

the comparative clearness of those plays which have been most frequently transcribed is a plain indication that this fault proceeds more from the carelessness of stupid copyists, than from confusion of thought or inadequate power of expression in the writer. In some cases, as in the prophecy of Calchas in the opening scene of the *AGAMEMNON*, the obscurity is studied and most appropriate. Poetry, like painting, will have its shade. But the great excellence of Æschylus, as a poet, is the bracing tone of thorough manhood, noble morality, and profound piety which pervades his works. Among those who are celebrated by Virgil as walking with Orpheus and Musæus in blissful Elysium—

“QUIQUE PII VATES ET PHOEBO DIGNA LOCUTI,”

the poet of the *EUMENIDES* deserves the first rank. There is a tradition current, in various shapes, among the ancient writers that he was brought before the Court of the Areopagus (so nobly eulogised by himself), on the charge of impiety, but that he was acquitted. That the Athenians might have taken offence at the freedom and boldness with which he handled religious, as other topics, is possible, though certainly by no means probable, considering how little of fixed doctrine there was in their imaginative theology; but it is more like the truth, according to the accounts which we have, that the offence which he gave consisted in some purely accidental allusion occurring in one of his plays, to some points that were, or seemed to be connected with the awful Eleusinian mysteries.* Certain it is that no writer could be less justly charged with impiety or irreligion. In his writings, religion is the key-note; and the noblest moral sentiments spring everywhere from the profoundest faith in a system of retribution carried on by the various personages of the great celestial aristocracy, of which Jove is the all-powerful and the all-wise head. So sublime, indeed, is the Æschylean theology, that certain modern writers, as if unwilling to think that such pure notions could co-exist with a belief in the popular religion, have concluded that the poet, like Euripides afterwards, must have been a free-thinker; and have imagined that they have found sure indications to this effect in his writings. But, though Æschylus was a Pythagorean (*Cic. Tusc. II. 10*), we have no proof that the Pythagoreans, any more than their successors, the Platonists, were given to scepticism. The seriousness of a poetic mind like that of Æschylus is, at all times, naturally inclined to faith; and the multi-

* ARISTOTLE, *Ethic. Nicom. III. 1*. CLEMEN. ALEX., *Strom II. 14*, p. 461. POTT. *Aelian, V.H.V. 19*, and WELCKER, *Trilog. p. 106*.

form polytheism of the Greeks was as pliable in the hands of pure men for pure purposes, as in the hands of gross men, to give a delusive ideality to their grossness.¹

¹ The primary authorities for the life of Æschylus are the PARIAN MARBLE, the *Bíos Aισχύλου*, the FROGS of ARISTOPHANES, the arguments of the extant plays, and various incidental notices in ATHENÆUS and other ancient authors, most of whom have been quoted or mentioned in the text. With regard to secondary sources of information, the present writer has been much assisted, and had his labour essentially curtailed, by PETERSEN'S *Vita Æschyli*, Havniae, 1812; the article ÆSCHYLUS, by WHISTON, in Dr. SMITH'S Dictionary of Biography and Mythology; the admirable condensed summary in BERNHARDY'S *Grundriss der Griechischen Litteratur*, 2ter, Theil, HALLE, 1845; and DONALDSON'S Greek Theatre. In Chronology, I have followed CLINTON.

AGAMEMNON

A LYRICO-DRAMATIC SPECTACLE

“Οἱ Τρώων μεν ὑπεξέφυγον στονόεσσαν αὐτὴν
Ἐν νόστῳ δ' ἀπόλοντο κακῆς ἰότητι γυναικός.”

“Greeks that 'scaped the Trojan war-cry, and the wailing battle-field,
But home returning basely perished by a wicked woman's guile.”

HOMER, *Odys.* xi. 383-4.

PERSONS

WATCHMAN.

CHORUS OF ARGIVE ELDERS.

CLYTEMNESTRA, Wife of Agamemnon.

HERALD.

AGAMEMNON, King of Argos and Mycenæ.

CASSANDRA, a Trojan Prophetess, Daughter of Priam.

ÆGISTHUS, Son of Thyestes.

SCENE—*The Royal Palace in Argos.*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

OF all that rich variety of Epic materials with which the early minstrel-literature of Greece supplied the drama of a future age, there was no more notable cycle among the ancients than that which went by the popular name of *Νόστοι*, or the *Returns*; comprehending an account of the adventures that befell the various Hellenic heroes of the Trojan war in their return home. To this cycle, in its most general acceptation, the *Odyssey* itself belongs; though the name of *Νόστοι*, according to the traditions of the ancient grammarians, is more properly confined to a legendary Epic, composed by an old poet, Agias of Troezen, of which the return of Agamemnon and Menelaus forms the principal subject. Of this Epos the grammarian Proclus * gives us the following abstract:—

“Athena raises a strife between Agamemnon and Menelaus concerning their voyage homeward. Agamemnon remains behind, in order to pacify the wrath of Athena; but Diomedes and Nestor depart, and return in safety to their own country. After them Menelaus sails, and arrives with five ships in Egypt; the rest of his vessels having been lost in a storm. Meanwhile, Calchas and Leonteus and Polypoetes go to Colophon, and celebrate the funeral obsequies of Tiresias, who had died there. There is then introduced the shade of Achilles appearing to Agamemnon, and warning him of the dangers that he was about to encounter. Then follows a storm as the fleet is passing the Capharean rocks, at the south promontory of Eubœa, on which occasion the Locrian Ajax is destroyed by the wrath of Athena, whom he had offended. Neoptolemus, on the other hand, under the protection of Thetis, makes his way overland through Thrace (where he encounters Ulysses in Maronea), to his native country, and proceeding to the country of the Molossi, is there recognised by his grandfather, the aged Peleus, the father of Achilles. The poem then concludes with an account of the murder of Agamemnon by Ægisthus and Clytemnestra, of the revenge taken on her by Orestes and Pylades, and of the return of Menelaus to Lacedæmon.” †

* Welcker, in the introductory remarks to his *Epischer Cyclus* (§ 1), has given what appear to me sufficient reasons for not confounding this Proclus with the famous Platonist of the same name.

† This and other curious fragments from the wreck of the old Hellenic epos, will be found in Becker's *Scholia to Homer* (Berlin, 1825), or in the second volume of Welcker's *Epic Cycle* (Bonn, 1849), in the Appendix.

The last sentence of this curious notice contains the Epic germ of which the famous trilogy—the Agamemnon, the Choephoræ, and the Eumenides of Æschylus—the three plays contained in the present volume, present the dramatic expansion. The celebrity of the legends with regard to the return of the mighty Atridan arose naturally from the prominent situation in which he stood as the admiral of the famous thousand-masted fleet; and, besides, the passage from the old Troezenian minstrel just quoted, is sufficiently attested by various passages—some of considerable length—in the Odyssey, which will readily present themselves to the memory of those who are familiar with the productions of the great Ionic Epopœist. In the very opening of that poem, for instance, occur the following remarkable lines:—

“Strange, O strange, that mortal men immortal gods will still be blaming,
Saying that the source of evil lies with us; while they, in sooth,
More than Fate would have infatuate with sharp sorrows pierce themselves!

Thus even now Ægisthus, working sorrow more than Fate would have,
The Atridan’s wife hath wedded, and himself returning slain,
Knowing well the steep destruction that awaits him; for ourselves
Sent the sharp-eyed Argus-slayer, Hermes, to proclaim our will,
That nor him he dare to murder, nor his wedded wife to woo.
Thus spoke Hermes well and wisely; but thy reckless wit, Ægisthus,
Moved he not; full richly therefore now thy folly’s fine thou payest.”

And the same subject is reverted to in the Third Book (v. 194), where old Nestor, in Pylos, gives an account to Telemachus, first of his own safe return, and then of the fate of the other Greeks, so far as he knew; and, again, in the Fourth Book (v. 535) where Menelaus is informed of his brother’s sad fate (slain “like a bull in a stall”) by the old prophetic Proteus, the sea harlequin of the African coast; and, also, in the Eleventh Book (v. 405), where Ulysses, in Hades, hears the sad recital from the injured shade of the royal Atridan himself.

The tragic events by which Agamemnon and his family have acquired such a celebrity in the epic and dramatic annals of Greece, are but the sequel and consummation of a series of similar events commencing with the great ancestor of the family; all which hang together in the chain of popular tradition by the great moral principle so often enunciated in the course of these dramas, that sin has always a tendency to propagate its like, and a root of bitterness once planted in a family, will grow up and branch out luxuriantly, till, in the fulness of time, it bears those bloody blossoms, and fruits of perdition that are its natural product. The guilty ancestor, in the present case, is the

well-known Tantalus, the peculiar style of whose punishment in the infernal regions has been stereotyped, for the modern memory, in the shape of one of the most common and most expressive words in the English language. Tantalus, a son of Jove, a native of Sipylos in Phrygia, and who had been admitted to the table of the gods, thinking it a small matter to know the divine counsels, if he did not, at the same time, gratify his vanity by making a public parade of his knowledge before profane ears, was punished in the pit of Tartarus by those tortures of ever reborn and never gratified desire which every schoolboy knows. His son, Pelops, an exile from his native country, comes with great wealth to Pisa; and having, by stratagem, won, in a chariot race, Hippodamia, the daughter of Oernomaus, king of that place, himself succeeded to the kingdom, and became so famous, according to the legend, as to lend a new name to the southern peninsula of Greece which was the theatre of his exploits.* In his career also, however, the traces of blood are not wanting, which soil so darkly the path of his no less famous descendants. Pelops slew Myrtilus, the charioteer by whose aid he had won the race that was the beginning of his greatness; and it was the Fury of this Myrtilus—or “his blood crying to Heaven,” as in Christian style we should express it—that, according to one poet (Eurip. *Orest.* 981), gave rise to the terrible retributions of blood by which the history of the Pelopidan family is marked. Of Pelops, according to the common account, Atreus and Thyestes were the sons. These having murdered their stepbrother, Chrysippus, were obliged to flee for safety to Mycenæ, in Argolis, where, in the course of events, they afterwards established themselves, and became famous for their wealth and for their crimes. The bloody story of these hostile brothers commences with the seduction, by Thyestes, of Aerope, the wife of Atreus; in revenge for which insult, Atreus recalls his banished brother, and, pretending reconciliation, offers that horrid feast of human flesh—the blood of the children to the lips of the father—from which the sun turned away his face in horror. The effect of this deed of blood was to entail, between the two families of Thyestes and Atreus, a hereditary hostility, the fruits of which appeared afterwards in the person of Ægisthus, the son of the former, who is found, in this first play of the trilogy, engaged with Clytemnestra in a treacherous plot to avenge his father's wrongs, by the murder of his uncle's son.

