

PERSONS

The PYTHONESS of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi.

APOLLO.

HERMES (Mute).

The SHADE of CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS OF FURIES.

PALLAS ATHENA.

JUDGES of the Court of Areopagus (Mute).

CONVOY OF THE FURIES.

SCENE—*First at Delphi in the Temple of Apollo ; then on the Hill
of Mars, Athens.*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

THOUGH the ancient Greek religion, there can be no question, was too much the creation of mere imagination, and tended rather to cultivate a delicate sense of beauty than to strike the soul with a severe reverence before the awful majesty of the moral law, yet it is no less certain that to look upon it as altogether addressed to our sensuous emotions, however convenient for a certain shallow school of theology, would lead the calm inquirer after moral truth far away from the right track. As among the gods that rule over the elements of the physical world, Jove, according to the Homeric creed, asserts a high supremacy, which restrains the liberty of the celestial aristocracy from running into lawless licence and confusion; so the wild and wanton ebullitions of human passion, over which a Bacchus, a Venus, and a Mars preside, are not free from the constant control of a righteous Jove, and the sacred terror of a retributive Erinnys. The great lesson of a moral government, and a secret order of justice pervading the apparent confusion of the system of things of which we are a part, is sufficiently obvious in the whole structure of the two great Homeric poems; but if it exists in the midst of that sunny luxuriance of popular fancy as a felt atmosphere, it is planted by Æschylus, the thoughtful lyrist of a later age, on a visible elevation, whence, as from a natural pulpit, enveloped with dark clouds, or from a Heathen Sinai, involved in fearful thunders and lightnings, it trumpets forth its warnings, and hurls its bolts of flaming denunciation against Sin. The reader, who has gone through the two preceding pieces of this remarkable trilogy, without discovering this their deep moral significance, has read to little purpose; but it is here, in the concluding piece, that the grand doctrine of the moral government of the world is most formally enunciated; it is in the person of the Furies that the wrathful indignation of Jove against the violators of the moral law manifests itself, in the full panoply of terror, and stands out as the stern Avatar of an inexorable Justice. Here, therefore, if we will understand the moral seriousness, of which the gay Hellenic Polytheism was not without its background, let us fix our gaze. If the principles of "immutable morality," of which our great English Platonist talks so comprehensively, are to be found anywhere, they are to be found here.

The Furies (or the *Eὐμενίδες*, *i.e.* the *Gracious-minded*, as they are called by a delicate euphemism) are generally looked upon as the impersonations of an evil conscience, the incarnated scourges of self-reproach. In this view there is no essential error; but it may be beneficial, in entering on the perusal of the present piece, to place before the modern reader more literally the true Homeric idea of these awful Powers. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, frequent mention is made of the *Erinnyes*; and from the circumstances, in which their names occur, in various passages of these poems, there can be no doubt that we are to view them primarily as the impersonation of an imprecation or curse, which a person, whose natural rights have been grossly violated, pronounces on the person, by whom this violation comes.* Thus the father of Phoenix (*Il.* ix. 453), being offended by the conduct of his son in relation to one of his concubines, "loads him with frequent curses, and invokes the hated Furies"—

Πολλὰ κατηρατο, στυγερὰς δ' ἐπὶ κεκλετ *Εριννύς*,

and "the gods," it is added, "gave accomplishment to his curse, the subterranean Jove, and the awful Persephone." In the same book we find, in the narration of the war, between the Curetes and the *Ætolians*, about Calydon, how Althaea, the mother of Meleager, being offended with her son on account of his having slain her brother, cursed him, and invoked Pluto and Proserpine that he might die, and

Her the Fury that walketh in darkness,
Heard from Erebus' depths, with a heart that knoweth no mercy.

Both these instances relate to offences committed against the revered character of a parent; but the elder brother also has his *Erinnys*.—(*Il.* xv. 204), and even the houseless beggar—(*Od.* xvii. 575), and, more than all, he to whose prejudice the sacred obligation of truth and honour have been set at nought by the perjured swearer—

Mighty Jove, be thou my witness, Jove of gods supremest, best,
Earth, and Sun, and Furies dread, that underneath the ground avenge
Whoso speaks and sweareth falsely—

says Agamemnon—(*Il.* xix. 257)—in restoring the intact Briseis to Achilles.

Thus, according to Homer's idea, wherever there is a cry of righteous indignation, rising up to Heaven from the breast of an injured person, there may be a Fury or Furies; for they are not

* This original germ of the Furies is mentioned frequently in these plays, as *πολυκρατεῖς ἀπὸ φθιμένων*, *Fell Curses of the Dead*, in the *Choephoræ*, p. 111 above. See also the words of Clytemnestra, *My curse beware*, p. 126 above.

limited or defined in any way as to number. It is not, however, on every petty occasion of common offence that these dread ministers of divine vengeance appear. Only, when deeds of a deeper darkness are done, do these daughters of primeval Night (for so Æschylus symbolises their pedigree) issue forth from their subterranean caverns. There is something volcanic in their indignation, whose eruption is too terrible to be common. They chiefly frequent the paths, that are dabbled with blood. A murdered father, or a murdered mother especially, were never known to appeal to them in vain, even though Jove's own prophet, Apollo, add his sanction to the deed. An Orestes may not hope to escape the bloody chase, which the "winged hounds," invoked by a murdered Clytemnestra, are eager to prepare—the sacred precincts of an oracular Delphi may not repel their intrusion—the scent of blood "laughs in their nostrils," and they will not be cheated of their game. Only one greatest goddess, in whose hands are the keys of her father's armoury of thunder, may withstand the full rush of these vindictive powers. Only Pallas Athena, with her panoply of Olympian strength, and her divine wisdom of reconciliation can bid them be pacified.

In order to understand thoroughly the situation of the matricide Orestes, in the present play, we must consider further the ancient doctrine of pollution attaching to an act of murder, and the consequent necessity of purification to the offender. The nature of this is distinctly set forth by Orestes himself in a reply to his sister Iphigenia, put into his mouth by Euripides. "Loxias," he says, "first sent me to Athens, and

There first arrived, no host would entertain me,
As being hated of the immortal gods,
And some, who pitied me, before me placed
Cold entertainment on a separate board;
Beneath the same roof though I lodged with them,
No interchange of living voice I knew,
But sat apart and ate my food alone."

IPHIG. TAUR. 954.

Like an unclean leper among the Jews, the man polluted with human blood wandered from land to land, as with a Cain's mark upon his brow, and every fellow-being shrank from his touch as from a living plague.

"For wisely thus our ancestors ordained,
That the blood-tainted man should know no joy
From sight of fellow-mortal or from touch,
But with an horrid sanctitude protected
Range the wide earth an exile."

EURIP. OREST. 512.

Under the ban of such a social excommunication as this, the first act of readmission into the fraternity of human society was performed by the sprinkling of swine's blood on the exile, a ceremony described particularly in the following passage of Apollonius Rhodius, where Jason and Medea are purified by Circe from the taint of the murder of Absyrtus :—

“First to free them from the taint of murder not to be recalled,
She above them stretched the suckling of a sow whose teats distilled
The juice that flows when birth is recent ; this she cut across the throat,
And with the crimson blood outflowing dashed the tainted suppliants' hands.
Then with other pure libations she allayed the harm, invoking
Jove that hears the supplication of the fugitive stained with blood.”

ARGON. IV. 704-9.

The other “pure libations” here mentioned include specially water, of which particular mention is made in the legend of Alcmaëon, which bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Orestes, and in which it is in the sacred stream of the Achelous alone that purification is at length found, from the deeply-engrained guilt of matricide. —(Apollodor, Lib. III., c. 7.) All this, however, availed only to remove the unhallowed taint, with which human blood had defiled the murderer. It was necessary, further, that he should be tried before a competent court, and formally acquitted, as having performed every atonement and given every satisfaction that the nature of the case required. According to the consuetudinary law of Athens, there were various courts in which different cases of murder and manslaughter were tried ; but of all the courts that held solemn judgment on shed blood, none was more venerable in its origin, or more weighty in its authority, than the famous court of the Areopagus ; and here it is, accordingly, that, after being wearied out by the sleepless chase of his relentless pursuers, Orestes, with the advice and under the protection of Apollo, arrives to gain peace to his soul by a final verdict of acquittal from the sage elders of Athens, acting by the authority and with the direction of their wise patron-goddess, Athena.

The connection of Athena and the Areopagus with the Orestean legend gives to the present play a local interest and a patriotic hue of which the want is too often felt in the existing remains of the Attic tragedy. But Athena and the grave seniors of the hill of Ares are not the only celestial personages here, in whom an Athenian audience would find a living interest. The Furies themselves enjoyed a special reverence in the capital of Athens, under the title of *Σεμνὰι θεαί*, or the *dread goddesses* ; and the principal seat of this worship, whether by a happy conjunction or a wise choice, was situated on

the north-east side (looking towards the Acropolis) of that very hill of the war god, where the venerable court that bore his name held its solemn sessions on those crimes, which it was the principal function of the Furies to avenge. Up to the present hour, the curious traveller through the wreck of Athenian grandeur sees pointed out the black rift of the rock into which the awful virgins, after accepting the pacification of Athena, are reported to have descended into their subterranean homes ; * and it is with this very descent, amid flaming torch-light and solemn hymns, that the great tragedian, mingling peace with fear, closes worthily the train of startling superhuman terrors which this drama exhibits.

But Æschylus is not a patriot only, and a pious worshipper of his country's gods in this play, he is also, to some small extent at least, manifestly a politician. The main feature of the constitutional history of Athens in the period immediately following the great Persian war, to which period our trilogy belongs, was the enlargement and the systematic completion of those democratic forms, of which the timocratic legislation of Solon, about a century and a-half before, had planted the first germs. Of these changes, Pericles, the man above all others who knew both to understand and to control his age, was the chief promoter ; and in a policy whose main tendency was the substitution of a numerous popular for a narrow professional control of public business, it could not fail to be a main feature, that the authority of the judges of the old aristocratic courts was curtailed in favour of those bodies of paid jurymen, the institution of which is specially attributed to Pericles and his coadjutor Ephialtes.† Whether these changes were politic or not, in the large sense of that word, need not be inquired here ; Mr. Grote has done much to lengthen the focus of those short-sighted national spectacles, through which the English eye has been accustomed to view the classic democracies ; but let it be that Pericles kept within the bounds of a wise liberty in giving a fair and a large trial to the action of democratic principles at that time and place ; or let it be, on the other hand, that he overstepped the line

“ Which whoso passes, or who reaches not,
Misses the mark of right ”—

in either case, where decision was so difficult, and discretion so delicate, no one can accuse the thoughtful tragic poet of a stolid conservatism, when he comes forward, in this play, as the advocate of

* Wordsworth's "Athens and Attica," London, 1836, c. II.

