His welfare insecure;

Other existences there are, which clash with ours.

Like us the lightning fires
 Love to have scope and play.
 The stream, like us, desires
 An unimpeded way.

Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.

Streams will not curb their pride
 The just man not to entomb,
 Nor lightnings go aside
 To leave his virtues room,

Nor is the wind less rough that blows a good man's barge.

Nature, with equal mind,
 Sees all her sons at play,
 Sees man control the wind,
 The wind sweep man away;

Allows the proudly-riding and the foundered bark.

And, lastly, though of ours
 No weakness spoil our lot;
 Through the non-human powers
 Of Nature harm us not;

The ill-deeds of other men make often *our* life dark.

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

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

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

Yet grant—as sense long miss'd
Things that are now perceived,
And much may still exist
Which is not yet believed—
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see—

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

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

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

This is not what Man hates,
Yet he can curse but this.

Harsh Gods and hostile Fates
 Are dreams: this only *is* :
 Is everywhere: sustains the wise, the foolish elf.
 Nor only, in the intent
 To attach blame elsewhere,
 Do we at will invent
 Stern Powers who make their care,
 To embitter human life, malignant Deities;
 But, next, we would reverse
 The scheme ourselves have spun,
 And what we made to curse
 We now would lean upon,
 And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.
 Look, the world tempts our eye,
 And we would know it all.
 We map the starry sky,
 We mind this earthen ball,
 We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands:
 We scrutinise the dates
 Of long-past human things,
 The bounds of effaced states,
 The lines of deceas'd kings:
 We search out dead men's words, and works of dead men's
 hands:
 We shut our eyes, and muse
 How our own minds are made;
 What springs of thought they use,
 How righten'd, how betray'd;
 And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed:
 But still, as we proceed,
 The mass swells more and more
 Of volumes yet to read,
 Of secrets yet to explore.
 Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimmed, our heat is
 tamed—
 We rest our faculties,
 And thus address the Gods:—
 "True Science if there is,
 It stays in your abodes.
 Man's measures cannot span the illimitable All:

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

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

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

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

At once our eyes grow clear:
 We see in blank dismay
 Year posting after year,
 Sense after sense decay;
 Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent:

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

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

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

Fools! that so often here
 Happiness mock'd our prayer,
 I think, might make us fear
 A like event elsewhere:

Make us not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.

And yet, for those who know
 Themselves, who wisely take
 Their way through life, and bow
 To what they cannot break,—

Why should I say that life need yield but *moderate* bliss?

Shall we, with tempers spoil'd.
 Health sapped by living ill,
 And judgments all embroiled
 By sadness and self-will,

Shall we judge what for man is not high bliss or is?

Is it so small a thing
 To have enjoy'd the sun,
 To have lived light in the spring,
 To have loved, to have thought, to have done;

To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling
 foes;

That we must feign a bliss
 Of doubtful future date,
 And while we dream on this
 Lose all our present state,

And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

Not much, I know, you prize
 What pleasures may be had,
 Who look on life with eyes
 Estranged, like mine, and sad:

And yet the village churl feels the truth more than you.

Who's loth to leave this life
 Which to him little yields:
 His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,
 His often-laboured fields;

The boors with whom he talk'd, the country spots he
 knew.

But thou, because thou hear'st
 Men scoff at Heaven and Fate;

Because the Gods thou fear'st
Fail to make blest thy state,
Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are.

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

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

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

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes.
They had staid long enough to see,
In Thebes, the billow of calamity
Over their own dear children roll'd,
Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,
For years, they sitting helpless in their home,
A grey old man and woman: yet of old
The Gods had to their marriage come,
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days
In sight of blood; but were rapt, far away,
To where the west wind plays,
And murmurs of the Adriatic come

To those untrodden mountain lawns: and there
Placed safely in changed forms, the Pair
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
And all that Theban woe, and stray
For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

EMPEDOCLES

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

PAUSANIAS

Yes, Master, in the wood.

EMPEDOCLES

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

PAUSANIAS

Thou wilt return to-morrow to the city?

EMPEDOCLES

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

PAUSANIAS (*alone*)

I dare not urge him further; he must go:
But he is strangely wrought;—I will speed back
And bring Pisianax to him from the city:
His counsel could once soothe him. But, Apollo!
How his brow lighten'd as the music rose!