Agamemnon, the son, or, according to a less common account (for which see Schol. ad *Iliad* II. 249), the grandson of Atreus, being

* See Thucydides, I. 9.

distinguished above the other Hellenic princes for wealth and power, was either by special election appointed, or by that sort of irregular kingship common among half-civilized nations, allowed to conduct the famous expedition against Troy that in early times foreshadowed the conquests of Alexander the Great, and the influence of the Greek language and letters in the East. Such a distant expedition as this, like the crusades in the middle ages, was not only a natural living Epos in itself, but would necessarily give rise to that intense glow of popular sympathy, and that excited state of the popular imagination, which enable the wandering poets of the people to make the best poetic use of the various dramatic incidents that the realities of a highly potentiated history present. Accordingly we find, in the very outset of the expedition, the fleet, storm-bound in the harbour of Aulis, opposite Eubœa, enabled to pursue its course, under good omens, only by the sacrifice of the fairest daughter of the chief. This event—a sad memorial of the barbarous practice of human sacrifice, even among the polished Greeks—formed the subject of a special play, perhaps a trilogic series of plays,* by Æschylus. This performance, however, has been unfortunately lost; and we can only imagine what it may have been by the description in the opening chorus of the present play, and by the beautiful, though certainly far from Æschylean, tragedy of Euripides. For our present purpose, it is sufficient to note that, in the *Agamemnon*, special reference is made to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, both as an unrighteous deed on the part of the father, for which some retribution was naturally to be expected, and as the origin of a special grudge in the mind of the mother, which she afterwards gratifies by the murder of her husband.

As to that deed of blood itself, and its special adaptation for dramatic purposes, there can be no doubt; as little that Æschylus has used his materials in the present play in a fashion that satisfies the highest demands both of lyric and dramatic poetry, as executed by the first masters of both. The calm majesty and modest dignity of the much-tried monarch; the cool self-possession, and the smooth front of specious politeness that mark the character of the royal murderess: the obstreperous bullying of the cowardly braggart, who does the deed with his heart, not with his hand; the half-wild, half-tender ravings of the horror-haunted Trojan prophetess; these together contain a combination of highly wrought dramatic ele-

* See Welcker's *Trilogie*, Darmstadt, 1824, p. 408, who, however, here, as in other parts of the same learned work, expends much superfluity of ingenious conjecture on subjects which, from their very nature, are necessarily barren of any certain result.

ments, such as is scarcely excelled even in the all-embracing pages of our own Shakespere. As far removed from common-place are the lyrical—in Æschylus never the secondary—elements of the piece. The sublime outbreak of Cassandra's prophetic horror is, as the case demanded, made to exhibit itself as much under the lyric as in the declamatory form; while the other choral parts, remarkable for length and variety, are marked not only by that mighty power of intense moral feeling which is so peculiarly Æschylean, but by the pictorial beauty and dramatic reality that distinguish the workmanship of a great lyric master from that of the vulgar dealer in inflated sentiment and sonorous sentences.

AGAMEMNON

Watch. I pray the gods a respite from these toils,
This long year's watch that, dog-like, I have kept,
High on the Atridan's battlements,¹ beholding
The nightly council of the stars, the circling
Of the celestial signs, and those bright regents,
High-swung in ether, that bring mortal men
Summer and winter. Here I watch the torch,
The appointed flame that wings a voice from Troy,
Telling of capture; thus I serve her hopes,
The masculine-minded who is sovereign here.²
And when night-wandering shades encompass round
My dew-sprent dreamless couch (for fear doth sit
In slumber's chair, and holds my lids apart),
I chaunt some dolorous ditty, making song,
Sleep's substitute, surgeon my nightly care,
And the misfortunes of this house I weep,
Not now, as erst, by prudent counsels swayed.
Oh! soon may the wished for sign relieve my toils,
Thrice-welcome herald, gleaming through the night!

[*The beacon is seen shining.*]

All hail thou cresset of the dark! fair gleam
Of day through midnight shed, all hail! bright father
Of joy and dance, in Argos, hail! all hail!
Hillo! hilloa!

I will go tell the wife of Agamemnon
To shake dull sleep away, and lift high-voiced³
The jubilant shout well-omened, to salute
This welcome beacon; if, indeed, old Troy
Hath fallen—as flames this courier torch to tell.
Myself will dance the prelude to this joy.
My master's house hath had a lucky throw,
And thrice six falls to me,⁴ thanks to the flame!
Soon may he see his home; and soon may I
Carry my dear-loved master's hand in mine!
The rest I whisper not, for on my tongue
Is laid a seal.⁵ These walls, if they could speak,

Would say strange things. Myself to those that know
Am free of speech, to whoso knows not dumb. [Exit

Enter CHORUS in procession. March time.

Nine years have rolled, the tenth is rolling,
Since the strong Atridan pair,
Menelaus and Agamemnon,
Sceptred kings by Jove's high grace,⁶
With a host of sworn alliance,
With a thousand triremes rare,
With a righteous strong defiance,
Sailed for Troy. From furious breast
Loud they clanged the peal of battle;
Like the cry of vultures wild
O'er the lone paths fitful-wheeling,⁷
With their plummy oarage oaring
Over the nest by the spoiler spoiled,
The nest dispeopled now and bare,
Their long but fruitless care.

But the gods see it: some Apollo,
Pan or Jove, the wrong hath noted,
Heard the sharp and piercing cry
Of the startled birds, shrill-throated
Tenants of the sky;
And the late-chastising Fury⁸
Sent from above to track the spoiler,
Hovers vengeful nigh.

Thus great Jove, the high protector
Of the hospitable laws,⁹
'Gainst Alexander sends the Atridans,
Harnessed in a woman's cause,
The many-lorded fair.

Toils on toils shall come uncounted,
(Jove hath willed it so);
Limb-outwearying hard endeavour,
Where the strong knees press the dust,
Where the spear-shafts split and shiver,
Trojan and Greek shall know.

But things are as they are: the chain
Of Fate doth bind them; sighs are vain,
Tears, libations, fruitless flow,
To divert from purposed ire
The powers whose altars know no fire.¹⁰

But we behind that martial train
 Inglorious left remain,
 Old and frail, and feebly leaning
 Strength as of childhood on a staff.
 Yea! even as life's first unripe marrow
 In the tender bones are we,
 From war's harsh service free.
 For hoary Eld, life's leaf up-shrunk,
 Totters, his three-footed way
 Feebly feeling, weak as childhood,
 Like a dream that walks by day.
 But what is this? what wandering word,
 Clytemnestra queen, hath reached thee?
 What hast seen? or what hast heard
 That from street to street swift flies
 Thy word, commanding sacrifice?
 All the altars of all the gods
 That keep the city, gods supernal,
 Gods Olympian, gods infernal,
 Gods of the Forum, blaze with gifts;
 Right and left the flame mounts high,
 Spiring to the sky,
 With the gentle soothings cherished
 Of the oil that knows no malice,¹¹
 And the sacred cake that smokes
 From the queen's chamber in the palace.
 What thou canst and may'st, declare;
 Be the healer of the care
 That bodes black harm within me; change it
 To the bright and hopeful ray,
 Which from the altar riseth, chasing
 From the heart the sateless sorrow
 That eats vexed life away.

*The CHORUS, having now arranged themselves into a regular
 band in the middle of the Orchestra, sing the First
 CHORAL HYMN.*

STROPHE.

I'll voice the strain.¹² What though the arm be weak
 That once was strong,
 The suasive breath of Heaven-sent memories stirs
 The old man's breast with song.
 My age hath virtue left

To sing what fateful omens strangely beckoned
 The twin kings to the fray,
 What time to Troy concentuous marched
 The embattled Greek array.
 Jove's swooping bird, king of all birds,* led on
 The kings of the fleet with spear and vengeful hand:
 By the way-side from shining seats serene,
 Close by the palace, on the spear-hand seen,†
 Two eagles flapped the air,
 One black, the other silver-tipt behind,
 And with keen talons seized a timorous hare,
 Whose strength could run no more,
 Itself, and the live burden which it bore.
 Sing woe and well-a-day! But still
 May the good omens shame the ill.

ANTISTROPHE.

The wise diviner of the host ‡ beheld,
 And knew the sign;
 The hare-devouring birds with diverse wings
 Typed the Atridan pair,
 The diverse-minded kings;¹³
 And thus the fate he chaunted:—Not in vain
 Ye march this march to-day;
 Old Troy shall surely fall, but not
 Till moons on moons away
 Have lingering rolled. Rich stores by labour massed
 Clean-sweeping Fate shall plunder. Grant the gods,
 While this strong bit for Troy we forge with gladness,
 No heavenly might in jealous wrath o'ercast
 Our mounting hope with sadness.
 For the chaste Artemis§ a sore grudge nurses
 Against the kings; Jove's winged hounds she curses,¹⁴
 The fierce war-birds that tore
 The fearful hare, with the young brood it bore.
 Sing woe and well-a-day! but still
 May the good omens shame the ill.