† "Καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐν Ἀρείῳ πάγῳ βουλὴν Ἐφιάλτης ἐκόλουσε καὶ Περικλῆς. τὰ δὲ δικαστήρια μισθοφόρα κατέστησε Περικλῆς."—ARISTOTLE, Pol. II. 9. 3.

the only court of high jurisdiction in Athens, now left unshaken by the great surge of those popular billows, that were yet swelling everywhere with the eager inspiration of Marathon and Salamis.* The court of Areopagus was not now, since the legislation of Solon, and the further democratic movement of Cleisthenes, in any invidious or exclusive sense an aristocratic assembly, such as the close corporations of the old Roman aristocracy before the series of popular changes introduced by Licinius Stolo; it was a council, in fact, altogether without that family and hereditary element, in which the principal offence of aristocracy has always lain; its members were composed entirely (not recruited merely like our House of Lords) of those superior magistrates—archons annually elected by the people—who had retired from office. To magnify the authority of such a body, and maintain intact the few privileges that had now been left it, was, when an obvious opportunity offered, not only excusable in a great national tragedian, but imperative. One thing his political attitude in this matter certainly proves, that he was not a vulgar hunter after popularity, delighting to swell to the point of insane exaggeration the cry of the hour, but one of those men of high purpose, who prove a greater strength of patriotism by stemming the popular stream, than by swimming with it.

Besides the championship of the Court of the Areopagus, there is another political element in this rich drama, which, though of less consequence, must not be omitted. No sooner had the Persian invaders been fairly driven back from the Hellenic shore, than that old spirit of narrow local jealousy, which was the worm at the heart of Grecian political existence, broke out with renewed vigour, and gave ominous indications in the untoward affair of Tanagra, of that terrible collision which shook the two great rival powers a few years afterwards in the famous Peloponnesian war. Sparta and Athens, opposed as they were by race, by geographical position, and by political character, after some public attempts at co-operation, in which Cimon was the principal actor, shrunk back, as in quiet preparation for the great trial of strength, into a state of isolated antagonism. But, though open hostility was deferred, wise precaution could not sleep; and, accordingly, we find the Athenians, about this time, anxious to secure a base of operations, so to speak, against Sparta in the Peloponnesus, by entering into an alliance with Argos. As a genuine Athenian, Æschylus, whatever his political feelings might be towards Cimon and the Spartan party, could not but look with

* “*Τῆς ναυαρχίας γὰρ ἐν τοῖς Μηδικοῖς ὁ δῆμος αἷτιος γενόμενος ἐφρονε-
ματίσθη.*”—ARISTOTLE, *ibid.*

pleasure on the additional strength which this Argive connection gave to Athens in the general council of Greece ; and, accordingly, he dexterously takes advantage of the circumstance of Orestes being an Argive, to trace back the now historical union of the two countries to a period where Fancy is free to add what links she pleases to the brittle bonds of international association.

Such is a rapid sketch of the principal religious and political relations, some notion of which is necessary to enable the general English reader to enter with sympathy on the perusal of the very powerful and singular drama of the Eumenides. The professional student, of course, will not content himself with what he finds here, but will seek for complete satisfaction in the luminous pages of Thirlwall and Grote—in the learned articles of Dr. Smith's Dictionary of Antiquities, in the notes of Schoemann, and, above all, in the rare Dissertations of Ottfried Müller, accompanying his edition of the Eumenides—a work which I have read once and again with mingled admiration and delight—from which I have necessarily drawn with no stinted hand in my endeavours to comprehend the Orestean trilogy for myself, and to make it comprehensible to others ; and which I most earnestly recommend to all classical students as a pattern-specimen of erudite architecture raised by the hand of a master, from whom, even in his points of most baseless speculation (as what German is without such ?), more is to be learned than from the triple-fanged certainties of vulgar commentators.

THE EUMENIDES

SCENE.—*In front of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi.*

The Pythoness. Old Earth, primeval prophetess, I first
 With these my prayers invoke ; and Themis¹ next,
 Who doth her mother's throne and temple both
 Inherit, as the legend runs ; and third
 In lot's due course, another Earth-born maid
 The unforced homage of the land received,
 Titanian Phœbe ; * she in natal gift
 With her own name her hoary right bequeathed
 To Phœbus : he from rocky Delos' lake²
 To Attica's ship-cruised bays was wafted, whence
 He in Parnassus fixed his sure abode.
 Hither with pious escort they attend him :
 The Sons of Vulcan pioneer his path,³
 Smoothing the rugged desert where he comes :
 The thronging people own him, and king Delphos,
 The land's high helmsman, flings his portals wide.
 Jove with divinest skill his heart inspires,
 And now the fourth on this dread seat enthroned
 Sits Loxias,† prophet of his father Jove.⁴
 These be the gods, whom chiefly I invoke :
 But thee, likewise, who 'fore this temple dwellest,⁵
 Pallas, I pray, and you, ye Nymphs that love
 The hollow Corycian rock,⁶ the frequent haunt
 Of pleasant birds, the home of awful gods.
 Thee, Bromius, too, I worship,⁷ not unweeting
 How, led by thee, the furious Thyads rushed
 To seize the godless Pentheus,⁸ ev'n as a hare
 Is dogged to death. And you, the fountains pure
 Of Pleistus,‡ and Poseidon's§ mighty power⁹
 I pray, and Jove most high, that crowns all things
 With consummation. These the gods that lead me
 To the prophetic seat, and may they grant me
 Best-omened entrance ; may consulting Greeks,
 If any be, by custom'd lot approach ;

* The progeny of Earth and Heaven were called Titans, among whom Phœbe is numbered by Hesiod.—Theog. 136.

† One of the waters that descend from Parnassus.

‡ Apollo.

§ Neptune.

For as the gods my bosom stir, I pour
The fateful answer.

[She goes into the Temple, but suddenly returns.]

O horrid tale to tell! O sight to see
Most horrible! that drives me from the halls
Of Loxias, so that I nor stand nor run,
But, like a beast fourfooted stumble on,
Losing the gait and station of my kind,
A gray-haired woman, weaker than a child!¹⁰
Up to the garlanded recess I walked,
And on the navel-stone* behold! a man
With crime polluted to the altar clinging,
And in his bloody hand he held a sword
Dripping with recent murder, and a branch
Of breezy olive, with flocks of fleecy wool
All nicely tipt. Even thus I saw the man;
And stretched before him an unearthly host
Of strangest women, on the sacred seats
Sleeping—not women, but a Gorgon brood,
And worse than Gorgons, or the ravenous crew
That filched the feast of Phineus¹¹ (such I've seen
In painted terror); but these are wingless, black,
Incarnate horrors, and with breathings dire
Snort unapproachable, and from their eyes
Pestiferous beads of poison they distil.
Such uncouth sisterhood, apparel'd so,¹²
From all affinity of gods or men
Divorced, from me and from the gods be far,
And from all human homes! Nor can the land,
That lends these unblest hags a home, remain
Uncursed by fearful scourges. But the god,
Thrice-potent Loxias himself will ward
His holiest shrine from lawless outrage. Him
Physician, prophet, soothsayer, we call,
Cleansing from guilt the blood-polluted hall. *[Exit.]*

The interior of the Delphic Temple is now presented to view. ORESTES is seen clinging to the navel-stone; the EUMENIDES lie sleeping on the seats around. In the background HERMES beside ORESTES. Enter APOLLO.

Apollo [to Orestes]. Trust me, I'll not betray thee. Far or near,
Thy guardian I, and to thine every foe

* See note to Choephoræ, No. 73.

No gentle god. Thy maddened persecutors
 Sleep-captured lie: the hideous host is bound.
 Primeval virgins, hoary maids, with whom
 Nor god, nor man, nor beast hath known communion.
 For evil's sake they are: in evil depth
 Of rayless Tartarus, underneath the ground,
 They dwell, of men and of Olympian gods
 Abhorred. But hence! nor faint thy heart, though they
 Are mighty to pursue from land to land
 O'er measureless tracks, from rolling sea to sea,
 And sea-swept cities. A bitter pasture truly
 Was thine from Fate;¹³ but bear all stoutly. Hie thee
 Away to Pallas' city, and embrace
 Her ancient image¹⁴ with close-clinging arms.
 Just Judges there we will appoint to judge
 Thy cause, and with soft-soothing pleas will pluck
 The sting from thy offence, and free thee quite
 From all thy troubles. Thou know'st that I, the god,
 When thou didst strike, myself the blow directed.

Orest. Liege lord Apollo, justice to the gods
 Belongs; in justice, O remember me.
 Thy power divine assurance gives that thou
 Can'st make thy will a deed.

Apollo. Fear nought. Trust me.
 [*To Hermes*] And thou, true brother's blood, true father's son,
 Hermes, attend, and to this mission gird thee.
 Fulfil the happy omen of thy name,
 The GUIDE,* and guide this suppliant on his way.
 For Jove respects thy function and thy pride,
 The prosperous convoy, and the faithful guide.

[*Exit HERMES, leading ORESTES. APOLLO retires.*]

Enter THE SHADE OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clytem. Sleeping? All sleeping! Ho! What need of sleepers?
 While I roam restless, of my fellow-dead
 Dishonoured and reproached, by fault of you,
 That when I slew swift vengeance overtook me.
 But being slain myself, my avengers sleep
 And leave my cause to drift! Hear me, sleepers!
 Such taunts I bear, such contumelious gibes,
 Yet not one god is touched with wrath to avenge

* πομπῆαιος. Of the dead specially, but also of the living: as of Ulysses in the *Odyssey*, Book X.

