

On this delightless rock, fixed and erect,
 With lid unsleeping, and with knee unbent.
 Alas ! what groans and wails shalt thou pour forth,
 Fruitless. Jove is not weak that he should bend ;⁶
 For young authority must ever be
 Harsh and severe.

Might. Enough of words and tears.
 This god, whom all the gods detest, wilt thou
 Not hate, thou, whom his impious larceny
 Did chiefly injure ?

Heph. But, my friend, my kinsman—

Might. True, that respect ; but the dread father's word
 Respect much more. Jove's word respect and fear.

Heph. Harsh is thy nature, and thy heart is full
 Of pitiless daring.

Might. Tears were wasted here,
 And labour lost is all concern for him.

Heph. O thrice-cursed trade, that e'er my hand should use it !

Might. Curse not thy craft ; the cunning of thy hand
 Makes not his woes ; he made them for himself.

Heph. Would that some other hand had drawn the lot
 To do this deed !

Might. All things may be, but this
 To dictate to the gods.⁷ There's one that's free,
 One only ; JOVE.

Heph. I know it, and am dumb.

Might. Then gird thee to the work, chain down the culprit,
 Lest Jove thy laggard zeal behold, and blame.

Heph. The irons here are ready.

Might. Take them, and strike
 Stout blows with the hammer ; nail him to the rock.

Heph. The work speeds well, and lingers not.

Might. Strike ! strike !
 With ring, and clamp, and wedge make sure the work.
 He hath a subtle wit will find itself
 A way where way is none.

Heph. This arm is fast.

Might. Then clasp this other. Let the sophist know,
 Against great Jove how dull a thing is wit.

Heph. None but the victim can reprove my zeal.

Might. Now take this adamantine bolt, and force
 Its point resistless through his rebel breast.

Heph. Alas ! alas ! Prometheus, but I pity thee !

Might. Dost lag again, and for Jove's enemies weep
Fond tears? Beware thou have no cause to weep
Tears for thyself.

Heph. Thou see'st no sightly sight
For eyes to look on.

Might. I behold a sower
Reaping what thing he sowed. But take these thongs,
And bind his sides withal.

Heph. I must! I must!
Nor needs thy urging.

Might. Nay, but I will urge,
Command, and bellow in thine ear! Proceed,
Lower—yet lower—and with these iron rings
Enclasp his legs.

Heph. 'Tis done, and quickly done.

Might. Now pierce his feet through with these nails. Strike
hard!

There's one will sternly prove thy work, and thee.

Heph. Harsh is thy tongue, and, like thy nature, hard.

Might. Art thou a weakling, do not therefore blame
The firm harsh-fronted will that suits my office.

Heph. Let us away. He's fettered limb and thew.

Might. There lie, and feed thy pride on this bare rock,
Filching gods' gifts for mortal men. What man
Shall free thee from these woes? Thou hast been called
In vain the Provident:⁸ had thy soul possessed
The virtue of thy name, thou hadst foreseen
These cunning toils, and hadst unwound thee from them.

[*Exeunt all, except PROMETHEUS, who is left chained.*]

*Prom.*⁹ O divine ether, and swift-winged winds,
And river-fountains, and of ocean waves
The multitudinous laughter,¹⁰ and thou Earth,
Boon mother of us all, and thou bright round
Of the all-seeing Sun, you I invoke!
Behold what ignominy of causeless wrongs
I suffer from the gods, myself a god.

See what piercing pains shall goad me
Through long ages myraid-numbered!
With such wrongful chains hath bound me
This new leader of the gods.
Ah me! present woes and future
I bemoan. O! when, O! when
Shall the just redemption dawn

Yet why thus prate? I know what ills await me.
 No unexpected torture can surprise
 My soul prophetic; and with quiet mind
 We all must bear our portioned fate, nor idly
 Court battle with a strong necessity.
 Alas! alas! 'tis hard to speak to the winds;
 Still harder to be dumb! my well-deservings
 To mortal men are all the offence that bowed me
 Beneath this yoke. The secret fount of fire
 I sought, and found, and in a reed concealed it;¹¹
 Whence arts have sprung to man, and life hath drawn
 Rich store of comforts. For such deed I suffer
 These bonds, in the broad eye of gracious day,
 Here crucified. Ah me! ah me! who comes?¹²
 What sound, what viewless breath, thus taints the air,
 God sent, or mortal, or of mingled kind?
 What errant traveller ill-spced comes to view
 This naked ridge of extreme Earth, and me?
 Whoe'er thou art, a hapless god thou see'st
 Nailed to this crag; the foe of Jove thou seest.