* Jove to Priam sent the eagle, of all flying things that be
 Noblest made, his dark-winged hunter.

† *i.e.* The right hand—the hand which brandishes the spear, *χερὸς ἐκ δοριπάλτου*;
 the right being the lucky side in Greek augury.—*ILIAD*, xxiv. 320.

‡ Calchas, the famous soothsayer of the *Iliad*.

§ Diana.

EPODE.

The lion's fresh-dropt younglings, and each whelp
That sucks wild milk, and through the forest roves,
Live not unfriended ; them the fair goddess loves,¹⁵

And lends her ready help.

The vision of the birds shall work its end
In bliss, but dashed not lightly with black bane ;*
I pray thee, Pæan, may she never send¹⁶
Contrarious blasts dark-lowering, to detain

The Argive fleet.

Ah ! ne'er may she desire to feast her eyes
On an unblest unholy sacrifice,
From festal use abhorrent, mother of strife,
And sundering from her lawful lord the wife.†
Stern-purposed waits the child-avenging wrath¹⁷

About the fore-doomed halls,
Weaving dark wiles, while with sure-memored sting
Fury to Fury calls.

Thus hymned the seer, the doom, in dubious chaunt
Bliss to the chiefs dark-mingling with the bane,
From the way-haunting birds ; and we
Respondent to the strain,
Sing woe and well-a-day ! but still
May the good omens shame the ill.

STROPHE I.

Jove, or what other name¹⁸
The god that reigns supreme delights to claim,
Him I invoke ; him of all powers that be,
Alone I find,
Who from this bootless load of doubt can free
My labouring mind.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Who was so great of yore,
With all-defiant valour brimming o'er,¹⁹
Is mute ; and who came next by a stronger arm
Thrice-vanquished fell ;
But thou hymn victor Jove : so in thy heart
His truth shall dwell.

* This excellent version I took from an article in the *Quarterly Review*.—Vol. lxx.
p. 340 † The sacrifice of Iphigenia displeasing to Clytemnestra.

Agamemnon

STROPHE II.

For Jove doth teach men wisdom, sternly wins
 To virtue by the tutoring of their sins;
 Yea! drops of torturing recollection chill
 The sleeper's heart; 'gainst man's rebellious will
 Jove works the wise remorse:
 Dread Powers, on awful seats enthroned, compel
 Our hearts with gracious force.²⁰

ANTISTROPHE II.

The elder chief, the leader of the ships,
 Heard the dire doom, nor dared to ope his lips
 Against the seer, and feared alone to stand
 'Gainst buffeting fate, what time the Chalcian strand*
 Saw the vexed Argive masts
 In Aulis tides hoarse-refluent,²¹ idly chained
 By the fierce Borean blasts;

STROPHE III.

Blasts from Strymon† adverse braying,
 Harbour-vexing, ship-delaying,
 Snapping cables, shattering oars,
 Wasting time, consuming stores,
 With vain-wandering expectation,
 And with long-drawn slow vexation
 Wasting Argive bloom.
 At length the seer forth-clanged the doom,
 A remedy strong to sway the breeze,
 And direful Artemis to appease,
 But to the chiefs severe:
 The Atridans with their sceptres struck the ground,
 Nor could restrain the tear.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Then spake the elder. To deny,
 How hard! still harder to comply!
 My daughter dear, my joy, my life,
 To slay with sacrificial knife,
 And with life's purple-gushing tide,
 Imbrue a father's hand, beside
 The altar of the gods.
 This way or that is ill: for how
 Shall I despise my federate vow?

* Chalcis, a city in Eubœa, opposite Aulis.

† A river in Macedonia.

How leave the ships? That all conspire
Thus hotly to desire
The virgin's blood—wind-soothing sacrifice—
Is the gods' right. So be it.²²

STROPHE IV.

Thus to necessity's harsh yoke he bared
His patient neck. Unblissful blew the gale
That turned the father's heart²³
To horrid thoughts unholy, thoughts that dared
The extreme of daring. Sin from its primal spring
Mads the ill-counsell'd heart, and arms the hand
With reckless strength. Thus he
Gave his own daughter's blood, his life, his joy,
To speed a woman's war, and consecrate²⁴
His ships for Troy.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

In vain with prayers, in vain she beats dull ears
With a father's name; the war-delighting chiefs
Heed not her virgin years.
The father stood; and when the priests had prayed
Take her, he said; in her loose robes enfolden,
Where prone and spent she lies,²⁵ so lift the maid,
Even as a kid is laid,
So lay her on the altar; with dumb force
Her beauteous* mouth gag, lest it breathe a voice
Of curse to Argos.

STROPHE V.

And as they led the maid, her saffron robe²⁶
Sweeping the ground, with pity-moving dart
She smote each from her eye,
Even as a picture beautiful, fain to speak,
But could not. Well that voice they knew of yore;
Oft at her father's festive board,
With gallant banqueters ringed cheerly round,
The virgin strain they heard²⁷
That did so sweetly pour
Her father's praise, whom Heaven had richly crowned
With bounty brimming o'er.

* The epithet *καλλιπρώρου*, *beautiful fronted*, applied to *στόματος*, being contrary to the genius of the English language, the translator must content himself with the simple epithet.

ANTISTROPHE V.

The rest I know not, nor will vainly pry ;
But Calchas was a seer not wont to lie.

Justice doth wait to teach
Wisdom by suffering. Fate will have its way.
The quickest ear is pricked in vain to-day,
To catch to-morrow's note. What boots
To forecast woe, which, on no wavering wing,²⁸
The burthen'd hour shall bring.

But we, a chosen band,
Left here sole guardians of the Apian land,*
Pray Heaven, all good betide !

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Chorus. Hail Clytemnestra ! honour to thy sceptre !
When her lord's throne is vacant, the wife claims
His honour meetly. Queen, if thou hast heard
Good news, or to the hope of good that shall be,
With festal sacrifice dost fill the city,
I fain would know ; but nothing grudge thy silence.

Clytem. Bearing blithe tidings, saith the ancient saw,
Fair Morn be gendered from boon mother Night !
News thou shalt hear beyond thy topmost hope ;
The Greeks have ta'en old Priam's city.

Chorus. How !

Troy taken ! the word drops from my faithless ear.

Clytem. The Greeks have taken Troy. Can I speak plainer ?

Chorus. Joy o'er my heart creeps, and provokes the tear.

Clytem. Thine eye accuses thee that thou art kind.

Chorus. What warrant of such news ? What certain sign ?

Clytem. Both sign and seal, unless some god deceive me.

Chorus. Dreams sometimes speak ; did suasive visions move
thee ?

Clytem. Where the soul sleeps, and the sense slumbers, there
Shall the wise ask for reasons ?

Chorus. Ever swift

Though wingless, Fame,²⁹ with tidings fair hath cheered
thee.

Clytem. Thou speak'st as one who mocks a simple girl.

Chorus. Old Troy is taken ? how ?—when did it fall ?

Clytem. The self-same night that mothers this to-day.

Chorus. But how ? what stalwart herald ran so fleetly ?

* An old name for the Peloponnesus.

Clytem. Hephæstus.* He from Ida shot the spark ;²⁹
 And flaming straightway leapt the courier fire
 From height to height ; to the Hermæan rock
 Of Lemnos, first from Ida ; from the isle
 The Athóan steep of mighty Jove received
 The beaming beacon ; thence the forward strength
 Of the far-travelling lamp strode gallantly³¹
 Athwart the broad sea's back. The flaming pine
 Rayed out a golden glory like the sun,
 And winged the message to Macistus' watch-tower.
 There the wise watchman, guiltless of delay,
 Lent to the sleepless courier further speed ;
 And the Messapian station hailed the torch
 Far-beaming o'er the floods of the Eurípus.
 There the grey heath lit the responsive fire,
 Speeding the portioned message ; waxing strong,
 And nothing dulled across Asopus' plain
 The flame swift darted like the twinkling moon,
 And on Cithæron's rocky heights awaked
 A new receiver of the wandering light.
 The far-sent ray, by the faithful watch not spurned,
 With bright addition journeying, bounded o'er
 Gorgópus' lake and Ægiplanctus' mount,
 Weaving the chain unbroken.³² Hence it spread
 Not scant in strength, a mighty beard of flame,³³
 Flaring across the headlands that look down
 On the Saronic gulf.³⁴ Speeding its march,
 It reached the neighbour-station of our city,
 Arachne's rocky steep ; and thence the halls
 Of the Atridæ recognised the signal,
 Light not unfathered by Idæan fire.
 Such the bright train of my torch-bearing heralds,
 Each from the other fired with happy news,
 And last and first was victor in the race.³⁵
 Such the fair tidings that my lord hath sent,
 A sign that Troy hath fallen.

Chorus. And for its fall
 Our voice shall hymn the gods anon : meanwhile
 I'm fain to drink more wonder from thy words.

Clytem. This day Troy fell. Methinks I see't ; a host
 Of jarring voices stirs the startled city,
 Like oil and acid, sounds that will not mingle,

* Vulcan.