My death, who died by matricidal hands.
 Behold these wounds!¹⁵ look through thy sleep, and see!
 Read with thy heart; some things the soul may scan
 More clearly, when the sensuous lid hath dropt,
 Nor garish day confounds.¹⁶ Full oft have ye
 Of my libations sipped the wineless streams,
 The soothings of my sober sacrifice,
 The silent supper from the solemn altar,
 At midnight hour when only ye are worshipped.
 But now all this beneath your feet lies trampled.
 The man is gone; fled like a hind! he snaps
 The meshes of your toils, and makes—O shame!
 Your Deity a mark for scoffers' eyes
 To wink at! Hear me, ye infernal hags,
 Unhoused from hell! For my soul's peace I plead,
 Once Clytemnestra famous, now a dream.¹⁷

[*The CHORUS moans.*

Ye moan! the while the man hath fled, and seeks
 For help from those that are no friends to me.¹⁸

[*The CHORUS moans again.*

Sleep-bound art thou. Hast thou no bowels for me?
 My Furies sleep, and let my murderer flee.

[*The CHORUS groans.*

Groaning and sleeping! Up! What work hast thou
 To do, but thine own work of sorrow? Rouse thee!

[*The CHORUS groans again.*

Sleep and fatigue have sworn a league to bind
 The fearful dragon with strong mastery.

Chorus [with redoubled groans and shrill cries]. Hold! seize
 him! seize him! seize there! there! there! hold!

Clytem. Thy dream scents blood; and, like a dog that doth
 In dreams pursue the chase, even so dost thou
 At phantasms bark and howl. To work! to work!
 Let not fatigue o'ermaster thus thy strength,
 Nor slumber soothe the sense of sharpest wrong.
 Torture thy liver with reproachful thoughts;
 Reproaches are the pricks that goad the wise.
 Up! blow a blast of bloody breath behind him!
 Dry up his marrow with the fiery vengeance!
 Follow! give chase! pursue him to the death!

CHORUS,¹⁹ starting up in hurry and confusion.

Voice 1. Awake! awake! rouse her as I rouse thee!

Voice 2. Dost sleep? arise! dash drowsy sleep away!
 Brave dreams be prelude to brave deed! Ho, sisters!

STROPHE I.

Voice 1. Shame, sisters, shame!
 Insult and injury!
 Shame, O shame!

Voice 2. Shame on me, too: a bootless, fruitless shame!

Voice 1. Insult and injury,
 Sorrow and shame!
 Burden unbearable,
 Shame! O shame!

Voice 2. The snare hath sprung: flown is the goodly game.

Voice 3. I slept, and when sleeping
 He sprang from my keeping;
 Shame, O shame!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Voice 1. O son of Jove, in sooth,
 If thou wilt hear the truth,
 Robber's thy name!

Voice 2. Thou being young dost overleap the old.²⁰

Voice 1. A suppliant, godless,
 And bloodstained, I see,
 And bitter to parents,
 Harboured by thee.

Voice 2. Apollo's shrine a mother-murderer's hold!

Voice 3. Apollo rewardeth
 Whom Justice discardeth,
 And robber's his name!

STROPHE II.

Voice 1. A voice of reproach
 Came through my sleeping,
 Like a charioteer
 With his swift lash sweeping.

Voice 2. Thorough my heart,
 Thorough my liver,
 Keen as the cold ice
 Shot through the river.

Voice 3. Harsh as the headsman,
 Ruthless exacter,
 When tearless he scourges
 The doomed malefactor.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Voice 1. All blushless and bold
 The gods that are younger
 Would rule o'er the old,
 With the right of the stronger.

Voice 2. The Earth's navel-stone
 So holy reputed,
 All gouted with blood,
 With fresh murder polluted,
 Behold, O behold !

Voice 3. By the fault of the younger,
 The holiest holy
 Is holy no longer.

STROPHE III.

Voice 1. Thyself thy hearth with this pollution stained
 Thyself, a prophet, free and unconstrained

Voice 2. O'er the laws of the gods
 Thou hast recklessly ridden,
 Dispensing to men
 Gifts to mortals forbidden ;

Voice 3. Us thou hast reft
 Of our name and our glory,
 Us and the Fates,
 The primeval, the hoary.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Voice 1. I hate the god. Though underneath the ground
 He hide my prey, there, too, he shall be found.

Voice 2. I at each shrine
 Where the mortal shall bend him,
 Will jealously watch,
 That no god may defend him.

Voice 3. Go where he will,
 A blood-guilty ranger,
 Hotly will hound him still
 I, the Avenger !

Apollo. Begone ! I charge thee, leave these sacred halls !
 From this prophetic cell avaunt ! lest thou
 A feathered serpent in thy breast receive,
 Shot from my golden bow ; and, inly pained,
 Thou vomit forth black froth of murdered men,
 Belching the clotted slaughter by thy maw
 Insatiate sucked. These halls suit not for thee ;

But where beheading, eye-out-digging dooms,²¹
 Abortions, butcheries, barrenness abound,
 Where mutilations, flayings, torturings,
 Make wretches groan, on pointed stakes impaled,
 There fix your seats ; there hold the horrid feasts,
 In which your savage hearts exultant revel,
 Of gods abominate—maids whose features foul
 Speak your foul tempers plainly. Find a home
 In some grim lion's den sanguinolent, not
 In holy temples which your breath pollutes.
 Depart, ye sheep unshepherded, whom none
 Of all the gods may own !

Chorus. Liege lord, Apollo,
 Ours now to speak, and thine to hear : thyself
 Not aided only, but the single cause
 Wert thou of all thou blamest.

Apollo. How so ? Speak !

Chorus. Thine was the voice that bade him kill his mother.

Apollo. Mine was the voice bade him avenge his father.

Chorus. All reeking red with gore thou didst receive him.

Apollo. Not uninvited to these halls he came.

Chorus. And we come with him. Wheresoe'er he goes,
 His convoy we. Our function is to follow.

Apollo. Follow ! but from this holy threshold keep
 Unholy feet.

Chorus. We, where we must go, go
 By virtue of our office.

Apollo. A goodly vaunt !
 Your office what ?

Chorus. From hearth and home we chase
 All mother-murderers.

Apollo. She was murdered here,
 That murdered first her husband.²²

Chorus. Yet should she
 By her own body's fruitage have been slain ?

Apollo. Thus speaking, ye mispraise the sacred rites
 Of matrimonial Hera²³ and of Jove,
 Unvalued make fair Aphrodite's grace,
 Whence dearest joys to mortal man descend.
 The nuptial bed, to man and woman fated,²⁴
 Hath obligation stronger than an oath,
 And Justice guards it. Ye who watch our crimes,
 If that loose reins to nuptial sins ye yield,

Offend, and grossly. If the murtherous wife
Escape your sharp-set vengeance, how can ye
Pursue Orestes justly? I can read
No even judgment in your partial scales,
In this more wrathful, and in that more mild.

She who is wise shall judge between us, Pallas.

Chorus. The man is mine already. I will keep him.

Apollo. He's gone; and thou'lt but waste thy toil to follow.

Chorus. Thy words shall not be swords, to cut my honors.

Apollo. Crowned with such honors, I would tear them from me!

Chorus. A mighty god beside thy father's throne

Art thou, Apollo. Me this mother's blood

Goads on to hound this culprit to his doom.

Apollo. And I will help this man, champion and save him,
My suppliant, my client; should I not,
Both gods and men would brand the treachery.

The scene changes to the Temple of Pallas in Athens. A considerable interval of time is supposed to have elapsed between the two parts of the Play.

Enter ORESTES.

Orest. Athena queen, at Loxias' hest I come.

Receive the suppliant with propitious grace.

Not now polluted, nor unwashed from guilt

I cling to the first altar; time hath mellowed

My hue of crime, and friendly men receive

The curse-beladen wanderer to their homes.

True to the god's oracular command,

O'er land and sea with weary foot I fare,

To find thy shrine, O goddess, and clasp thine image;

And now redemption from thy doom I wait.

Enter CHORUS.

Chorus. 'Tis well. The man is here. His track I know.

The sure advisal of our voiceless guide

Follow; as hound a wounded stag pursues,

We track the blood, and snuff the coming death.

Soothly we pant, with life-outwearying toils

Sore overburdened! O'er the wide sea far

I came, and with my wingless flight outstripped

The couriers of the deep. Here he must lie,

In some pent corner skulking. In my nostrils

The scent of mortal blood doth laugh me welcome.

CHORUS.²⁵

Voice 1. Look, sisters, look !

Voice 2. On the right, on the left, and round about,
Search every nook !

Voice 3. Warily watch him,
The blood-guilty ranger,
That Fraud may not snatch him,
From me the Avenger !

Voice 1. At the shrine of the goddess,
He bendeth him lowly,
Embracing her image,
The ancient the holy.

Voice 2. With hands crimson-reeking,
He clingeth profanely,
A free pardon seeking
From Pallas—how vainly !

Voice 3. For blood, when it floweth,
For once and for ever
It sinks, and it knoweth
To mount again never.

Voice 1. Thou shalt pay me with pain ;
From thy heart, from thy liver
I will suck, I will drain
Thy life's crimson river.

Voice 2. The cup from thy veins
I will quaff it, how rarely !
I will wither thy brains,
Thou shalt pine late and early.

Voice 3. I will drag thee alive,
For thy guilt matricidal,
To the dens of the damned,
For thy lasting abidal.

EPODE.

Tutti. There imprisoned thou shalt see
All who living sinned with thee,
'Gainst the gods whom men revere,
'Gainst honoured guest, or parents dear ;
All the guilty who inherited
Woe, even as their guilt had merited.
For Hades,* in his halls of gloom,
With a justly portioned doom,

Literally the unseen world. Sometimes used for the King of the unseen world—
Pluto.

Binds them down securely :
 All the crimes of human kind,
 In the tablet of his mind,
 He hath graven surely.

Orest. By manifold ills I have been taught to know
 All expiations ; and the time to speak
 I know, and to be silent. In this matter
 As a wise master taught me, so my tongue
 Shapes utterance. The curse that bound me sleeps,
 My harsh-grained guilt is finer worn, the deep
 Ensanguined stain washed to a softer hue ;
 Still reeking fresh with gore, on Phœbus' hearth,
 The blood of swine hath now wrought my lustration,*
 And I have held communings with my kind
 Once and again unharming. Time, that smooths
 All things, hath smoothed the front of my offence.
 With unpolluted lips I now implore
 Thy aid, Athena, of this land the queen.
 Myself, a firm ally, I pledge to thee,
 Myself, the Argive people, and their land,
 Thy bloodless prize. And whether distant far
 On Libyan plains beside Tritonian pools,
 Thy natal flood, with forward foot firm planted,
 Erect, or with decorous stole high-seated,²⁷
 Thy friends thou aidest, or with practised eye
 The ordered battle on Phlegrean fields
 Thou musterest²⁸—come!—for gods can hear from far—
 And from these woes complete deliverance send !