Him thou see'st, whom all the Immortals
 Whoso tread the Olympian threshold,
 Name with hatred; thou beholdest
 Man's best friend, and, therefore, hated
 For excess of love.

Hark, again! I hear the whirring
 As of winged birds approaching;
 With the light strokes of their pinions
 Ether pipes ill-boding whispers!—
 Alas! alas! that I should fear
 Each breath that nears me.

The OCEANIDES approach, borne through the air in a winged car.

STROPHE I.

Chorus. Fear nothing; for a friendly band approaches;
 Fleet rivalry of wings
 Oar'd us to this far height, with hard consent
 Wrung from our careful sire
 The winds swift-sweeping bore me: for I heard
 The harsh hammer's note deep deep in ocean caves,
 And, throwing virgin shame aside, unshod
 The winged car I mounted.

Prom. Ah! ah!

Daughters of prolific Tethys,¹³
And of ancient father Ocean,
With his sleepless current whirling
Round the firm ball of the globe.
Look! with rueful eyes behold me
Nailed by adamantine rivets,
Keeping weary watch unenvied
On this tempest-rifted rock!

ANTISTROPHE I.

Chorus. I look, Prometheus; and a tearful cloud
My woeful sight bedims,
To see thy goodliest form with insult chained,
In adamantine bonds,
To this bare crag, where pinching airs shall blast thee.
New gods now hold the helm of Heaven; new laws
Mark Jove's unrighteous rule; the giant trace
Of Titan times hath vanished.¹⁴

Prom. Deep in death-receiving Hades
Had he bound me, had he whelmed me
In Tartarean pit, unfathomed,
Fettered with unyielding bonds!
Then nor god nor man had feasted
Eyes of triumph on my wrongs,
Nor I, thus swung in middle ether,*
Moved the laughter of my foes.

STROPHE II.

Chorus. Which of the gods hath heart so hard
To mock thy woes? Who will withhold
The fellow-feeling and the tear,
Save only Jove. But he doth nurse
Strong wrath within his stubborn breast,
And holds all Heaven in awe.
Nor will he cease till his hot rage is glutted,
Or some new venture shakes his stable throne.

Prom. By my Titan soul, I swear it!
Though with harsh chains now he mocks me,
Even now the hour is ripening,
When this haughty lord of Heaven
Shall embrace my knees, beseeching
Me to unveil the new-forged counsels

* αἰθέριον κίλυγμα.

That shall hurl him from his throne.¹⁵
 But no honey-tongued persuasion,
 No smooth words of artful charming,
 No stout threats shall loose my tongue,
 Till he loose these bonds of insult,
 And himself make just atonement
 For injustice done to me.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Chorus. Thou art a bold man, and defiest
 The keenest pangs to force thy will.
 With a most unreined tongue thou speakest;
 But me—sharp fear hath pierced my heart.
 I fear for thee: and of thy woes
 The distant, doubtful end

I see not. O, 'tis hard, most hard to reach
 The heart of Jove!¹⁶ prayer beats his ear in vain.

Prom. Harsh is Jove, I know—he frameth
 Justice for himself; but soon,
 When the destined arm o'ertakes him,
 He shall tremble as a child.
 He shall smooth his bristling anger,
 Courting friendship shunned before,
 More importunate to unbind me
 Than impatient I of bonds.

Chorus. Speak now, and let us know the whole offence
 Jove charges thee withal; for which he seized,
 And with dishonor and dire insult loads thee.
 Unfold the tale; unless, perhaps, such sorrow
 Irks thee to tell.