Callicles must wait here, and play to him:
 I saw him through the chestnuts far below,
 Just since, down at the stream.—Ho! Callicles!
 [*He descends, calling.*]

ACT SECOND

Evening. The Summit of Etna.

EMPEDOCLES

Alone—

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

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

Be disarrayed of their divinity—
 Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,
 And awe be dead, and hope impossible,
 And the soul's deep eternal night come on,
 Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!

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

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

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

Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?
 Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,
 Through the dark night, suddenly,
 Typho, such red jets of flame?
 Is thy tortured heart still proud?
 Is thy fire-scath'd arm still rash?
 Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?
 Does thy fierce soul still deplore
 Thy ancient rout in the Cilician hills,
 And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?
 Do thy bloodshot eyes still see
 The fight that crown'd thy ills,
 Thy last defeat in this Sicilian sea?
 Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,
 Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee down,
 Never to cease to writhe, and try to sleep,
 Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair?
 That thy groans, like thunder deep,
 Begin to roll, and almost drown
 The sweet notes, whose lulling spell
 Gods and the race of mortals love so well,
 When through thy caves thou hearest music swell?

But an awful pleasure bland
 Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,

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

EMPEDOCLES

He fables, yet speaks truth.
 The brave impetuous hand yields everywhere
 To the subtle, contriving head.
 Great qualities are trodden down,
 And littleness united
 Is become invincible.

These rumblings are not Typho's groans, I know
 These angry smoke-bursts
 Are not the passionate breath
 Of the mountain-crush'd, tortur'd, intractable Titan king.
 But over all the world
 What suffering is there not seen
 Of plainness oppressed by cunning,
 As the well-counsell'd Zeus oppress'd
 The self-helping son of Earth?
 What anguish of greatness
 Rail'd and hunted from the world
 Because its simplicity rebukes
 This envious, miserable age!

I am weary of it!
 Lie there, ye ensigns
 Of my unloved pre-eminence
 In an age like this!
 Among a people of children,
 Who throng'd me in their cities,
 Who worshipp'd me in their houses,
 And ask'd, not wisdom,
 But drugs to charm with,
 But spells to mutter—
 All the fool's armoury of magic—Lie there,
 My golden circlet!
 My purple robe!

CALLICLES (*from below*)

As the sky-brightening south wind clears the day,
 And makes the mass'd clouds roll,
 The music of the lyre blows away
 The clouds that wrap the soul.

Oh, that Fate had let me see
 That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,
 That famous, final victory
 When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire;
 When, from far Parnassus' side,
 Young Apollo, all the pride
 Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,
 To the Phrygian highlands came:
 Where the long green reed-beds sway
 In the rippled waters grey
 Of that solitary lake
 Where Mæander's springs are born:
 Where the ridged pine-muffled roots
 Of Messogis westward break,
 Mounting westward, high and higher:
 There was held the famous strife;
 There the Phrygian brought his flutes,
 And Apollo brought his lyre,
 And, when now the westering sun
 Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,
 And the attentive Muses said,
 Marsyas! thou art vanquishèd.

Then Apollo's minister
Hang'd upon a branching fir
Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,
And began to whet his knife.
But the Mænads, who were there,
Left their friend, and with robes flowing
In the wind, and loose dark hair
O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,
Each her ribbon'd tambourine
Flinging on the mountain sod,
With a lovely frighten'd mien
Came about the youthful God.
But he turned his beauteous face
Haughtily another way,
From the grassy sun-warmed place,
Where in proud repose he lay,
With one arm over his head,
Watching how the whetting sped.

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

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

EMPEDOCLES

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

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

Take thy bough; set me free from my solitude!
 I have been enough alone.

Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?
 But they will gladly welcome him once more,
 And help him to unbend his too tense thought,
 And rid him of the presence of himself,
 And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,
 And haunt him, till the absence from himself,
 That other torment, grow unbearable:
 And he will fly to solitude again,
 And he will find its air too keen for him,

And so change back: and many thousand times
Be miserably bandied to and fro
Like a sea wave, betwixt the world and thee,
Thou young, implacable God! and only death
Shall cut his oscillations short, and so
Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

And yet what days were those, Parmenides!
When we were young, when we could number friends
In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
When with elated hearts we join'd your train,
Ye Sun-born virgins! on the road of Truth.
Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
Nor outward things were clos'd and dead to us,
But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
On simple minds with a pure natural joy;
And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,
We had the power to feel the pressure eas'd,
The brow unbound, the thought flow free again,
In the delightful commerce of the world.
We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy.
The smallest thing could give us pleasure then—
The sports of the country people;
A flute note from the woods;
Sunset over the sea;
Seed-time and harvest;
The reapers in the corn;
The vinedresser in his vineyard;
The village girl at her wheel.