Chorus. Not all Apollo's, all Athena's power
 Shall aid thee. Thou, of gods and men forsook,
 Shalt pine and dwindle, stranger to the name
 Of joy, a wasted shadow, bloodless sucked
 To fatten wrathful gods. Thou dost not speak,
 But, as a thing devoted, standest dumb,
 My prey, even mine ! my living banquet thou,
 My fireless victim. List, and thou shalt hear
 My song, that binds thee with its viewless chain.

Chorus. Deftly, deftly weave the dance !
 Sisters lift the dismal strain !
 Sing the Furies, justly dealing
 Dooms deserved to guilty mortals ;
 Deftly, deftly lift the strain !
 Whoso lifted hands untainted

* See Introductory Remarks.

Him no Furies' wrath shall follow,
 He shall live unharmed by me ;
 But who sinned, as this offender,
 Hiding foul ensanguined hands,
 We with him are present, bearing
 Unhired witness for the dead ;
 We will tread his heels, exacting
 Blood for blood, even to the end.

CHORAL HYMN.²⁹

STROPHE I.

Mother Night that bore me,
 A scourge, to go before thee,
 To scourge, with stripes delightless,
 The seeing and the sightless,³⁰
 Hear me, I implore thee,

O Mother Night !

Mother Night that bore me,
 The son of Leto o'er me
 Rough rides, in thy despite.
 From me, the just pursuer,
 He shields the evil-doer,
 The son to me devoted,
 For mother-murder noted,
 He claims against the right.

Where the victim lies,
 Let the death-hymn rise !
 Lift ye the hymn of the Furies amain !
 The gleeless song, and the lyreless strain,³¹
 That bindeth the heart with a viewless chain,
 With notes of distraction and maddening sorrow,
 Blighting the brain, and burning the marrow !

Where the victim lies,
 Let the death-hymn rise,
 The hymn that binds with a viewless chain !

ANTISTROPHE I.

Mother Night that bore me,
 The Fate that was before me,
 This portion gave me surely,
 This lot for mine securely,
 To bear the scourge before thee,
 O Mother Night !

The Eumenides

And, in embrace untender
 To hold the red offender,
 That sinned in gods' despite,
 And wheresoe'er he wend him,
 His keepers close we tend him.
 In living or in dying,
 From us there is no flying,
 The daughters of the Night.

Where the victim lies,
 Let the death-hymn rise !
 Lift ye the hymn of the Furies amain !
 The gleeless song, and the lyreless strain,
 That bindeth the heart with a viewless chain,
 With notes of distraction and maddening sorrow,
 Blighting the brain, and burning the marrow !
 Where the victim lies,
 Let the death-hymn rise,
 The hymn that binds with a viewless chain !

STROPHE II.

From primal ages hoary,
 This lot, our pride and glory,
 Appointed was to us ;
 To Hades' gloomy portal,
 To chase the guilty mortal,
 But from Olympians, reigning
 In lucid seats,* abstaining ;
 Their nectared feasts we taste not,
 Their sun-white robes invest not
 The maids of Erebus.

But, with scourge and with ban,
 We prostrate the man,
 Who with smooth-woven wile,
 And a fair-faced smile,
 Hath planted a snare for his friend ;
 Though fleet, we shall find him,
 Though strong, we shall bind him,
 Who planted a snare for his friend.

ANTISTROPHE II.

This work of labour earnest,³²
 This task severest, sternest,

* *Lucidae sedes*.—HORACE III. 3.

Let none remove from us.
 To all their due we render,
 Each deeply-marked offender
 Our searching eye reproveth,
 Though blissful Jove removeth,
 From his Olympian glory,
 Abhorr'd of all and gory,
 The maids of Erebus.

But, swift as the wind,
 We follow and find,
 Till he stumbles apace,
 Who had hoped in the race,
 To escape from the grasp of the Furies!
 And we trample him low,
 Till he writhe in his woe,
 Who had fled from the chase of the Furies.

STROPHE III.

The thoughts heaven-scaling
 Of men haughty-hearted,
 At our breath, unavailing
 Like smoke they departed.
 Our jealous foot hearing,
 They stumble before us,
 And bite the ground, fearing
 Our dark-vested chorus.

ANTISTROPHE III.

They fall, and perceive not
 The foe that hath found them;
 They are blind and believe not,
 Thick darkness hath bound them.
 From the halls of the fated,
 A many-voiced wailing
 Of sorrow unsated
 Ascends unavailing.

STROPHE IV.

For the Furies work readily
 Vengeance unsparing,
 Surely and steadily
 Ruin preparing.
 Dark crimes strictly noted,
 Sure-memored they store them;

And, judgment once voted,
 Prayers vainly implore them.
 For they know no communion
 With the bright-throned union
 Of the gods of the day;
 Where the living appear not,
 Where the pale Shades near not,
 In regions delightless,
 All sunless and sightless,
 They dwell far away.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

What mortal reveres not
 Our deity awful?
 When he names us, who fears not
 To work deeds unlawful?
 From times hoary-dated,
 This statute for ever
 Divinely was fated;
 Time takes from it never.
 For dishonour we bear not,
 Though the bright thrones we share not
 With the gods of the day.
 Our right hoary-dated
 We claim unabated,
 Though we dwell, where delightless
 No sun cheers the sightless,
 'Neath the ground far away.

Enter ATHENA.

Athena. The cry that called me from Scamander's banks³³
 I heard afar, even as I hied to claim
 The land for mine which the Achæan chiefs
 Assigned me, root and branch, my portion fair
 Of the conquered roods, a goodly heritage
 To Theseus' sons. Thence, with unwearied foot,
 I journeyed here by these high-mettled steeds
 Car-borne, my wingless ægis in the gale
 Full-bosomed whirring. And now, who are ye,
 A strange assembly, though I fear you not,
 Here gathered at my gates? I speak to both,
 To thee the stranger, that with suppliant arms
 Enclasps my statue—Whence art thou? And you,

Like to no generation seed-begotten,
Like to no goddess ever known of gods,
Like to no breathing forms of mortal kind;
But to reproach with contumelious phrase
Who wrong not us, nor courtesy allows,
Nor Themis wills. Whence are ye?

Chorus. Daughter of Jove,

'Tis shortly said: of the most ancient Night
The tristful daughters we, and our dread name,
Even from the fearful CURSE we bear, we borrow.*

Athena. I know you, and the dreaded name ye bear.

Chorus. Our sacred office, too—

Athena. That I would hear.

Chorus. The guilty murderer from his home we hunt.

Athena. And the hot chase, where ends it?

Chorus. There, where joy

Is never named.

Athena. And is this man the quarry,

That, with hoarse-throated whoop, thou now pursuest?

Chorus. He slew his mother—dared the worst of crimes.

Athena. What mightier fear, what strong necessity
Spurred him to this?

Chorus. What fear so strong that it

Should prompt a mother's murder?

Athena. There are two parties. Only one hath spoken.

Chorus. He'll neither swear himself, nor take my oath.³⁴

Athena. The show of justice, not fair Justice self,
Thou lovest.

Chorus. How? Speak—thou so rich in wisdom.

Athena. Oaths are no proof, to make the wrong the right.

Chorus. Prove thou. A true and righteous judgment judge.

Athena. I shall be judge, betwixt this man and thee
To speak the doom.

Chorus. Even thou. Thy worthy deeds

Give thee the worth in this high strife to judge.

Athena. Now, stranger, 'tis thy part to speak. Whence come,

Thy lineage what, and what thy fortunes, say,
And then refute this charge against thee brought.

For well I note the sacredness about thee,
That marks the suppliant who atonement seeks,
In old Ixíon's guise;³⁵ and thou hast fled

* See Introductory Remarks. They designate themselves here from their origin
Apai or imprecations.

For refuge, to my holy altar clinging.

Answer me this, and plainly tell thy tale.

Orest. Sovran Athena, first from these last words

A cause of much concernment be removed.

I seek for no atonement ; no pollution

Cleaves to thy sacred image from my touch.

Of this receive a proof. Thou know'st a murderer

Being unatoned a voiceless penance bears,

Till, from the hand of friendly man, the blood

Of a young beast from lusty veins hath sprent him,

Cleansing from guiltiness. These sacred rites

Have been performed : the blood of beasts hath sprent me,

The lucent lymph hath purged the filthy stain.

For this enough. As for my race, I am

An Argive born : and for my father, he

Was Agamemnon, king of men, by whom

The chosen admiral of the masted fleet,

The ancient city of famous Priam thou

Didst sheer uncit³⁶. Sad was his return ;

For, with dark-bosomed guile, my mother killed him,

Snared in the meshes of a tangled net,

And of the bloody deed the bath was witness.

I then, returning to my father's house

After long exile—I confess the deed—

Slew her who bore me, a dear father's murder

With murder quitting. The blame—what blame may be—

I share with Loxias, who fore-augured griefs

To goad my heart if, by my fault, such guilt

Should go unpunished. I have spoken. Thou

What I have done, if justly or unjustly,

Decide. Thy doom, howe'er it fall, contents me.

Athena. In this high cause to judge, no mortal man

May venture ; nor may I divide the law

Of right and wrong, in such keen strife of blood.

For thee, in that thou comest to my halls,³⁷

In holy preparation perfected,

A pure and harmless suppliant, I, as pledged

Already thy protector, may not judge thee.

For these, 'tis no light thing to slight their office.

For, should I send them hence uncrowned with triumph,

Dripping fell poison from their wrathful breasts,

They'd leave a noisome pestilence in the land

Behind them. Thus both ways I'm sore perplexed ;

Absent or present, they do bring a curse.
 But since this business needs a swift decision,
 Sworn judges I'll appoint, and they shall judge
 Of blood in every age. Your testimonies
 And proofs meanwhile, and all that clears the truth,
 Provide. Myself, to try this weighty cause,
 My choicest citizens will choose, and bind them
 By solemn oath to judge a righteous judgment.

CHORAL HYMN.³⁸

STROPHE I.

Ancient rights and hoary uses
 Now shall yield to young abuses,
 Right and wrong together chime,
 If the vote
 Fail to note
 Mother-murder for a crime.
 Murder now, made nimble-handed,
 Wide shall rage without control;
 Sons against their parents banded
 Deeds abhorred
 With the sword
 Now shall work, while ages roll.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Now no more, o'er deeds unlawful,
 Shall the sleeping Mænads* awful
 Watch, with jealous eyes to scan;
 Free and chainless,
 Wild and reinless,
 Stalks o'er Earth each murtherous plan.
 Friend to friend his loss deplores,
 Lawless rapine, treacherous wound,
 But in vain his plaint he pours;
 To his bruises
 Earth refuses
 Balm; no balm on Earth is found.