Prom. To tell or not to tell
 Irks me the same; which way I turn is pain.
 When first the gods their fatal strife began,
 And insurrection raged in Heaven—some striving
 To cast old Kronos from his hoary throne,
 That Jove might reign, and others to crush i' the bud
 His swelling mastery—I wise counsel gave
 To the Titans, sons of primal Heaven and Earth;
 But gave in vain. Their dauntless stubborn souls
 Spurned gentle ways, and patient-working wiles,
 Weening swift triumph with a blow. But me,
 My mother Themis, not once but oft, and Earth
 (One shape of various names),¹⁷ prophetic told

That violence and rude strength in such a strife
 Were vain—craft haply might prevail. This lesson
 I taught the haughty Titans, but they deigned
 Scarce with contempt to hear my prudent words.
 Thus baffled in my plans, I deemed it best,
 As things then were, leagued with my mother Themis,
 To accept Jove's proffered friendship. By my counsels
 From his primeval throne was Kronos* hurled
 Into the pit Tartarean, dark, profound,
 With all his troop of friends. Such was the kindness
 From me received by him who now doth hold
 The masterdom of Heaven; these the rewards
 Of my great zeal: for so it hath been ever.
 Suspicion's a disease that cleaves to tyrants,
 And they who love most are the first suspected.¹⁸
 As for your question, for what present fault
 I bear the wrong that now afflicts me, hear.
 Soon as he sat on his ancestral throne
 He called the gods together, and assigned
 To each his fair allotment, and his sphere
 Of sway supreme; but, ah! for wretched man!
 To him nor part nor portion fell: Jove vowed
 To blot his memory from the Earth, and mould
 The race anew.† I only of the gods
 Thwarted his will;¹⁹ and, but for my strong aid,
 Hades had whelmed, and hopeless ruin swamped
 All men that breathe. Such were my crimes: these pains
 Grievous to suffer, pitiful to behold,
 Were purchased thus; and mercy's now denied
 To him whose crime was mercy to mankind:
 And here I lie, in cunning torment stretched,²⁰
 A spectacle inglorious to Jove.

Chorus. An iron-heart were his, and flinty hard,
 Who on thy woes could look without a tear,
 Prometheus; I had liefer not so seen thee,
 And seeing thee fain would call mine eyesight liar.

Prom. Certes no sight am I for friends to look on.

Chorus. Was this thy sole offence?

Prom. I taught weak mortals
 Not to foresee harm, and forestall the Fates.

* Saturn the father of Jove.

† "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air: for it repenteth me that I have made him."—GEN. vi. 7.

Chorus. A sore disease to anticipate mischance :
How didst thou cure it ?

Prom. Blind hopes of good I planted
In their dark breasts.²¹

Chorus. That was a boon indeed,
To ephemeral man.

Prom. Nay more, I gave them fire.

Chorus. And flame-faced fire is now enjoyed by mortals ?²²

Prom. Enjoyed, and of all arts the destined mother.

Chorus. And is this all the roll of thy offendings
That he should rage so fierce ? Hath he not set
Bounds to his vengeance ?

Prom. None, but his own pleasure.

Chorus. And when shall he please ? Vain the hope ; thou see'st
That thou hast erred ; and that thou hast to us
No pleasure brings, to thee excess of pain.
Of this enough. Seek now to cure the evil.

Prom. 'Tis a light thing for him whose foot's unwarped
By misadventure's meshes to advise
And counsel the unfortunate. But I
Foreknew my fate, and if I erred, I erred
With conscious purpose, purchasing man's weal
With mine own grief. I knew I should offend
The Thunderer, though deeming not that he
Would perch me thus to pine 'twixt Earth and Sky,
Of this wild wintry waste sole habitant.
But cease to weep for ills that weeping mends not ;
Descend, and I'll discourse to thee at length
Of chances yet to come. Nay, do not doubt ;
But leave thy car, nor be ashamed to share
The afflictions of the afflicted ; for Mishap,
Of things that lawless wander, wanders most ;
With me to-day it is with you to-morrow.

Chorus. Not to sluggish ears, Prometheus,
Hast thou spoken thy desire ;
From our breeze-borne car descending,
With light foot we greet the ground.
Leaving ether chaste, smooth pathway
Of the gently-winnowing wing,
On this craggy rock I stand,
To hear the tale, while thou mayst tell it,
Of thy sorrows to the end.