By natural hatred sundered. Thou may'st hear
 Shouts of the victor, with the dying groan,
 Battling, and captives' cry ; upon the dead—
 Fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters, wives—
 The living fall—the young upon the old ;
 And from enthralled necks wail out their woe.
 Fresh from the fight, through the dark night the spoilers
 Tumultuous rush where hunger spurs them on,
 To feast on banquets never spread for them.
 The homes of captive Trojan chiefs they share
 As chance decides the lodgment ; there secure
 From the cold night-dews and the biting frosts,
 Beneath the lordly roof, to their hearts' content ³⁶
 They live, and through the watchless night prolong
 Sound slumbers. Happy if the native gods
 They reverence, and the captured altars spare, ³⁷
 Themselves not captive led by their own folly !
 May no unbridled lust of unjust gain
 Master their hearts, no reckless rash desire !
 Much toil yet waits them. Having turned the goal, ³⁸
 The course's other half they must mete out,
 Ere home receive them safe. Their ships must brook
 The chances of the sea ; and, these being scaped,
 If they have sinned ³⁹ the gods their own will claim,
 And vengeance wakes till blood shall be atoned.
 I am a woman ; but mark thou well my words ;
 I hint the harm ; but with no wavering scale,
 Prevail the good ! I thank the gods who gave me
 Rich store of blessings, richly to enjoy.

Chorus. Woman, thou speakest wisely as a man,
 And kindly as thyself. But having heard
 The certain signs of Agamemnon's coming,
 Prepare we now to hymn the gods ; for surely
 With their strong help we have not toiled in vain.

O regal Jove ! O blessed Night !
 Thou hast won thee rich adornments,
 Thou hast spread thy shrouding meshes
 O'er the towers of Priam. Ruin
 Whelms the young, the old. In vain
 Shall they strive to o'erleap the snare,
 And snap the bondsman's galling chain,
 In woe retrieveless lost.

Jove, I fear thee, just protector
Of the wrong'd host's sacred rights ;
Thou didst keep thy bow sure bent
'Gainst Alexander ; not before
The fate-predestined hour, and not
Beyond the stars, with idle aim,
Thy cunning shaft was shot.

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE I.

The hand of Jove hath smote them ; thou
May'st trace it plainly ;
What the god willed, behold it now
Not purposed vainly !
The gods are blind,⁴⁰ and little caring,
So one hath said, to mark the daring
Of men, whose graceless foot hath ridden
O'er things to human touch forbidden.
Godless who said so ; sons shall rue
Their parents' folly,
Who flushed with wealth, with insolence flown,
The sober bliss of man outgrown,
The trump of Mars unchastened blew,
And stirred red strife without the hue
Of justice wholly.
Live wiselier thou ; not waxing gross
With gain, thou shalt be free from loss.
Weak is his tower, with pampering wealth
In brief alliance
Who spurns great Justice' altar dread
With damned defiance ;
Him the deep hell shall claim, and shame
His vain reliance.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Self-will fell Até's daughter,⁴¹ still
Fore-counselling ruin,
Shall spur him on resistless borne
To his undoing.
Fined with sharp loss beyond repairing,
His misery like a beacon flaring,
Shall shine to all. Like evil brass,
That tested shows a coarse black mass,
His deep distemper he shall show

By dints of trial.
 Even as a boy in wanton sport,⁴²
 Chasing a bird to his own hurt,
 And to the state's redeemless loss,
 Whom, when he prays, the gods shall cross
 With sheer denial,
 And sweep the lewd and lawless liver
 From earth's fair memory for ever ;
 Thus to the Atridans' palace came
 False Alexander,
 And shared the hospitable board,
 A bold offender,
 Filching his host's fair wife away
 To far Scamander.

STROPHE II.

She went, and to the Argive city left
 Squadrons shield-bearing,
 Battle preparing,
 Swords many-flashing,
 Oars many-plashing ;
 She went, destruction for her dowry bearing,
 To the Sigeian shore ;
 Light with swift foot she brushed the doorstep, daring
 A deed undared before.
 The prophets of the house loud wailing,⁴³
 Cried with sorrow unavailing,
 " Woe to the Atridans ! woe !
 The lofty palaces fallen low !
 The marriage and the marriage bed,
 The steps once faithful, fond to follow
 There where the faithful husband led ! "
 He silent stood in sadness, not in wrath,⁴⁴
 His own eye scarce believing,
 As he followed her flight beyond the path
 Of the sea-wave broadly heaving.
 And phantoms sway each haunt well known,
 Which the lost loved one wont to own,
 And the statued forms that look from their seats
 With a cold smile serenely,
 He loathes to look on ; in his eye
 Pines Aphrodité * leanly.

* Venus.

ANTISTROPHE II.

In vain he sleeps ; for in the fretful night
 Shapes of fair seeming
 Flit through his dreaming,
 Soothing him sweetly,
 Leaving him fleetly
 Of bliss all barren. The shape fond fancy weaves him
 His eager grasp would keep,
 In vain ; it cheats the hand ; and leaves him, sweeping
 Swift o'er the paths of sleep.

These sorrows pierce the Atridan chiefs,
 And, worse than these, their private griefs,
 But general Greece that to the fray
 Sent her thousands, mourns to-day ;
 And Grief stout-hearted at each door
 Sits to bear the burden sore
 Of deathful news from the Trojan shore.
 Ah ! many an Argive heart to-day
 Is pricked with wail and mourning,
 Knowing how many went to Troy,
 From Troy how few returning !
 The mothers of each house shall wait
 To greet their sons at every gate ;
 But, alas ! not men, but dust of men
 Each sorrowing house receiveth,
 The urn in which the fleshly case
 Its cindered ruin leaveth.

STROPHE III.

For Mars doth market bodies, and for gold
 Gives dust, and in the battle of the bold
 Holds the dread scales of Fate.
 Burnt cinders, a light burden, but to friends
 A heavy freight,
 He sends from Troy ; the beautiful vase he sends
 With dust, for hearts, well lined, on which descends
 The frequent tear.
 And friends do wail their praise ; this here
 Expert to wield the pointed spear,
 And this who cast his life away,
 Nobly in ignoble fray,
 For a strange woman's sake.
 And in their silent hearts hate burns ;

Against the kings
 The moody-muttered grudge creeps forth,
 And points its stings.
 Others they mourn who 'neath Troy's wall
 Entombed, dark sleep prolong,
 Low pressed beneath the hostile sod,
 The beautiful, the strong !

ANTISTROPHE III.

O hard to bear, when evil murmurs fly,
 Is a nation's hate ; unblest on whom doth lie
 A people's curse !
 My heart is dark, in my fear-procreant brain
 Bad begets worse.
 For not from heaven the gods behold in vain
 Hands red with slaughter. The black-mantled train *
 Who watch and wait,
 In their own hour shall turn to bane
 The bliss that grew from godless gain.
 The mighty man with heart elate
 Shall fall ; even as the sightless shades,
 The great man's glory fades.
 Sweet to the ear is the popular cheer
 Forth billowed loudly ;
 But the bolt from on high shall blast his eye ⁴⁵
 That looketh proudly.
 Be mine the sober bliss, and far
 From fortune's high-strung rapture ;
 Not capturing others, may I never
 See my own city's capture !

EPODE.

Swift-winged with thrilling note it came,
 The blithe news from the courier-flame ;
 But whether true and witnessed well,
 Or if some god hath forged a lie,
 What tongue can tell ?
 Who is so young, so green of wit,
 That his heart should blaze with a fever fit,
 At a tale of this fire-courier's telling,
 When a new rumour swiftly swelling,
 May turn him back to dole ? To lift the note
 Of clamorous triumph ere the fight be fought,

* The Furies.

Is a light chance may fitly fall,
Where women wield the spear.⁴⁶
A wandering word by woman's fond faith sped
Swells and increases,
But with dispersion swift a woman's tale
Is lost and ceases.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Soon shall we know if the light-bearing lamps
And the bright signals of the fiery changes
Spake true or, dream-like, have deceived our sense
With smiling semblance. For, behold, where comes,
Beneath the outspread olive's branchy shade,
A herald from the beach; and thirsty dust,
Twin-sister of the clay, attests his speed.
Not voiceless he, nor with the smoking flame
Of mountain pine will bring uncertain news.
His heraldry gives increase to our joy,
Or—but to speak ill-omened words I shun;—
May fair addition fair beginning follow!
Chorus. Whoso fears evil where no harm appears,
Reap first himself the fruit of his own fears.

Enter HERALD.

Hail Argive land! dear fatherland, all hail!
This tenth year's light doth shine on my return!
And now this one heart's hope from countless wrecks
I save! Scarce hoped I e'er to lay my bones
Within the tomb where dearest dust is stored.
I greet thee, native land! thee, shining sun!
Thee, the land's Sovereign, Jove! thee, Pythian King,
Shooting no more thy swift-winged shafts against us.
Enough on red Scamander's banks we knew
Thee hostile; now our saviour-god be thou,
Apollo, and our healer from much harm!⁴⁷
And you, all gods that guide the chance of fight,
I here invoke; and thee, my high protector,
Loved Hermes, of all heralds most revered.
And you, all heroes that sent forth our hosts,
Bring back, I pray, our remnant with good omens.
O kingly halls! O venerated seats!
O dear-loved roofs, and ye sun-fronting gods,⁴⁸
If ever erst, now on this happy day,
With these bright-beaming eyes, duly receive

Your late returning king ; for Agamemnon
 Comes, like the sun, a common joy to all.
 Greet him with triumph, as beseems the man,
 Who with the mattock of justice-bringing Jove
 Hath dug the roots of Troy, hath made its altars
 Things seen no more, its towering temples razed,
 And caused the seed of the whole land to perish.
 Such yoke on Ilium's haughty neck the elder
 Atridan threw, a king whom gods have blessed
 And men revere, 'mongst mortals worthy most
 Of honour ; now nor Paris, nor in the bond
 Partner'd with him, old Troy more crime may boast
 Than penalty ; duly in the court of fight,
 In the just doom of rape and robbery damned,
 His pledge is forfeited ; ⁴⁹ his hand hath reaped
 Clean bare the harvest of all bliss from Troy.
 Doubly they suffer for a double crime.

Chorus. Hail soldier herald, how farest thou ?

Herald. Right well !

So well that I could bless the gods and die.