STROPHE II.

Now no more, from grief's prostration,
 Cries and groans
 Heaven shall scale with invocation—
 "Justice hear my supplication,
 Hear me, Furies, from your thrones!"

* That is, the Furies themselves.

The Eumenides

From the recent sorrow bleeding,
 Father thus or mother calls,
 Vainly with a piteous pleading,
 For the House of Justice falls.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Blest the man in whose heart reigneth
 Holy Fear ;
 Fear his heart severely traineth ;
 Blest, from troublous woe who gaineth
 Ripest fruits of wisdom clear ;*
 But who sports, a careless liver,³⁹
 In the sunshine's flaunting show,
 Holy Justice, he shall never
 Thy severest virtue know.

STROPHE III.

Lordless life, or despot-ridden,
 Be they both from me forbidden.
 To the wise mean strength is given,⁴⁰
 Thus the gods have ruled in heaven ;
 Gods, that gently or severely
 Judge, discerning all things clearly.
 Mark my word, I tell thee truly,
 Pride, that lifts itself unduly,⁴¹
 Had a godless heart for sire.
 Healthy-minded moderation
 Wins the wealthy consummation,
 Every heart's desire.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Yet, again, I tell thee truly,
 At Justice' altar bend thee duly.
 Wean thine eye from lawless yearning
 After gain ; with godless spurning
 Smite not thou that shrine most holy.
 Punishment, that travels slowly,
 Comes at last, when least thou fearest.
 Yet, once more ; with truth sincerest,
 Love thy parents and revere,

* Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen ass,
 Und durch die kummervollen Nächte
 Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,
 Er kennt Euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte !—GOETHE.

And the guest, that to protect him,
Claims thy guardian roof, respect him,
With an holy fear.*

STROPHE IV.

Whoso, with no forced endeavour,
Sin-eschewing liveth,
Him to hopeless ruin never
Jove the Saviour giveth.
But whose hand, with greed rapacious,
Draggeth all things for his prey,
He shall strike his flag audacious,
When the god-sent storm shall bray,
Winged with fate at last ;
When the stayless sail is flapping,
When the sail-yard swings, and, snapping,
Crashes to the blast.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

He shall call, but none shall hear him,
When dark ocean surges ;
None with saving hand shall near him,
When his prayer he urges.
Laughs the god, to see him vainly
Grasping at the crested rock ;
Fool, who boasted once profanely
Firm to stand in Fortune's shock ;
Who so great had been
His freighted wealth with fearful crashing,
On the rock of Justice dashing,
Dies, unwept, unseen.

Enter ATHENA, behind a Herald.

Athena. Herald, proclaim the diet, and command
The people to attention ; with strong breath
Give the air-shattering Tyrrhene trump free voice,⁴²
To speak shrill-throated to the assembled throngs ;
And, while the judges take their solemn seats,
In hushed submission, let the city hear
My laws that shall endure for aye ; and these,
In hushed submission, wait the righteous doom.

* " For strangers and the poor are from Jove."—HOMER.

*Enter APOLLO.*⁴³

Chorus. Sovran Apollo, rule where thou art lord ;
But here what business brings the prophet ? *Speak.*

Apollo. I come a witness of the truth ; this man
Is suppliant to me, he on my hearth
Found refuge, him I purified from blood.
I, too, am patron of his cause, I share
The blame, if blame there be, in that he slew
His mother. Pallas, order thou the trial.

Athena [*to the Furies*]. *Speak ye the first, 'tis wiseliest ordered thus,*

That, who complains, his plaint set forth in order,
Point after point, articulately clear.

Chorus. Though we be many, yet our words are few.
Answer thou singly, as we singly ask ;

This first—art thou the murderer of thy mother ?

Orest. I did the deed. This fact hath no denial.

Chorus. Once worsted ! With three fits I gain the trial.

Orest. Boast, when thou seest me fall. As yet I stand.

Chorus. This answer now—how didst thou do the deed.

Orest. Thus ; with my pointed dagger, in the neck
I smote her.

Chorus. Who the bloody deed advised ?

Orest. The god of oracles. Here he stands to witness.

Chorus. Commanding murder with prophetic nod ?

Orest. Ay ! and even now I do not blame the god.

Chorus. Soon, soon, thou'lt blame him, when the pebble drops
Into the urn of justice with thy doom.

Orest. My murdered sire will aid me from the tomb.

Chorus. Trust in the dead ; in thy dead mother trust.

Orest. She died, with two foul blots well marked for vengeance.

Chorus. How so ? This let the judges understand.

Orest. The hand that killed her husband killed my father.

Chorus. If she for her crimes died, why livest thou ?

Orest. If her thou didst not vex, why vex me now ?

Chorus. She slew a man, but not of kindred blood.

Orest. Is the son's blood all to the mother kin,
None to the father ?

Chorus. Peace, thou sin-stained monster !

Dost thou abjure the dearest blood, the mother's
That bore thee 'neath her zone ?

Orest. [*to Apollo*]. Be witness thou.

Apollo, speak for me, if by the rule

Of Justice she was murdered. That the deed
Was done, and by these hands, I not deny ;
If justly or unjustly blood was spilt,
Thou knowest. Teach me how to make reply.

Apollo. I speak to you, Athena's mighty council ;
And what I speak is truth : the prophet lies not.
From my oracular seat was published never
To man, to woman, or to city aught
By my Olympian sire unfathered.* Ye
How Justice sways the scale will wisely weigh ;
But this remember—what my father wills
Is law. Jove's will is stronger than an oath.

Chorus. Jove, say'st thou, touched thy tongue with inspiration,
To teach Orestes that he might avenge
A father's death by murdering a mother ?

Apollo. His was no common father—Agamemnon,
Honoured the kingly sceptre god-bestowed
To bear—he slain by a weak woman, not
By furious Amazon with far-darting bow,
But in such wise as I shall now set forth
To thee, Athena, and to these that sit
On this grave bench of judgment. Him returning
All prosperous from the wars, with fairest welcome
She hailed her lord, and in the freshening bath
Bestowed him ; there, ev'n while he laved, she came
Spreading death's mantle out, and, in a web
Of curious craft entangled, stabbed him. Such
Was the sad fate of this most kingly man,
Of all revered, the fleet's high admiral.
A tale it is to prick your heart with pity,
Even yours that seal the judgment.

Chorus. Jove, thou sayest,
Prefers the father : yet himself did bind
With bonds his hoary-dated father Kronos.⁴⁴
Make this with that to square, and thou art wise.
Ye judges, mark me, if I reason well.

Apollo. O odious monsters, of all gods abhorred !
A chain made fast may be untied again.
This ill hath many cures ; but, when the dust
Hath once drunk blood, no power can raise it. Jove
Himself doth know no charm to disenchant
Death ; other things he turns both up and down,
At his good pleasure, fainting not in strength.

Chorus. Consider well whereto thy words will lead thee.
 How shall this man, who spilt his mother's blood,
 Dwell in his father's halls at Argos? How
 Devoutly kneel at the public altar? How
 With any clanship share lustration? ⁴⁵

Apollo. This
 Likewise I'll answer. Mark me! whom we call
 The mother begets not; ⁴⁶ she is but the nurse,
 Whose fostering breast the new-sown seed receives.
 The father truly gets; the dam but cherishes
 A stranger-bud, that, if the gods be kind,
 May blossom soon, and bear. Behold a proof!
 Without a mother may a child be born,
 Not so without a father. Which to witness
 Here is this daughter of Olympian Jove,
 Not nursed in darkness, in the womb, and yet
 She stands a goddess, heavenly mother ne'er
 Bore greater. Pallas, here I plight my faith
 To magnify thy city and thy people;
 And I this suppliant to thy hearth hath sent,
 Thy faithful ally ever. May the league
 Here sworn to-day their children's children bind!

Athena. Now judges, as your judgment is, I charge you,
 So vote the doom. Words we have had enough.

Chorus. Our quiver's emptied. We await the doom.

Athena. How should the sentence fall to keep me free
 Of your displeasure?

Chorus. What we said we said.

Even as your heart informs you, nothing fearing,
 So judges justly vote, the oath revering.

Athena. Now, hear my ordinance, Athenians! ⁴⁷ Ye,
 In this first strife of blood, umpires elect,
 While age on age shall roll, the sons of Aegeus
 This Council shall revere. Here, on this hill,
 The embattled Amazons pitched their tents of yore, ⁴⁸
 What time with Theseus striving, they their tents
 Against these high-towered infant walls uptowered.
 To Mars they sacrificed, and, to this day,
 This Mars' Hill speaks their story. Here, Athenians,
 Shall reverence of the gods, and holy fear,
 That shrinks from wrong, both night and day possess,
 A place apart, so long as fickle change
 Your ancient laws disturbs not; but, if this

Pure fount with muddy streams ye trouble, ye
 Shall draw the draught in vain. From anarchy
 And slavish masterdom alike my ordinance
 Preserve my people! Cast not from your walls
 All high authority; for where no fear
 Awful remains, what mortal will be just?
 This holy reverence use, and ye possess
 A bulwark, and a safeguard of the land,
 Such as no race of mortals vaunteth, far
 In Borean Scythia, or the land of Pelops.*
 This council I appoint intact to stand
 From gain, a venerated conclave, quick
 In pointed indignation, when all sleep
 A sleepless watch. These words of warning hear,
 My citizens for ever. Now ye judges
 Rise, take your pebbles, and by vote decide,
 The sacred oath revering. I have spoken.

The AEROPAGITES advance; and, as each puts his pebble into the urn, the CHORUS and APOLLO alternately address them as follows:

Chorus. I warn ye well: the sisterhood beware,
 Whose wrath hangs heavier than the land may bear.

Apollo. I warn ye well: Jove is my father; fear
 To turn to nought the words of me, his seer.

Chorus. If thou dost plead, where thou hast no vocation,
 For blood, will men respect thy divination?

Apollo. Must then my father share thy condemnation,
 When first he heard Ixion's supplication?

Chorus. Thou say'st.⁴⁹ But I, if justice be denied me,
 Will sorely smite the land that so defied me.

Apollo. Among the gods the elder, and the younger,
 Thou hast no favour; I shall prove the stronger.