Fulness of life and power of feeling, ye
Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,
Who dwell on a firm basis of content.
But he who has outliv'd his prosperous days,
But he, whose youth fell on a different world
From that on which his exil'd age is thrown;
Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd
By other rules than are in vogue to-day;
Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,
But in a world he loves not must subsist
In ceaseless opposition, be the guard
Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards,

That the world win no mastery over him;
 Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one;
 Who has no minute's breathing space allow'd
 To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy;—
 Joy and the outward world must die to him
 As they are dead to me.

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

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

No, no, ye Stars! there is no death with you,
 No languor, no decay! Languor and death,
 They are with me, not you! ye are alive!
 Ye and the pure dark ether where ye ride
 Brilliant above me! And thou, fiery world!
 That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount
 Upon whose charr'd and quaking crust I stand,

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

[*A long silence. He continues :*

Oh, that I could glow like this mountain!
 Oh, that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea!
 Oh, that my soul were full of light as the stars!
 Oh, that it brooded over the world like the air!
 But no, this heart will glow no more: thou art
 A living man no more, Empedocles!
 Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—
 But a naked, eternally restless mind. [*After a pause :—*

To the elements it came from
 Everything will return.
 Our bodies to Earth;
 Our blood to Water;
 Heat to Fire;
 Breath to Air.
 They were well born, they will be well entomb'd.
 But mind!—
 And we might gladly share the fruitful stir
 Down on our mother Earth's miraculous womb.
 Well would it be
 With what roll'd of us in the stormy deep.
 We should have joy, blent with the all-bathing Air.
 Or with the active radiant life of Fire.
 But Mind—but Thought—
 If these have been the master part of us—
 Where will *they* find their parent element?

What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?
But we shall still be in them, and they in us,
And we shall be the strangers of the world,
And they will be our lords, as they are now;
And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
And never let us clasp and feel the All
But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.
And we shall be unsatisfied as now,
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
The ineffable longing for the life of life
Baffled for ever: and still Thought and Mind
Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,
Over the unallied unopening Earth,
Over the unrecognising Sea: while Air
Will blow us fiercely back to Sea and Earth,
And Fire repel us from its living waves.
And then we shall unwillingly return
Back to this meadow of calamity,
This uncongenial place, this human life.
And in our individual human state
Go through the sad probation all again,
To see if we will poise our life at last,
To see if we will now at last be true
To our own only true deep-buried selves,
Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
Or whether we will once more fall away
Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
Forged by the imperious lonely Thinking-Power.
And each succeeding age in which we are born
Will have more peril for us than the last;
Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,
Will fret our minds to an intenser play,
Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.
And we shall struggle a while, gasp and rebel:
And we shall fly for refuge to past times.
Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness:
And the reality will pluck us back,
Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature.
And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,
And rally them for one last fight—and fail.
And we shall sink in the impossible strife,

And be astray for ever.

Slave of Sense

I have in no wise been: but slave of Thought?—

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

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

Is it but for a moment?

Ah! boil up, ye vapours!

Leap and roar, thou Sea of Fire!

My soul glows to meet you.

Ere it flag, ere the mists

Of despondency and gloom

Rush over it again,

Receive me! save me!

[*He plunges into the crater.*]

CALLICLES (*from below*)

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
Quick breaks the red flame.

All Etna heaves fiercely

Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo!

Are haunts meet for thee.

But, where Helicon breaks down

In cliff to the sea.

Where the moon-silver'd inlets

Send far their light voice

Up the still vale of Thisbe,

O speed, and rejoice!

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

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

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

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

'Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, The Nine.

—The Leader is fairest,
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows,
They stream up again.

What seeks on this mountain
The glorified train?—

They bathe on this mountain,
In the spring by their road.

Then on to Olympus,
Their endless abode.

—Whose praise do they mention,
Of what is it told?—

What will be for ever,
What was from of old.