Chorus. Doubtless thy love of country tried thy heart ?

Herald. To see these shores I weep for very joy.

Chorus. And that soul-sickness sweetly held thee ?

Herald. How ?

Instruct my wit to comprehend thy words.

Chorus. Smitten with love of them that much loved thee.

Herald. Say'st thou ? loved Argos us as we loved Argos ?

Chorus. Ofttimes we sorrowed from a sunless soul.

Herald. How so ? Why should the thought of the host have
 clouded

Thy soul with sadness ?

Chorus. Sorrow not causeless came ;

But I have learned to drug all woes by silence.

Herald. Whom should'st thou quail before, the chiefs away ?

Chorus. I could have used thy phrase, and wished to die.

Herald. Die now, an' thou wilt, for joy ! The rolling years

Have given all things a prosperous end, though some

Were hard to bear ; for who, not being a god,

Can hope to live long years of bliss unbroken ?

A weary tale it were to tell the tithe

Of all our hardships ; toils by day, by night,

Harsh harbourage, hard hammocks, and scant sleep.

No sun without new troubles, and new groans,

Shone on our voyage ; and when at length we landed,
Our woes were doubled ; 'neath the hostile walls,
On marshy meads night-sprinkled by the dews,
We slept, our clothes rotted with drenching rain,
And like wild beasts with shaggy-knotted hair.
Why should I tell bird-killing winter's sorrows,
Long months of suffering from Idéan snows,
Then summer's scorching heat, when noon beheld
The waveless sea beneath the windless air
In sleep diffused ; these toils have run their hour.
The dead care not to rise ; their roll our grief
Would muster o'er in vain ; and we who live
Vainly shall fret at the cross strokes of fate.
Henceforth to each harsh memory of the past
Farewell ! we who survive this long-drawn war
Have gains to count that far outweigh the loss.
Well may we boast in the face of the shining sun,
O'er land and sea our winged tidings wafting,
THE ACHÆAN HOST HATH CAPTURED TROY ; and now
On the high temples of the gods we hang
These spoils, a shining grace, there to remain
An heritage for ever.⁵⁰ These things to hear
Shall men rejoice, and with fair praises laud
The state and its great generals, laud the grace
Of Jove the Consummator. I have said.

Chorus. I own thy speech the conqueror ; for a man
Can never be too old to learn good news,
And though thy words touch Clytemnestra most,
Joy to the Atridan's halls is wealth to me.

Clytem. I lifted first the shout of jubilee,
Then when the midnight sign of the courier fire
Told the deep downfall of the captured Troy ;
But one then mocked my faith, that I believed
The fire-spied message in so true a tale.
'Tis a light thing to buoy a woman's heart
With hopeful news, they cried ; and with these words
They wildered my weak wit. And yet I sped
The sacrifice, and raised the welcoming shout
In woman's wise, and at a woman's word
Forthwith from street to street uprose to the gods
Well-omened salutations, and glad hymns,
Lulling the fragrant incense-feeding flame.
What needs there more ? The event has proved me right,

Himself—my lord—with his own lips shall speak
 The weighty tale ; myself will go make ready
 With well-earned honour to receive the honoured.
 What brighter bliss on woman's lot may beam,
 Than when a god gives back her spouse from war,
 To ope the gates of welcome. Tell my husband,
 To his loved home, desired of all, to haste.
 A faithful wife, even as he left her, here
 He'll find expectant, like a watch-dog, gentle
 To him and his, to all that hate him harsh.
 The seals that knew his stamp, when hence he sailed,
 Unharmed remain, untouched : and for myself
 Nor praise nor blame from other man I know,
 No more than dyer's art can tincture brass.⁵¹

Herald. A boast like this, instinct with very truth,
 Comes from a noble lady without blame.

Chorus. Wise words she spake, and words that need no comment
 To ears that understand. But say, good Herald,
 Comes Menelaus safe back from the wars,
 His kindly sway in Argos to resume?

Herald. I cannot gloss a lie with fair pretence ;
 The best told lie bears but a short-lived fruit.

Chorus. Speak the truth plainly, if thou canst not pleasantly ;
 These twain be seldom wedded ; and here, alas !
 They stand out sundered with too clear a mark.

Herald. The man is vanished from the Achæan host,
 He and his vessel. Thou hast heard the truth.

Chorus. Sailed he from Ilium separate from the fleet ?
 Or did the tempest part him from his friends !

Herald. Like a good marksman thou hast hit the mark,
 In one short sentence summing many sorrows.

Chorus. Alive is he or dead ? What word hath reached you ?
 What wandering rumour from sea-faring men ?

Herald. This none can tell, save yon bright sun aloft.
 That cherishes all things with his friendly light.

Chorus. How came the storm on the fleet ? or how was ended
 The wrath of the gods ?

Herald. Not well it suits to blot
 With black rehearsal this auspicious day.
 Far from the honors of the blissful gods⁵²
 Be grief's recital. When with gloomy visage
 An ugly tale the herald's voice unfolds,
 At once a general wound, and private grief,

An army lost, the sons of countless houses
 Death-doomed by the double scourge so dear to Ares,*
 A twin-speared harm, a yoke of crimson slaughter :
 A herald saddled with such woes may sing
 A pæan to the Erinnyes. But I,
 Who to this city blithe and prosperous
 Brought the fair news of Agamemnon's safety,
 How shall I mingle bad with good, rehearsing
 The wintry wrath sent by the gods to overwhelm us ?
 Fire and the sea, sworn enemies of old,⁵³
 Made friendly league to sweep the Achæan host
 With swift destruction pitiless. Forth rushed
 The tyrannous Thracian blasts, and wave chased wave,
 Fierce 'neath the starless night, and ship on ship
 Struck clashing ; beak on butting beak was driven ;
 The puffing blast, the beat of boiling billows,
 The whirling gulph (an evil pilot) wrapt them
 In sightless death. And when the shining sun
 Shone forth again, we see the Ægean tide
 Strewn with the purple blossoms of the dead,
 And wrecks of shattered ships. Us and our bark
 Some god, no man, the storm-tost hull directing,
 Hath rescued scathless, stealing us from the fray,
 Or with a prayer begging our life from Fate.
 Kind Fortune helmed us further, safely kept
 From yeasty ferment in the billowy bay,
 Nor dashed on far-ledged rocks. Thus having 'scaped
 That ocean hell,⁵⁴ scarce trusting our fair fortune,
 We hailed the lucid day ; but could we hope,
 The chance that saved ourselves had saved our friends ?
 Our fearful hearts with thoughts of them we fed,
 Far-labouring o'er the loosely-driving main.⁵⁵
 And doubtless they, if yet live breath they breathe,
 Deem so of us, as we must fear of them,
 That they have perished. But I hope the best.
 And first and chief expect ye the return
 Of Menelaus. If the sun's blest ray
 Yet looks on him, where he beholds the day
 By Jove's devising,⁵⁶ not yet willing wholly
 To uproot the race of Atreus, hope may be
 He yet returns. Thou hast my tale ; and I
 Have told the truth untinctured with a lie.

[Exit.

* Mars.

Agamemnon

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE I.

Who gave her a name
 So true to her fame?
 Does a Providence rule in the fate of a word?
 Sways there in heaven a viewless power
 O'er the chance of the tongue in the naming hour?
 Who gave her a name,
 This daughter of strife, this daughter of shame,
 The spear-wooded maid of Greece?
 Helen the taker!⁵⁷ 'tis plain to see
 A taker of ships, a taker of men,
 A taker of cities is she.
 From the soft-curtained chamber of Hymen she fled,
 By the breath of giant⁵⁸ Zephyr sped,
 And shield-bearing throngs in marshalled array
 Hounded her flight o'er the printless way,
 Where the swift-plashing oar
 The fair booty bore
 To swirling Simois' leafy shore,
 And stirred the crimson fray.

ANTISTROPHE I.

For the gods sent a bride,
 Kin but not kind,⁵⁹
 Ripe with the counsel of wrath to Troy,
 In the fulness of years, the offender to prove,
 And assert the justice of Jove;
 For great Jove is lord
 Of the rights of the hearth and the festal board.
 The sons of Priam sang
 A song to the praise of the bride:
 From jubilant throats they praised her then,
 The bride from Hellas brought;
 But now the ancient city hath changed
 Her hymn to a doleful note.
 She weeps bitter tears; she curses the head
 Of the woe-wedded Paris; she curses the bed
 Of the beautiful bride
 That crossed the flood,
 And filched the life of her sons, and washed
 Her wide-paved streets with blood.

STROPHE II.

Whoso nurseth the cub of a lion
Weaned from the dugs of its dam, where the draught
Of its mountain-milk was free,
Finds it gentle at first and tame.
It frisks with the children in innocent game,
And the old man smiles to see ;
It is dandled about like a babe in the arm,
It licketh the hand that fears no harm,
And when hunger pinches its fretful maw,
It fawns with an eager glee.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But it grows with the years ; and soon reveals
The fount of fierceness whence it came :
And, loathing the food of the tame,
It roams abroad, and feasts in the fold,
On feasts forbidden, and stains the floor
Of the house that nursed it with gore.
A curse they nursed for their own undoing,
A mouth by which their own friends shall perish ;
A servant of Até, a priest of Ruin,⁶⁰
Some god hath taught them to cherish.

STROPHE III.

Thus to Troy came a bride of the Spartan race,
With a beauty as bland as a windless calm,
Prosperity's gentlest grace ;
And mild was love's blossom that rayed from her eye,
The soft-winged dart that with pleasing pain
Thrills heart and brain.
But anon she changed : herself fulfilled
Her wedlock's bitter end ;
A fatal sister, a fatal bride,
Her fateful head she rears ;
Herself the Erinnys from Jove to avenge
The right of the injured host, and change
The bridal joy to tears.