Chorus. Such were thy deeds in Pheres' house,⁵⁰ deceiving
 The Fates, and mortal men from death reprieving.

Apollo. Was it a crime to help a host? to lend
 A friendly hand to raise a sinking friend?

Chorus. Thou the primeval Power didst undermine,
 Mocking the hoary goddesses with wine.

Apollo. Soon, very soon, when I the cause shall gain,
 Thou'lt spit thy venom on the ground in vain.

That is, *Asia*. See Introduction to the *Agamemnon*.

Chorus. Thou being young, dost jeer my ancient years
With youthful insolence ; till the doom appears,
I'll patient wait ; my hot-spurred wrath I'll stay,
And even-poised betwixt two tempers sway.

Athena. My part remains ; and I this crowning pebble
Drop to Orestes ; for I never knew
The mother's womb that bore me.* I give honor,
Save in my virgin nature, to the male
In all things ; all my father lives in me.⁵¹
Not blameless be the wife, who dared to slay
Her husband, lord and ruler of her home.
My voice is for Orestes ; though the votes
Fall equal from the urn, my voice shall save him.
Now shake the urn, to whom this duty falls,
And tell the votes.

Orest. O Phœbus, how shall end
This doubtful issue ?

Chorus. O dark Night, my mother,
Behold these things !

Orest. One moment blinds me quite,
Or to a blaze of glory opes my eyes.

Chorus. We sink to shame, or to more honor rise.

*Apollo.*⁵² Judges, count well the pebbles as they fall,
And with just jealousy divide them. One
Being falsely counted works no simple harm.
One little pebble saves a mighty house.

Athena. Hear now the doom. This man from blood is free.
The votes are equal ; he escapes by me.

Orest. O Pallas, Saviour of my father's house,
Restorer of the exile's hope, Athena,
I praise thee ! Now belike some Greek will say,
The Argive man revisiteth the homes
And fortunes of his father, by the aid
Of Pallas, Loxias, and Jove the Saviour
All-perfecting, who pled the father's cause,
Fronting the wrathful Furies of the mother !
I now depart : and to this land I leave,
And to this people, through all future time,
An oath behind me, that no lord of Argos
Shall ever brandish the well-pointed spear
Against this friendly land.† When, from the tomb,

* Alluding to the well-known and beautiful allegoric myth that the goddess of wisdom sprang, full-armed, into birth from the brain of the all-wise Omnipotent, without the intervention of a mother.

† See the Preliminary Remarks.

I shall perceive who disregards this oath
 Of my sons' sons, I will perplex that man
 With sore perplexities inextricable ;
 Ways of despair, and evil-birded paths *
 Shall be his portion, cursing his own choice.
 But if my vows be duly kept, with those
 That in the closely-banded league shall aid
 Athena's city, I am present ever.
 Then fare thee well, thou and thy people! Never
 May foe escape thy grasp! When thou dost struggle,
 Safety and victory attend thy spear!

[*Exit.*

Chorus. Curse on your cause,
 Ye gods that are younger!
 O'er the time-hallowed laws
 Rough ye ride as the stronger.
 Of the prey that was ours
 Ye with rude hands bereave us,
 'Mid the dark-dreaded Powers
 Shorn of honor ye leave us.
 Behold, on the ground
 From a heart of hostility,
 I sprinkle around
 Black gouts of sterility!
 A plague I will bring,
 With a dry lichen spreading;
 No green blade shall spring
 Where the Fury is treading.
 To abortion I turn
 The birth of the blooming,
 Where the plague-spot shall burn
 Of my wrath, life-consuming.
 I am mocked,† but in vain
 They rejoice at my moaning;
 They shall pay for my pain,
 With a fearful atoning,
 Who seized on my right,
 And, with wrong unexampled,
 On the daughters of Night
 High scornfully trampled.

* παρόρνιθας, as we say ill-starred—that is, *unfortunate, unlucky*, the metaphor being varied, according to the changes of fashions in the practice of divination.

† Αἰὶ γελῶμαι—"fortasse non male."—PALEY.

Athena. Be ruled by me: your heavy-bosomed groans
Refrain. Not vanquished thou, but the fair vote
Leapt equal from the urn, with no disgrace
To thee. From Jove himself clear witness came;
The oracular god that urged the deed, the same
Stood here to vouch it, that Orestes might not
Reap harm from his obedience. Soothe ye, therefore;
Cast not your bolted vengeance on this land,
Your gout of wrath divine distil not, stings
Of pointed venom, with keen corrosive power
Eating life's seeds, all barrenness and blight.
A home within this land I pledge you, here
A shrine, a refuge, and a hearth secure,
Where ye on shining thrones shall sit, my city
Yielding devoutest homage to your power.

Chorus. Curse on your cause,
Ye gods that are younger!
O'er the time-hallowed laws
Rough ye ride, as the stronger.
Of the prey that was ours
Ye with rude hands bereave us,
'Mid the dark-dreaded Powers
Shorn of honor ye leave us.
Behold, on the ground
From a heart of hostility,
I sprinkle around
Black gout of sterility!
A plague I will bring
With a dry lichen spreading;
No green blade shall spring
Where the Fury is treading.
To abortion I turn
The birth of the blooming,
Where the plague-spot shall burn
Of my wrath, life-consuming.
I am mocked, but in vain
They rejoice at my moaning;
They shall pay for my pain,
With a fearful atoning,
Who seized on my right,
And, with wrong unexampled,
On the daughters of Night
High scornfully trampled.

Athena. Dishonoured are ye not : Spit not your rancour
On this fair land remediless. Rests my trust
On Jove, the mighty, I of all the gods
Sharing alone the strong keys that unlock
His thunder-halls : ⁵³ but this I name not here.
Yield thou : cast not the seed of reckless speech
To crop the land with woe. Soothing the waves
Of bitter anger darkling in thy breast,
Dwell in this land, thy dreadful deity
Sistered with me. When thronging worshippers
Henceforth shall cull choice firstlings for thine altars,
Praying thy grace to bless the wedded rite,
And the child-bearing womb—then honoured so,
How wise my present counsel thou shalt know.

CHORUS.

Voice 1. I to dwell 'neath the Earth
All clipt of my glory,
In the dark-chambered Earth,
I, the ancient, the hoary !

Voice 2. I breathe on thee curses,
I cut through thy marrow,
For the insult that pierces
My heart like an arrow.

Voice 3. Hear my cry, mother Night,
'Gainst the gods that deceived me !
With their harsh-handed might
Of my right they bereaved me.

Athena. Thy anger I forgive ; for thou'rt the elder.
But though thy years bring wisdom, to me also
Jove gave a heart, not undiscerning. You—
Mark well my words—if now some foreign land
Ye choose, will rue your choice, and long for Athens.
The years to be shall float more richly fraught
With honor to my citizens ; thou shalt hold
An honoured seat beside Erectheus' home, ⁵⁴
Where men and women in marshalled pomp shall pay thee
Such homage, as no land on Earth may render.
But cast not ye on this my chosen land
Whetstones of fury, teaching knives to drink
The blood of tender bowels, madding the heart
With wineless drunkenness, that men shall swell
Like game cocks for the battle ; save my city

From brothered strife, and from domestic brawls. ⁵⁴
 Without the walls, and far from kindred hearths
 Rage war, where honor calls, and glory crowns.
 A bird of blood within the house I love not.
 Use thine election ; wisely use it ; give
 A blessing, and a blessing take ; with me
 May this land dear to the gods be dear to thee !

CHORUS.

Voice 1. I to dwell 'neath the Earth
 All clipt of my glory,
 In the dark-chambered Earth
 I, the ancient, the hoary !

Voice 2. I breathe on thee curses,
 I cut through thy marrow,
 For the insult that pierces
 My heart like an arrow.

Voice 3. Hear my cry, mother Night,
 'Gainst the gods that deceived me !
 With their harsh-handed might
 Of my right they bereaved me.

Athena. To advise thee well I faint not. Never more
 Shalt thou, a hoary-dated power, complain
 That I, a younger, or my citizens,
 From our inhospitable gates expelled thee
 Of thy due honors shortened. If respect
 For sacred Peitho's* godhead, for the honey
 And charming of the tongue may move thee, stay ;
 But, if ye will go, show of justice none
 Remains, with rancour, wrath, and scathe to smite
 This land and people. Stands your honoured lot
 With me for ever, so ye scorn it not.

Chorus. Sovran Athena, what sure home receives me ?

Athena. A home from sorrow free. Receive it freely.

Chorus. And when received, what honors wait me then ?

Athena. No house shall prosper where thy blessing fails.

Chorus. This by thy grace is sure ?

Athena. I will upbuild
 His house who honours thee.

Chorus. This pledged for ever ?

Athena. I cannot promise what I not perform.

Chorus. Thy words have soothed me, and my wrath relents.

* The goddess of Persuasion—*πειθώ*.

Athena. Here harboured thou wilt number many friends.

Chorus. Say, then, how shall my hymn uprise to bless thee?

Athena. Hymn things that strike fair victory's mark: from
Earth,

From the sea's briny dew, and from the sky
Bring blessings; the benignly-breathing gales
On summer wings be wafted to this land;
Let the Earth swell with the exuberant flow
Of fruits and flowers, that want may be unknown.
Bless human seed with increase, but cast out
The impious man; even as a gardener, I
Would tend the flowers, the briars and the thorns
Heaped for the burning. This thy province. I
In feats of Mars conspicuous will not fail
To plant this city 'fore all eyes triumphant.

STROPHE I.

Chorus. Pallas, thy welcome so kindly compelling
Hath moved me; I scorn not to mingle my dwelling
With thine, and with Jove's, the all-ruling, thy sire.
The city I scorn not, where Mars guards the portals,
The fortress of gods,⁵⁶ the fair grace of Immortals.
I bless thee prophetic; to work thy desire
To the Sun, when he shines in his full-flooded splendour,
Her tribute to thee may the swelling Earth render,
And bounty with bounty conspire!

Athena. Athens, no trifling gain I've won thee.