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

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

INDEX TO FIRST LINES

	PAGE
Affections, Instincts, Principles, and Powers	34
Again I see my bliss at hand	83
And lie thou there	358
And the first grey of morning fill'd the east	145
And you, ye stars	109
A region desolate and wild	67
Artist, whose hand, with horror wing'd, hath torn	35
As the kindling glances	61
As the sky-brightening south wind clears the day	106
A wanderer is man from his birth	137
A whisper through the palace flies of one	295
A year had flown, and o'er the sea away	218
Because thou hast believed, the wheels of life	34
Before man parted for this earthly strand	128
Children (as such forgive them) have I known	36
Come, dear children, let us away	228
Come to me in my dreams, and then	117
Did I then waver	328
Down the Savoy valleys sounding	42
Draw, draw near to the tomb	278
Each on his own strict line we move	116
Far, far from here	102
Faster, faster	91
Forth from the east, up the ascent of Heaven	181
God knows it, I am with you. If to prize	36
Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece	246
Go, for they call you, Shepherd, from the hill	133
Hark! ah, the Nightingale!	110
He sleeps—sleeps calm. O ye all-seeing Gods!	305
High fate is theirs, ye sleepless waves, whose ear	26
How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!	240
If, in the silent mind of One all-pure	69
I have heard, O Queen, how a prince	301
I must not say that thou wert true	113
"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool	35
In front the awful Alpine track	262
In such a glen, on such a day	341
In summer, on the headlands	226
In the cedar shadow sleeping	54

366 Matthew Arnold's Poems

	PAGE
In the deserted moon-blanch'd street	131
In this fair stranger's eyes of grey	90
In this lone open glade I lie	136
I saw him sensitive in frame	248
Is she not come? The messenger was sure	203
I too have suffer'd: yet I know	112
 Joy comes and goes: hope ebbs and flows	 68
 Laugh, my Friends, and without blame	 50
Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet	133
 Maidens, assure me if they told me true	 288
Mist clogs the sunshine	72
Moderate tasks and moderate leisure	71
Much is there which the Sea	286
My horse's feet beside the lake	86
 " Not by the justice that my father spurn'd	 38
Not in sunk Spain's prolong'd death agony	37
 O honour'd Queen, O faithful followers	 330
O Merope, the trouble on thy face	324
" O monstrous, dead, unprofitable world	33
O most just Vizier, send away	166
One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee—	32
O Son and Mother	322
Others abide our question. Thou art free	33
 Peace, who tarriest too long	 294
 Raised are the dripping oars	 119
Raise the light, my page, that I may see her	213
 Saint Brandan sails the Northern Main	 224
Say, what blinds us, that we claim the glory	118
Set down your pitchers, maidens! and fall back	269
Silent, the Lord of the world	127
So far as I conceive the World's rebuke	38
So rest, for ever rest, O Princely Pair!	46
Son of Cresphontes, past what perils	334
Son of Cresphontes, we have reached the goal	267
So on the floor lay Balder dead; and round	173
Still glides the stream, slow drops the boat	115
Stop!—not to me, at this bitter departing	116
Strew on her roses, roses	49
 The Gods held talk together, group'd in knots	 189
The howling void to span	342
The lyre's voice is lovely everywhere	104
The Master stood upon the Mount, and taught	125
The mules, I think, will not be here this hour	335
The noon is hot: when we have crossed the stream	339
The sandy spits, the shorelock'd lakes	149
The thoughts that rain their steady flow	118
The track winds down to the clear stream	103

	PAGE
They are gone: all is still: Foolish heart, dost thou quiver?	47
Thou, who dost dwell alone—	62
Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused	256
Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts	108
"To die be given us, or attain!	74
True, we must tame our rebel will	114
Unwelcome shroud of the forgotten dead	19
Upon the glistening leaden roof	45
Vain is the effort to forget	116
Was it a dream? We sail'd, I thought we sail'd.	53
Weary of myself, and sick of asking	129
We cannot kindle when we will	130
We, O Nature, depart	122
We were apart: yet, day by day	88
Well hath he done who hath seized happiness	99
What mortal, when he saw	64
When I shall be divorced some ten years hence	37
Where I am, thou ask'st, and where I wended	111
Where, under Loughrigg, the stream	253
Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?	33
Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?	65
Why each is striving, from of old	114
Why, when the world's great mind	70
Ye storm-winds of Autumn!	83
Yes! in the sea of life enisled	90
Yes, now the longing is o'erpast	49
Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem	36