ANTISTROPHE III.

'Twas said of old, and 'tis said to-day,
That wealth to prosperous stature grown
Begets a birth of its own :
That a surfeit of evil by good is prepared,

And sons must bear what allotment of woe
 Their sires were spared.
 But this I rebel to believe : I know
 That impious deeds conspire
 To beget an offspring of impious deeds
 Too like their ugly sire.
 But whoso is just, though his wealth like a river
 Flow down, shall be scathless : his house shall rejoice
 In an offspring of beauty for ever.

STROPHE IV.

The heart of the haughty delights to beget
 A haughty heart.⁶¹ From time to time
 In children's children recurrent appears
 The ancestral crime.
 When the dark hour comes that the gods have decreed,
 And the Fury burns with wrathful fires,
 A demon unholy, with ire unabated,
 Lies like black night on the halls of the fated :
 And the recreant son plunges guiltily on
 To perfect the guilt of his sires.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

But Justice shines in a lowly cell ;
 In the homes of poverty, smoke-begrimed,
 With the sober-minded she loves to dwell.
 But she turns aside
 From the rich man's house with averted eye,
 The golden-fretted halls of pride
 Where hands with lucre are foul, and the praise
 Of counterfeit goodness smoothly sways :
 And wisely she guides in the strong man's despite
 All things to an issue of RIGHT.
Chorus. But, hail the king ! the city-taking
 Seed of Atreus' race.
 How shall I accost thee ! How
 With befitting reverence greet thee ?
 Nor above the mark, nor sinking
 Beneath the line of grace ?
 Many of mortal men there be,
 'Gainst the rule of right preferring
 Seeming to substance ; tears are free
 In the eye when woe its tale rehearseth,
 But the sting of sorrow pierceth

No man's liver ; many force
 Lack-laughter faces to relax
 Into the soft lines traced by joy.
 But the shepherd true and wise
 Knows the faithless man, whose eyes,
 With a forward friendship twinkling,
 Fawn with watery love.⁶²
 For me, I nothing hide. O King,
 In my fancy's picturing,
 From the Muses far I deemed thee,
 And thy soul not wisely helming
 When thou drew'st the knife
 For Helen's sake, a woman, whelming
 Thousands in ruin, rushing rashly
 On unwelcome strife.
 But now all's well. No shallow smiles
 We wear for thee, thy weary toils
 All finished. Thou shalt know anon
 What friends do serve thee truly,
 And who in thy long absence used
 Their stewardship unduly.

Enter AGAMEMNON with attendants ; CASSANDRA behind.

Aga. First Argos hail ! and ye, my country's gods,
 Who worked my safe return, and nerved my arm
 With vengeance against Priam ! for the gods,
 Taught by no glozing tongue, but by the sight
 Of their own eyes knew justice ; voting ruin
 And men-destroying death to ancient Troy,
 Their fatal pebbles in the bloody urn
 Not doubtingly they dropt ; the other vase,
 Unfed with hope of suffrage-bearing hand,
 Stood empty. Now the captured city's smoke
 Points where it fell. Raves Ruin's storm ; the winds
 With crumbled dust and dissipated gold
 Float grossly laden. To the immortal gods
 These thanks, fraught with rich memory of much good,
 We pay ; they taught our hands to spread the net
 With anger-whetted wit ; a woman's frailty
 Laid bare old Ilium to the Argive bite,
 And with the setting Pleiads outleapt a birth
 Of strong shield-bearers from the fateful horse.
 A fierce flesh-tearing lion leapt their walls,

And licked a surfeit of tyrannic blood.
 This prelude to the gods. As for thy words
 Of friendly welcome, I return thy greeting,
 And as your thought, so mine ; for few are gifted
 With such rich store of love, to see a friend
 Preferred and feel no envy ; 'tis a disease
 Possessing mortal men, a poison lodged
 Close by the heart, eating all joy away
 With double barb—his own mischance who suffers
 And bliss of others sitting at his gate,
 Which when he sees he groans. I know it well ;
 They who seemed most my friends, and many seemed,
 Were but the mirrored show, the shadowy ghost
 Of something like to friendship, substanceless.
 Ulysses only, most averse to sail,
 Was still most ready in the yoke with me
 To bear the harness ; living now or dead,
 This praise I frankly give him. For the rest,
 The city and the gods, we will take counsel
 In full assembly freely. What is good
 We will give heed that it be lasting ; where
 Disease the cutting or the caustic cure
 Demands, we will apply it. I, meanwhile,
 My hearth and home salute, and greet the gods,
 Who, as they sent me to the distant fray,
 Have brought me safely back. Fair victory,
 Once mine, may she dwell with me evermore !

Clytem. Men ! Citizens ! ye reverend Argive seniors,
 No shame feel I, even in your face, to tell
 My husband-loving ways. Long converse lends
 Boldness to bashfulness. No foreign griefs,
 Mine own self-suffered woes I tell. While he
 Was camping far at Ilium, I at home
 Sat all forlorn, uncherished by the mate
 Whom I had chosen ; this was woe enough
 Without enforcement ; but, to try me further,
 A host of jarring rumours stormed my doors,
 Each fresh recital with a murkier hue
 Than its precedent ; and I must hear all.
 If this my lord, had borne as many wounds
 In battle as the bloody fame recounted,
 He had been pierced throughout even as a net ;
 And had he died as oft as Rumour slew him,

He might have boasted of a triple coil ⁶³
 Like the three-bodied Geryon, while on earth
 (Of him below I speak not), and like him
 Been three times heaped with a cloak of funeral dust.
 Thus fretted by cross-grained reports, oft-times
 The knotted rope high-swung had held my neck,
 But that my friends with forceful aid prevented.
 Add that my son, pledge of our mutual vows,
 Orestes is not here ; nor think it strange.
 Thy Phocian spear-guest, ⁶⁴ the most trusty Strophius,
 Took him in charge, a twofold danger urging
 First thine beneath the walls of Troy, and further
 The evil likelihood that, should the Greeks
 Be worsted in the strife, at home the voice
 Of many-babbling anarchy might cast
 The council down, and as man's baseness is,
 At fallen greatness insolently spurn.
 Moved by these thoughts I parted with my boy,
 And for no other cause. Myself the while
 So woe-worn lived, the fountains of my grief
 To their last drop were with much weeping drained ;
 And far into the night my watch I've kept
 With weary eyes, while in my lonely room
 The night-torch faintly glimmered. In my dream
 The buzzing gnat, with its light-brushing wing,
 Startled the fretful sleeper ; thou hast been
 In waking hours, as in sleep's fitful turns
 My only thought. But having bravely borne
 This weight of woe, now with blithe heart I greet
 Thee, my heart's lord, the watch-dog of the fold,
 The ship's sure mainstay, pillared shaft whereon
 Rests the high roof, fond parent's only child,
 Land seen by sailors past all hope, a day
 Lovely to look on when the storm hath broken,
 And to the thirsty wayfarer the flow
 Of gushing rill. O sweet it is, how sweet
 To see an end of the harsh yoke that galled us !
 These greetings to my lord ; nor grudge me, friends,
 This breadth of welcome ; sorrows we have known
 Ample enough. And now, thou precious head,
 Come from thy car ; nay, do not set thy foot,
 The foot that trampled Troy, on common clay.
 What ho ! ye laggard maids ! why lags your task

Behind the hour? Spread purple where he treads.
 Fitly the broidered foot-cloth marks his path,
 Whom Justice leadeth to his long-lost home
 With unexpected train. What else remains
 Our sleepless zeal, with favour of the gods,
 Shall order as befits.

Aga. Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house!
 Almost thou seem'st to have spun thy welcome out
 To match my lengthened absence; but I pray thee
 Praise with discretion, and let other mouths
 Proclaim my pæans. For the rest, abstain
 From delicate tendance that would turn my manhood
 To woman's temper. Not in barbaric wise
 With prostrate reverence base, kissing the ground,
 Mouth sounding salutations; not with purple,
 Breeder of envy, spread my path. Such honors
 Suit the immortal gods; me, being mortal,
 To tread on rich-flowered carpetings wise fear
 Prohibits. As a man, not as a god,
 Let me be honored. Not the less my fame
 Shall be far blazoned, that on common earth
 I tread untapestried. A sober heart
 Is the best gift of God; call no man happy
 Till death hath found him prosperous to the close.
 For me, if what awaits me fall not worse
 Than what hath fallen, I have good cause to look
 Bravely on fate.

Clytem. Nay, but my good lord will not
 In this gainsay my heart's most warm desire.

Aga. My wish and will thou shalt not lightly mar.

Clytem. Hast thou a vow belike, and fear'st the gods?

Aga. If e'er man knew, I know my will in this.

Clytem. Had Priam conquered, what had Priam done?

Aga. His feet had trod the purple; doubt it not.

Clytem. What Priam would, thou may'st, unless the fear
 Of popular blame make Agamemnon quail.

Aga. But popular babble strengthens Envy's wing.

Clytem. Thou must be envied if thou wilt be great.

Aga. Is it a woman's part to hatch contention?

Clytem. For once be conquered; they who conquer may
 Yield with a grace.

Aga. And thou in this vain strife
 Must be perforce the conqueror; is it so?

Clytem. 'Tis even so : for once give me the reins.

Aga. Thou hast thy will. Come, boy, unbind these sandals,⁶⁵

That are the prostrate subjects to my feet,
When I do tread ; for with shod feet I never
May leave my print on the sea-purple, lest
Some god with jealous eye look from afar
And mark me. Much I fear with insolent foot
To trample wealth, and rudely soil the web
Whose precious threads the pure-veined silver buys.
So much for this. As for this maid, receive
The stranger kindly : the far-seeing gods
Look down with love on him who mildly sways.
For never yet was yoke of slavery borne
By willing neck ; of all the captive maids
The choicest flower she to my portion fell.
And now, since thou art victor o'er my will,
I tread the purple to my father's hall.