With rich blessing thou shalt harbour,
Through my grace, these much-prevailing
Sternest-hearted Powers. For they
Rule, o'er human fates appointed,
With far-reaching sway.
Woe to the wretch, by their wrath smitten! ⁵⁷
With strokes he knows not whence descending,
Not for his own, for guilt inherited,⁵⁸
They with silent-footed vengeance
Shall o'ertake him: in the dust,
Heaven with piercing cries imploring,
Crushed the sinner lies.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Chorus. Far from thy dwelling, and far from thy border,
By the grace of my godhead benignant I order

The blight that may blacken the bloom of thy trees.
 Far from thy border, and far from thy dwelling
 Be the hot blast that shrivels the bud in its swelling,
 The seed-rotting taint, and the creeping disease !
 Thy flocks still be doubled, thy seasons be steady,
 And, when Hermes is near thee, ⁵⁹ thy hand still be ready
 The Heaven-dropt bounty to seize !

Athena. Hear her words, my city's warders,
 Fraught with blessing ; she prevaieth
 With Olympians and Infernals,
 Dread Erinnys much revered.
 Mortal fates she guideth plainly
 To what goal she pleaseth, sending
 Songs to some, to others days
 With tearful sorrows dulled.

STROPHE II.

Chorus. Far from your dwelling
 Be death's early knelling,
 When falls in his green strength the strong
 Your virgins, the fairest,
 To brave youths the rarest
 Be mated, glad life to prolong !
 Ye Fates, high-presiding, ⁶⁰
 The right well dividing,
 Dread powers darkly mothered with me ;
 Our firm favour sharing,
 From judgment unsparing
 The homes of the just man be free !
 But the guilty shall fear them,
 When in terror shall near them
 The Fates, sternly sistered with me.

Athena. Work your perfect will, dread maidens,
 O'er my land benignly watching !
 I rejoice. Blest be the eyes
 Of Peitho, that with strong persuasion
 Armed my tongue, to soothe the fierce
 Refusal of these awful maids.
 Jove, that rules the forum, nobly
 In the high debate hath conquered. ⁶¹
 In the strife of blessing now,
 You with me shall vie for ever.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Chorus. Far from thy border
 The lawless disorder,
 That sateless of evil shall reign !
 Far from thy dwelling
 The dear blood welling,
 That taints thy own hearth with the stain,
 When slaughter from slaughter
 Shall flow, like the water,
 And rancour from rancour shall grow !
 But joy with joy blending
 Live, each to all lending,
 And hating one-hearted the foe !
 When bliss hath departed,
 From will single-hearted,
 A fountain of healing shall flow.

Athena. Wisely now the tongue of kindness
 Thou hast found, the way of love ;
 And these terror-speaking faces
 Now look wealth to me and mine.
 Her so willing, ye more willing
 Now receive ; this land and city,
 On ancient right securely throned,
 Shall shine for evermore.

STROPHE III.

Chorus. Hail, and all hail ! mighty people be greeted !
 On the sons of Athena shine sunshine the clearest !
 Blest people, near Jove the Olympian seated,
 And dear to the virgin his daughter the dearest.
 Timely wise 'neath the wings of the daughter ye gather ;
 And mildly looks down on her children the father.

Athena. Hail, all hail to you ! but chiefly
 Me behoves it now to lead you
 To your fore-appointed homes.
 Go, with holy train attendant,
 With sacrifice, and torch resplendent,
 Underneath the ground.
 Go, and with your potent godhead
 Quell the ill that threats the city,
 Spur the good to victory's goal.
 Lead the way ye sons of Cranaus,*

* Like Erectheus (p. 167 above), one of the most ancient Earth-born kings of Attica.

To these strangers, strange no more ;
 Their kindly thoughts to you remember,
 Grateful evermore.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Chorus. Hail, yet again, with this last salutation,
 Ye sons of Athena, ye citizens all !
 On gods, and on mortals, in high congregation
 Assembled, my blessing not vainly shall fall.
 O city of Pallas, while thou shalt revere me,
 Thy walls hold the pledge that no harm shall come near thee.

Athena. Well hymned. My heart chimes with you, and I send
 The beamy-twinkling torches to conduct you
 To your dark-vaulted chambers 'neath the ground.
 They who attend my shrine, with pious homage,
 Shall be your convoy. The fair eye of the land,
 The marshalled host of Theseus' sons shall march
 In festive train with you, both man and woman,
 Matron and maid, green youth and hoary age.
 Honor the awful maids, clad with the grace
 Of purple-tinctured robes ; and let the flame
 March 'fore their path bright-rayed ; and, evermore,
 With populous wealth smile every Attic rood
 Blessed by this gracious-minded sisterhood.⁶¹

CONVOY, *conducting the EUMENIDES in festal pomp to their
 subterranean temple, with torches in their hands :*

STROPHE I.

Go with honor crowned and glory,
 Of hoary Night the daughters hoary,
 To your destined hall.
 Where our sacred train is wending,
 Stand, ye pious throngs attending,
 Hushed in silence all.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Go to hallowed habitations,
 'Neath Ogygian * Earth's foundations :
 In that darksome hall
 Sacrifice and supplication
 Shall not fail. In adoration
 Silent worship all.

So the Greeks called anything very ancient, from Ogyges, an old Boeotian king.

STROPHE II.

Here, in caverned halls, abiding,
 High on awful thrones presiding,
 Gracious ye shall reign.
 March in torches' glare rejoicing!
 Sing, ye throngs, their praises, voicing
 Loud the exultant strain!

ANTISTROPHE II.

Blazing torch, and pure libation
 From age to age this pious nation
 Shall not use in vain.
 Thus hath willed it Jove all-seeing,
 Thus the Fate. To their decreeing
 Shout the responsive strain!

PROMETHEUS BOUND

A LYRICO-DRAMATIC SPECTACLE

Δῆσε δ' ἄλυκτοπέδῃσι Προμηθεά ποικιλόβουλην
Δεσμοῖς ἀργαλέοισι.

HESIOD.

Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent.

SHELLEY.

PERSONS

MIGHT and FORCE, Ministers of Jove.

HEPHAESTHUS or VULCAN, the God of Fire.

PROMETHEUS, Son of Iapetus, a Titan.

CHORUS OF OCEANIDES.

OCEANUS.

Io, Daughter of INACHUS, King of Argos.

HERMES, Messenger of the Gods.

SCENE—*A Rocky Desert in European Scythia.*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

IN the mythology of the ancient Greeks, as of many other nations, we find the earlier periods characterised by a series of terrible mundane struggles—wars in Heaven and wars on Earth—which serve as an introduction to, and a preparation for the more regularly ordered and more permanent dynasty that ultimately sways the sceptre of Olympus. In the theological poem of Hesiod, as in the prose narration of Apollodorus, HEAVEN and EARTH are represented as the rulers of the first celestial dynasty; their offspring, called Titans, in the person of one of their number, KRONOS, by a violent act of dethronement, forms a second dynasty; while he, in his turn, after a no less violent struggle, gives place to a third sceptre—viz., that of JOVE—who, in the faith of the orthodox Athenian, was the supreme ruler of the world of gods, and men, now, after many throes and struggles, arrived, at its normal state, not henceforward to be disturbed. The general character which this succession of dynasties exhibits, is that of order arising out of confusion, peace out of war, and wisely-reasoned plan triumphing over brute force—

“Scimus ut impios
Titanas immanemque turmam
Fulmine sustulerit caduco,
Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat
Ventosum, et urbes, regnaque tristia,
Divosque, mortalesque turbas,
Imperio regit unus aequo.”

This representation of the philosophic lyrist of a late age is in perfect harmony with the epithets *μητιβελς* and *μητιέρα* given to Jove by the earliest Greek poets, and with the allegory by which *Mētis*, or *Counsel* personified, is represented as one of the wives of the Supreme Ruler. It is worthy of notice also, in the same view, that the legends about the Titans, Giants, and other Earth-born monsters, warring with Jove, are often attached to districts—such as Campania and Cilicia—in which the signs of early volcanic action are, even at the present day, unmistakeable; plainly indicating that such mythic narrations were only exhibitions, in the historical form (according to the early style), of great elemental convulsions and physical changes taking place on the face of the Earth.

Among the persons most prominent in that primeval age of gigantic "world-strife" (if we may be allowed to Anglicize a German compound) stands Prometheus ; not, however, like his Titan brethren in character, though identical with them in descent, and in the position which he finally assumed towards the god in whose hands the supreme government of the world eventually remained. Prometheus, as his name denotes, strives against the high authority of Jove, not by that "reasonless force which falls by its own weight," but by intelligence and cunning. Viewed in this character, he was the natural ally, not of the serpent-footed Giants and the flame-breathing Typhon, but of the All-wise Olympian ; and such, indeed, Æschylus, in the present piece (v. 219, p. 189 below), represents as having been his original position : but, as "before honor is humility, and before pride comes a fall," so the son of Iapetus, like Tantalus, and so many others in the profoundly moral mythology of the Hellenes, found himself exalted into the fellowship of the blissful gods, only that he might be precipitated into a more terrible depth of misery. He was wise ; nay, benevolent (*ἀκακῆτα*, Hesiod. Theog., 614) ; his delight was to exercise his high intellect in the elevation of the infant human race, sunk in a state of almost brutish stupidity ; he stood forward as an incarnation of that practical intellect (so triumphant in these latter days), which subjects the rude elements of nature, for human use and convenience, to mechanical calculation and control ; but, with all this, he was proud, he was haughty ; his Titanic strength and his curious intellect he used, to shake himself free from all dependence on the highest power, which the constitution of things had ordered should stand as the strong key-stone of the whole. Not to ruin mankind, but to save them, he sinned the sin of Lucifer ; he would make himself God ; and, as in the eye of a court-martial, the subaltern who usurps the functions of the commander-in-chief stands not acquitted, because he alleges that he acted with a benevolent intent, or for the public good, so, in the faith of an orthodox Athenian, Prometheus was not the less worthy of his airy chains because he defied the will of Jove in the championship of mankind. Neither man nor god may question or impugn the divine decree of supreme Jove, on grounds of expediency or propriety. With the will of Zeus, as with the laws of nature, there is no arguing. In this relationship the first, second, and third point of duty is submission. Such is the doctrine of modern Christian theology ; such, also, was the doctrine of the old Hellenic theologer, HESIOD—

Vain the wit is of the wisest to deceive the mind of Jove ;
Not Prometheus, son of Iapetus, though his heart was moved by love,
Might escape the heavy anger of the god that rules the skies,
But, despite of all his cunning, with a strong chain bound he lies.

THEOG. 613.