Clytem. The wide sea flows ; and who shall dry it up ?
The ocean flows, and in its vasty depths
Is brewed the purple's die, as silver precious,
A tincture ever-fresh for countless robes.
But Agamemnon's house is not a beggar ;
With this, and with much more the gods provide us ;
And purple I had vowed enough to spread
The path of many triumphs, had a god
Given me such 'hest oracular to buy
The ransom of thy life. We have thee now,
Both root and trunk, a tree rich leafage spreading
To shade this mansion from the Sirian dog.
Welcome, thou double blessing ! to this hearth
That bringest heat against keen winter's cold,
And coolness when the sweltering Jove prepares
Wine from the crudeness of the bitter grape ;
Enter the house, made perfect by thy presence.
Jove, Jove, the perfecter ! perfect thou my vow,⁶⁶
And thine own counsels quickly perfect thou !

[*Exeunt.*

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE I.

Whence these shapes of fear that haunt me ?
These hovering portents why ?
Is my heart a seer inspired,
To chaunt unbidden and unhired⁶⁷

Notes of dark prophecy?
 Blithe confidence, my bosom's lord,*
 That swayed the doubtful theme,
 Arise, and with thy clear command
 Chase the vain-vexing dream!
 Long years have rolled; and still I fear,
 As when the Argive band
 Unloosed their cables from the shore,⁶⁸
 And eager plied the frequent oar
 To the far Ilian strand.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Now they return: my vouching eyes
 To prop my faith conspire,
 And yet my heart, in self-taught hymns,
 As with a Fury's burden brims,
 And will not own the lyre.
 I fear, I fear: the bold-faced Hope
 Hath left my heart all drear;
 And my thought, not idly tossed within,
 Feels evil creeping near.
 For the heart hath scent of things to come
 And prophecies by fear;
 And yet I pray, may all conspire
 To prove my boding heart a liar,
 And me a foolish seer.

STROPHE II.

Full-blooded health, that in the veins
 With lusty pulses hotly wells,
 Shall soon have check. Disease beside it
 Wall to wall, ill-sundered, dwells.
 The proud trireme, with sudden shock,
 In its mid career, on a sunken rock
 Strikes, and all is lost.
 Yet there is hope; the ship may rein
 Its plunge, from whelming ruin free,
 If with wise sling the merchant fling
 Into the greedy sea
 A part to save the whole. And thus
 Jove, that two-handed stores for us,
 In our mid woe may pause,

* "My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne."

SHAKESPEARE, quoted by Symmons.

Heap gifts on gifts from yearly furrows,
And save the house from swamping sorrows,
And lean starvation's jaws.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But, oh ! when black blood stains the ground,
And the mortal mortal lies,
Shall the dead hear when thou chauntest ?
To thy charming shall he rise ?
Once there was a leech so wise
Could raise the dead,* but, from the skies,
Struck by Jove, he ceased.
But cease my song. Were link with link
In the chain of things not bound together⁶⁹
That each event must wait its time,
Nor one dare trip the other,
My tongue had played the prophet's part,
And rolled the burden from my heart ;
But now, to doubt resigned,
With smothered fears, all dumb I wait
The unravelling hour ; while sparks of fate
Flit through my darksome mind.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clytem. Come thou, too, in ; this maid, I mean ; Cassandra !
For not in wrath Jove sent thee here to share
Our family lustrations, and to stand,
With many slaves, beside the household altar.⁷⁰
Step from this car, nor bear thy spirit proudly
Above thy fate, for even Alcmena's son,
To slavery sold, once bore the hated yoke.
What must be, must be ; rather thank the chance
That gave thee to an old and wealthy house ;
For they who reap an unexpected growth
Of wealth, are harsh to slaves beyond the line
Of a well-tempered rule. Here thou shalt find
The common use of bondage.

Chorus. Plainly she speaks ;
And thou within Fate's iron toils once caught
Wert wise to go—if go thou wilt—but, soothly,
Thou hast no willing look.

Clytem. Nay ! an' she be not
Barbarian to the bone, and speaking nought

* Æsculapius.

Save swallow jabber,* she shall hear my voice.
I'll pierce her marrow with it.

Chorus. Captive maid,
Obey! thou shouldst; 'tis best; be thou persuaded
To leave thy chariot-seat and follow her.

Clytem. No time have I to stand without the gate
Prating with her. Within, on the central hearth,
The fire burns bright, the sheep's fat slaughter waiting,
To furnish forth a banquet that transcends
The topmost of our hopes. Wilt thou obey,
Obey me quickly! If with stubborn sense
Thou hast nor ear to hear, nor voice to speak,
Answer my sign with thy barbarian hand.

Chorus. A wise interpreter the maid demands;
Like a wild beast new caught, even so she stands.

Clytem. Ay! she is mad; her wit to sober counsels
Is deaf; she comes from the new-captured city,
Untaught to bear the Argive bit with patience,
But foams and dashes bloody froth. I will not
Make myself base by wasting words on her. [Exit

Chorus. Poor maid, I may not blame; I pity thee.
Come, leave thy seat; for, though the yoke be strange,
Necessity compels, and thou must bear it.

STROPHE I.

Cass. Ah! ah! woes me! woe! woe!

Apollo! O Apollo!

Chorus. Why dost thou wail to Loxias?† is he
A gloomy god that he should list sad tales?

ANTISTROPHE I.

Cass. Ah! ah! woes me! woe! woe!

Apollo! O Apollo!

Chorus. Again with evil-omened voice she cries
Upon the god least fit to wait on woe.

STROPHE II.

Cass. Apollo! Apollo!

My way-god, my leader Apollo!‡

Apollo the destroyer!

Thou with light labour hast destroyed me quite.

* *Swallow jabber.*—"Barbarians are called swallows because their speech cannot be understood any more than the twitter of swallows."—Stanley, from Hesychius.

† An epithet of Apollo, from λοξός oblique, for which Macrobius (Sat. I. 17) gives astronomical reasons; but it seems more obvious to say that the god is so called from the obliqueness or obscurity of his oracles.

Chorus. Strange oracles against herself she speaks ;
Ev'n in the bondsman's bosom dwells the god.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Cass. Apollo ! Apollo !
Apollo, my leader, whither hast thou led me ?⁷²
My way-god, Apollo ?

What homes receive thy captive prophetess ?

Chorus. The Atridæ's homes. This, an' thou knowst it not,
I tell thee ; and the words I speak are true.

STROPHE III.

Cass. Ha ! the house of the Atridæ !*

Well the godless house I know,
With the dagger and the rope,
And the self-inflicted blow !

Where red blood is on the floor,
And black murder at the door—

This house—this house I know.

Chorus. She scents out slaughter, mark me, like a hound,
And tracks the spot where she shall feast on blood.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Cass. Ay ! I scent a truthful scent,
And the thing I say I know.
See ! see ! these weeping children,
How they vouch the monstrous woe !
Their red wounds are bleeding fresh,
And their father eats their flesh,
This bloody house I know.

Chorus. The fame of thy divinings far renowned
Have reached us, but we wish no prophets here.

STROPHE IV.

Cass. Ha ! ha ! what plots she now !
A new sorrow, a new snare
To the house of the Atridæ,
And a burden none may bear !
A black harm to all and each,
A disease that none may leech,
And the evil plot to mar
All help and hope is far.

* From the looseness of the laws of quantity in English versification, it may be as well to state here that I wish these lines of seven syllables to be read as *υ υ —', υ —', υ —',* not *—' υ, —' υ, —' υ, —'.*

Chorus. Nay now I'm lost and mazed in vain surmise.
What first she said I knew—the common rumour.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

Cass. Ha ! woman wilt thou dare ?
Thy bed's partner and thy mate
In the warm refreshing bath
Shall he find his bloody fate ?
How shall I dare to say
What comes and will not stay ?
See, to do her heart's command
Where she stretches her red hand !

Chorus. Not yet I understand : through riddles dark
And cloudy oracles my wits are wandering.

STROPHE V.

Cass. Ha ! what bloody sight is this !
'Tis a net of Hades spread—
'Tis a snare to snare her lord,
The fond sharer of her bed.
The black chorus of the place*
Shout for vengeance o'er the race,
Whose offence cries for atoning,
With a heavy death of stoning !

STROPHE VI.

Chorus. What black Fury of the place
Shall shout vengeance o'er the race ?
Such strange words I hate to hear.
The blithe blood, that crimson ran⁷³
In my veins, runs pale and wan
With the taint of yellow fear,
As when in the mortal anguish,⁷⁴
Life's last fitful glimpses languish
And Fate, as now, is near !

ANTISTROPHE V.

Cass. Ha ! ha ! the work proceeds !
From the bull keep back the cow !
Lo ! now she seizes him
By the strong black horn,⁷⁵ and now
She hath wrapt him round with slaughter :
She strikes ! and in the water
Of the bath he falls. Mark well,
In the bath doth murder dwell.

* The Furies.

ANTISTROPHE VI.

Chorus. No prophetic gift is mine
 The dark saying to divine,
 But this sounds like evil quite;
 For to mortal man was never
 The diviner's voice the giver
 Of a message of delight,
 But in words of mazy mourning,
 Comes the prophet's voice of warning,
 With a lesson of affright.

STROPHE VII.

Cass. Fill the cup, and brim the woe!
 'Tis my own heart's blood must flow
 Me! miserable me!
 From old Troy why didst thou bring me
 Poor captive maid, to sing thee
 Thy dirge, and die with thee?

STROPHE VIII.