Those who are acquainted with the philological learning on this subject, which I have discussed elsewhere,* or even with the common ideas on the legend of Prometheus brought into circulation by the productions of modern poetry, are aware that the view just given of the moral significance of this weighty old myth, is not the current one, and that we are rather accustomed to look upon Prometheus as a sort of proto-martyr of liberty, bearing up with the strength of a god against the punishment unjustly inflicted on him by the celestial usurper and tyrant, Jove. But Hesiod, we have just seen, looks on the matter with very different eyes ; and the unquestioned supremacy of Jove that stands out everywhere, from the otherwise not always consistent theological system of the Iliad, leads plainly to the conclusion that Homer also, had he had occasion to introduce this legend, would have handled it in a spirit altogether different from our Shelleys and Byrons, and other earth-shaking and heaven-scaling poets of the modern revolutionary school. As little is there any ground (see the life of Æschylus, vol. I.) for the supposition that our tragedian has taken up different theological ground in reference to this myth, from that which belonged to the two great expositors of the popular creed ; not to mention the staring absurdity of the idea, that a grave tragic poet in a serious composition, at a public religious festival, should have dared, or daring, should have been allowed, to hold up their supreme deity to a nation of freemen in the character of a cruel and unjust tyrant. Thrown back, therefore, on the original Hesiodic conception of the myth, we are led to observe that the imperfect and unsatisfactory ideas so current on this subject in modern times, have taken their rise from the practice (so natural under the circumstances) of looking on the extant piece as a complete whole, whereas nothing is more certain than that it is only a fragment ; the second part, in fact, of a dramatic trilogy similar in conception and execution to that, of which we have endeavoured to present a reflection in the preceding pages. Potter, in his translation published a hundred years ago, prefaced his version of the present piece with the well-known fact, that Æschylus wrote three plays on this subject—the *Fire-bringing Prometheus*, the *Prometheus Bound*, and the *Prometheus Unbound*—but this intima-

* Classical Museum, No. XV. p. 1.

tion was not sufficient to prevent his readers, with the usual hastiness of human logic, from judging of what they saw, as if it were an organic whole, containing within itself every element necessary for forming a true conception of its character. The consequence was, that the hero of the piece, who, of course, tells his own story in the most favourable way for himself, was considered as having passed a final judgment on the case; as the friend and representative of man, he naturally seemed entitled to the gratitude of men; while Jove, being now only an idol in the world (perhaps a devil), and having no advocate in the heart of the modern reader, was made to stand—on the representation of the same Prometheus—as the type of heartless tyranny, and the impersonation of absolute power combined with absolute selfishness. This is Shelley's view; but that such was not the view of Æschylus we may be assured, both from the consideration already mentioned, and from the poet's method of reconciling apparently incompatible claims of opposite celestial powers, so curiously exhibited in the *Eumenides*. In the trilogy of the preceding pages, Orestes stands in a situation, so far as the development of the plot is concerned, precisely analogous to that of Prometheus in the present piece. His conduct, as submitted to the moral judgment of the spectator, produces the same conflict of contrary emotions of which his own bosom is the victim. With the one-half of our heart we approve of his avenging his father's murder; with the other half, we plead that a son shall, on no ground of offence, allow his indignation to proceed so far as to imbrue his hands in the blood of her whose milk he had sucked. This contrariety of emotions excited in the second piece of the trilogy, produces the tragic knot, which it is the business of the poet to unloose, by the worthy interposition of a god. "*Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus.*"—Exactly so in the second piece of the Promethean trilogy, our moral judgment praises the benevolence of the god, who, to elevate our human race from brutish degradation, dared to defy omnipotent power, and to deceive the wisdom of the omniscient; while, at the same time, we cannot but condemn the spirit of unreined independence that would shake itself free from the great centre of moral cohesion, and the reckless boldness that casts reproach in the face of the great Ruler of the universe. In this state of suspense, represented by the doubtful attitude of the Chorus* through the whole play, the present fragment of the great Æschylean Promethiad leaves the well-instructed modern reader; and it admits

* BUCK. (Introduction, p. xiii.) has very aptly compared here the position of Antigone, in the well-known play of that name, and the half-approving, half-condemning tone of the Chorus in that play.

not, in my view, of a doubt that, in the concluding piece, it remained for the poet to effect a reconciliation between the contending interests and clashing emotions, somewhat after the fashion of which we possess a specimen in the *Eumenides*. By what agency of individuals or of arguments this was done, it is hopeless now to inquire; the fragmentary notices that remain are too meagre to justify a scientific restoration of the lost drama; they who wish to see what erudite imagination can do in this direction may consult Welcker and Schoemann—WELCKER, in the shape of prose dissertation in his *Trilogie*, p. 28; and SCHOEMANN, in the shape of a poetical restoration of the lost poem, in the Appendix to his very valuable edition of this play. About one thing only can we be certain, that, in the ultimate settlement of disputed claims, neither will Prometheus, on the one hand, be degraded from the high position on which the poet has planted him as a sort of umpire between gods and men, nor will Jove yield one whit of his supreme right to exact the bitterest penalties from man or god who presumes to act independently of, and even in opposition to his will. The tragic poet will duly exercise his grand function of keeping the powers of the celestial world—as he does the contending emotions of the human mind—in due equipoise and subordination.*

The plot of the *Prometheus Bound* is the simplest possible, being not so much the dramatic progression of a course of events, as a single dramatic situation presented through the whole piece under different aspects. The theft of fire from Heaven, or (as the notice of Cicero seems to indicate) from the Lemnian volcano of Mosychlos,† having been perpetrated in the previous piece, *MIGHT* and *FORCE*, two allegorical personages, the ministers of Jove's vengeance, are now introduced, along with *HEPHAESTUS*, the forger of celestial chains, nailing the benevolent offender to a cold craggy rock in the wastes of European Scythia. In this condition when, after a long silence, he at length gives vent to his complaint, certain kindred divine persons—first, the Oceanides, or daughters of Ocean, and then their hoary sire himself, are brought on the scene, with words of solace and friendly exhortation to the sufferer.‡ When all the arguments that these parties have to advance are exhausted in vain, another mythic personage, of a different character, and for a

* The most remarkable passages of the ancients where reference is made to the *Prometheus Unbound* of Æschylus are:—CICERO, *Tusc.* II. 10; ARRIAN, *Periplus Pont. Eux.* p. 19; STRABO, *Lib. I.* p. 33 and *IV.* 182-3; PLUTARCHUS, *vit. Pompeii*, init.; ATHENÆUS, *XV.* p. 672, *Cas.*

† "Veniat Æschylus non poeta solum, sed etiam Pythagoreus. Sic enim accepimus. Quo modo fert apud eum Prometheus dolorem, quem excipit *ob furtum Lemnium*."—*Tusc. Quæst.* II. 10, Welcker, *Trilogie*, p. 7.

‡ "*Chorus consilietur amicis*."—HORACE.

different purpose, appears. This is Io, the daughter of Inachus, the primeval king of Argos, who, having enjoyed the unblissful distinction of stirring the heart of Jove with love, is, by the jealous wrath of Hera, transmuted into the likeness of a cow,* and sent wandering to the ends of the Earth, fretted into restless distraction by the stings of a malignant insect. This character serves a threefold purpose. First, as a sufferer, tracing the origin of all her misery from Jove, she both sympathizes strongly with Prometheus, and exhibits the character of Jove in another unfavourable aspect; secondly, with her wild maniac cries and reinless fits of distraction, she presents a fine contrast to the calm self-possession with which the stout-hearted Titan endures the penalty of his pride; and, in the third place, as the progenitrix of the Argive Hercules, the destined instrument of the delivery of Prometheus, she connects the middle with the concluding piece of the trilogy. Last of all, when this strange apparition has vanished, appears on the scene the great Olympian negotiator, Hermes; who, with the eloquence peculiar to himself, and the threatened terrors of his supreme master, endeavours to break the pride and to bend the will of the lofty-minded offender. In vain. The threatened terrors of the Thunderer now suddenly start into reality; and, amid the roar of contending elements, the pealing Heaven and the quaking Earth, the Jove-defying son of Iapetus descends into Hell.

The superhuman grandeur and high tragic sublimity which belongs to the very conception of this subject, has suffered nothing in respect of treatment from the genius of the bard who dared to handle it. The Prometheus Bound, though inferior in point of lyric richness and variety to the Agamemnon, and though somewhat overloaded with narrative in one place, is nevertheless felt throughout to be one of the most powerful productions of one of the most powerful minds that the history of literature knows. No work of a similar lofty character certainly has ever been so extensively popular. The Prometheus Unbound of Shelley, and Lord Byron's Manfred, bear ample witness, of which we may well be proud, to the relationship which exists between the severe Melpomene of ancient Greece, and the lofty British Muse.

* On the stage, of course, her transmutation can only be indicated by the presence of a pair of ox horns on her virgin forehead.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

*Enter MIGHT and FORCE, leading in PROMETHEUS ;
HEPHAESTUS, with chains.*

Might. At length the utmost bound of Earth we've reached,
This Scythian soil, this wild untrodden waste.¹
Hephaestus now Jove's high behests demand
Thy care ; to these steep cliffy rocks bind down
With close-linked chains of during adamant
This daring wretch.² For he the bright-rayed fire,
Mother of arts, flower of thy potency,
Filched from the gods, and gave to mortals. Here,
Just guerdon of his sin shall find him ; here
Let his pride learn to bow to Jove supreme,
And love men well, but love them not too much.

Heph. Ye twain, rude MIGHT and FORCE, have done your work
To the perfect end ; but I—my heart shrinks back
From the harsh task to nail a kindred god³
To this storm-battered crag. Yet dare I must.
Where Jove commands, whoso neglects rebels,
And pays the traitor's fine. High-counselled son
Of right-decreeing Themis,⁴ I force myself
No less than thee, when to this friendless rock
With iron bonds I chain thee, where nor shape
Nor voice of wandering mortal shall relieve
Thy lonely watch ; but the fierce-burning sun
Shall parch and bleach thy fresh complexion. Thou,
When motley-mantled Night * hath hid the day,
Shalt greet the darkness, with how short a joy !
For the morn's sun the nightly dew shall scatter,
And thou be pierced again with the same pricks
Of endless woe—and saviour shall be none.⁵
Such fruits thy forward love to men hath wrought thee.
Thyself a god, the wrath of gods to thee
Seemed little, and to men thou didst dispense
Forbidden gifts. For this thou shalt keep watch

* ἡ ποικιλείμων νύξ. *Buntgewandige*—SCHÖR. "*Various-vested Night*."—COLERIDGE, in a Sonnet to the Autumnal Moon.