Chorus. By a god thou art possessed,
 And he raveth in thy breast,
 And he sings a song of thee
 That hath music, but no glee.
 Like a dun-plumed nightingale,*
 That, with never-sated wail,
 Crieth Itys! Itys! aye,⁷⁶
 As it scatters, in sweet flow,
 The thick blossoms of its woe,⁷⁷
 So singest thou to-day.

ANTISTROPHE VII.

Cass. Ah! the clear-toned nightingale!
 Mellow bird, thou dost not wail,†
 For the good gods gave to thee
 A light shape of fleetest winging,
 A bright life of sweetest singing,
 But a sharp-edged death to me.

* Dun-plumed. ξουθα. "Because the poor brown bird, alas
 Sings in the garden sweet and true."

† "Most musical, most melancholy bird!"
 A melancholy bird? O idle thought!
 In Nature there is nothing melancholy.

MISS BARRETT

COLERIDGE

Agamemnon

ANTISTROPHE VIII.

Chorus. By a god thou art possessed,
 And he goads thee without rest,
 And he racks thy throbbing brain
 With a busy-beating pain,
 And he presses from thy throat
 The heavy struggling note,
 And the cry that rends the air.
 Who bade her tread this path,
 With the prophecy of wrath,
 And the burden of despair?

STROPHE IX.

Cass. O the wedlock and the woe
 Of the evil Alexander,
 To his chiefest friends a foe!
 O my native stream Scamander,
 Where in youth I wont to wander,
 And was nursed for future woes,
 Where thy swirling current flows!
 But now on sluggish shore
 Of Cocytus I shall pour,
 'Mid the Acherusian glades,
 My divinings to the shades.

STROPHE X.

Chorus. Nothing doubtful is the token;
 For the words the maid hath spoken
 To a very child are clear.
 She hath pierced me to the marrow;
 And her cry of shrieking sorrow
 Ah! it crushes me to hear.

ANTISTROPHE IX.

Cass. The proud city lieth lowly,
 Nevermore to rise again!
 It is lost and ruined wholly;
 And before the walls in vain
 Hath my pious father slain
 Many meadow-cropping kine,
 To appease the wrath divine.
 Where it lieth it shall lie,
 Ancient Ilium: and I

On the ground, when all is past,
Soon my reeking heart shall cast.⁷⁸

ANTISTROPHE X.

Chorus. Ah! the mighty god, wrath-laden,
He hath smote the burdened maiden
With a weighty doom severe.
From her heart sharp cries he wringeth,
Dismal, deathful strains she singeth,
And I wait the end in fear.

Cass. No more my prophecy, like a young bride
Shall from a veil peep forth, but like a wind
Waves shall it dash from the west in the sun's face,⁷⁹
And curl high-crested surges of fierce woes,
That far outbellow mine. I'll speak no more
In dark enigmas. Ye my vouchers be,
While with keen scent I snuff the breath of the past,
And point the track of monstrous crimes of eld.
There is a choir, to destiny well-tuned,
Haunts these doomed halls, no mellow-throated choir,
And they of human blood have largely drunk:
And by that wine made bold, the Bacchanals
Cling to their place of revels. The sister'd Furies
Sit on these roofs, and hymn the prime offence
Of this crime-burthened race; the brother's sin
That trod the brother's bed.* Speak! do I hit
The mark, a marksman true? or do I beat
Your doors, a babbling beggar prophesying
False dooms for hire? Be ye my witnesses,
And with an oath avouch, how well I know
The hoary sins that hang upon these walls.

Chorus. Would oaths make whole our ills, though I should
wedge them

As stark as ice?⁸⁰ But I do marvel much
That thou, a stranger born, from distant seas,
Dost know our city as it were thine own.

Cass. Even this to know, Apollo stirred my breast.

Chorus. Apollo! didst thou strike the god with love?

Cass. Till now I was ashamed to hint the tale.

Chorus. The dainty lips of nice prosperity
Misfortune opens.

Cass. Like a wrestler he
Strove for my love; he breathed his grace upon me.

* See Introductory Remarks.

Chorus. And hast thou children from divine embrace?

Cass. I gave the word to Loxias, not the deed.

Chorus. Hadst thou before received the gift divine?

Cass. I had foretold my countrymen all their woes.

Chorus. Did not the anger of the god pursue thee?

Cass. It did; I warned, but none believed my warning.

Chorus. To us thou seem'st to utter things that look

Only too like the truth.

Cass. Ah me! woe! woe!

Again strong divination's troublous whirl

Seizes my soul, and stirs my labouring breast

With presages of doom. Lo! where they sit,

These pitiful young ones on the fated roof,

Like to the shapes of dreams! The innocent babes,

Butchered by friends that should have blessed them, and

In their own hands their proper bowels they bear,

Banquet abhorred, and their own father eats it.*

This deed a lion, not a lion-hearted

Shall punish; wantonly in her bed, whose lord

Shall pay the heavy forfeit, he shall roll,

And snare my master—woe's me, even *my* master,

For slavery's yoke my neck must learn to own.

Ah! little weens the leader of the ships,

Troy's leveller, how a hateful bitch's tongue,

With long-drawn phrase, and broad-sown smile, doth weave

His secret ruin. This a woman dares;

The female mars the male. Where shall I find

A name to name such monster? dragon dire,

Rock-lurking Scylla, the vexed seaman's harm,

Mother of Hades, murder's Mænad, breathing

Implacable breath of curses on her kin.⁸¹

All-daring woman! shouting in her heart,

As o'er the foe, when backward rolls the fight,

Yet hymning kindest welcome with her tongue.

Ye look mistrustful; I am used to that.

That comes which is to come; and ye shall know

Full soon, with piteous witness in your eyes,

How true, and very true, Cassandra spake.

Chorus. Thyestes' banquet, and his children's flesh

I know, and shudder; strange that she should know

The horrors of that tale; but for the rest

She runs beyond my following.

Cass.

Thus I said;

* The banquet of his own children, which Atreus offered to Thyestes.—See Introductory Remarks.

Thine eyes shall witness Agamemnon's death.

Chorus. Hush, wretched maiden ! lull thy tongue to rest,
And cease from evil-boding words !

Cass. Alas !

The gods that heal all evil, heal not this.

Chorus. If it must be ; but may the gods forefend !

Cass. Pray thou, and they will have more time to kill.

Chorus. What man will dare to do such bloody deed ?

Cass. I spake not of a *man* : thy thoughts shoot wide.

Chorus. The deed I heard, but not whose hand should do it.

Cass. And yet I spake good Greek with a good Greek tongue.

Chorus. Thou speakest Apollo's words : true, but obscure.

Cass. Ah me ! the god ! like fire within my breast

Burns the Lycéan god.* Ah me ! pain ! pain !

A lioness two-footed with a wolf

Is bedded, when the noble lion roamed

Far from his den ; and she will murder me.

She crowns the cup of wrath ; she whets the knife

Against the neck of the man, and he must pay

The price of capture, I of being captive.

Vain gauds, that do but mock my grief, farewell !

This laurel-rod, and this diviner's wreath

About my neck, should they outlive the wearer ?

Away ! As ye have paid me, I repay.

Make rich some other prophetess with woe !

Lo ! where Apollo looks, and sees me now

Doff this diviner's garb, the self-same weeds

He tricked me erst withal, to live for him,

The public scorn, the scoff of friends and foes,

The mark of every ribald jester's tongue,

The homeless girl, the raving mountebank,

The beggar'd, wretched, starving maniac.

And now who made the prophetess unmakes her,

And leads me to my doom—ah ! not beside

My father's altar doomed to die ! the block

From my hot life shall drink the purple stain.

But we shall fall not unavenged : the gods

A mother-murdering shoot shall send from far

To avenge his sire ; the wanderer shall return

To pile the cope-stone on these towering woes.

The gods in heaven a mighty oath have sworn,

To raise anew the father's prostrate fate

By the son's arm.—But why stand here, and beat

* Apollo.

The air with cries, seeing what I have seen ;
 When Troy hath fallen, suffering what it suffered,
 And they who took the city by the doom
 Of righteous gods faring as they shall fare ?
 I will endure to die, and greet these gates
 Of Hades gaping for me. Grant me, ye gods,
 A mortal stroke well-aimed, and a light fall
 From cramped convulsion free ! Let the red blood
 Flow smoothly from its fount, that I may close
 These eyes in peaceful death.

Chorus. O hapless maid !

And wise as hapless ! thou hast spoken long !
 But if thou see'st the harm, why rush on fate
 Even as an ox, whom favouring gods inspire
 To stand by the altar's steps, and woo the knife.

Cass. I'm in the net. Time will not break the meshes.

Chorus. But the last moment of sweet life is honoured.

Cass. My hour is come ; what should I gain by flight ?

Chorus. Thou with a stout heart bravely look'st on fate.

Cass. Bravely thou praisest : but the happy hear not
 Such commendations.⁸²

Chorus. Yet if death must come,
 His fame is fair who nobly fronts the foe.

Cass. Woe's me, the father and his noble children !

Chorus. Whither now ? What father and what children ? Speak.

Cass. [*Approaching and starting back from the house.*]
 Woe ! woe !

Chorus. What means this woe ? What horrid fancy scares thee ?

Cass. Blood-dripping murder reeks from yonder house.

Chorus. How ? 'Tis the scent of festal sacrifice.

Cass. The scent of death—a fragrance from the grave.

Chorus. Soothly no breath of Syrian nard she names.

Cass. But now the time is come. I go within
 To wail for Agamemnon and myself.

I've done with life. Farewell ! My vouchers ye,
 Not with vain screaming, like a fluttering bird,⁸³

Above the bush I cry. Yourselves shall know it

Then when, for me a woman, a woman dies,

And for a man ill-wived a man shall fall.

Trust me in this. Your honest faith is all

The Trojan guest, the dying woman, craves.

Chorus. O wretched maid ! O luckless prophetess

Cass. Yet will I speak one other word, before