*Enter OCEAN.*²³

Ocean. From my distant caves cerulean²⁴
This fleet-pinioned bird hath borne me ;
Needed neither bit nor bridle,
Thought instinctive reined the creature ;
Thus, to know thy griefs, Prometheus,
And to grieve with thee I come.
Soothly strong the tie of kindred
Binds the heart of man and god ;
But, though no such tie had bound me,
I had wept for thee the same.
Well thou know'st not mine the cunning
To discourse with glozing phrase :
Tell me how I may relieve thee,
I am ready to relieve ;
Friend thou boastest none than Ocean
Surer, in the hour of need.

Prom. How now, old Ocean? thou too come to view
My dire disasters?—how shouldst thou have dared,
Leaving the billowy stream whose name thou bearest,
Thy rock-roofed halls, and self-built palaces,
To visit this Scythian land, stern mother of iron,
To know my sorrows, and to grieve with me?
Look on this sight—thy friend, the friend of Jove,
Who helped him to the sway which now he bears,
Crushed by the self-same god himself exalted.

Ocean. I see, Prometheus ; and I come to speak
A wise word to the wise ; receive it wisely.
Know what thou art, and make thy manners new ;
For a new king doth rule the subject gods.
Compose thy speech, nor cast such whetted words
'Gainst Jove, who, though he sits apart sublime,
Hath ears, and with new pains may smite his victim,
To which his present wrath shall seem a toy.
Listen to me ; slack thy fierce ire, and seek
Speedy deliverance from these woes. Trite wisdom
Belike I speak, Prometheus ; but thou knowest
A lofty-sounding tongue with passionate phrase
Buys its own ruin. Proud art thou, unyielding,
And heap'st new woes tenfold on thine own head.
Why should'st thou kick against the pricks? Jove reigns
A lord severe, and of his acts need give

Of the fair-fruited Sicilly. Such hot shafts,
 From the flame-breathing ferment of the deep,
 Shall Typhon cast with sateless wrath, though now
 All scorched and cindered by the Thunderer's stroke,
 Moveless he lies. But why should I teach thee?
 Thou art a wise man, thine own wisdom use
 To save thyself. For me, I'll even endure
 These pains, till Jove shall please to slack his ire.

Ocean. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that mild words
 Are medicines of fierce wrath? ²⁸

Prom. They are, when spoken
 In a mild hour; but the high-swelling heart
 They do but fret the more.

Ocean. But, in the attempt
 To ward the threatened harm, what evil see'st thou?

Prom. Most bootless toil, and folly most inane.

Ocean. Be it so; but yet 'tis sometimes well, believe me,
 That a wise man should seem to be a fool.

Prom. Seem fool, seem wise, I, in the end, am blamed.

Ocean. Thy reckless words reluctant send me home.

Prom. Beware, lest love for me make thyself hated.

Ocean. Of whom? Of him, who, on the all-powerful throne
 Sits, a new lord?

Prom. Even him. Beware thou vex not
 Jove's jealous heart.

Ocean. In this, thy fate shall warn me.

Prom. Away! farewell; and may the prudent thoughts,
 That sway thy bosom now, direct thee ever.

Ocean. I go, and quickly. My four-footed bird
 Brushes the broad path of the limpid air
 With forward wing: right gladly will he bend
 The wearied knee on his familiar stall.

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE I.

Thy dire disasters, unexampled wrongs,
 I weep, Prometheus.
 From its soft founts distilled the flowing tear
 My cheek bedashes.
 'Tis hard, most hard! By self-made laws Jove rules,
 And 'gainst the host of primal gods he points
 The lordly spear.

ANTISTROPHE I.

With echoing groans the ambient waste bewails
 Thy fate, Prometheus ;
 The neighbouring tribes of holy Asia weep
 For thee, Prometheus ;²⁹
 For thee and thine ! names mighty and revered
 Of yore, now shamed, dishonoured, and cast down,
 And chained with thee.

STROPHE II.

And Colchis, with her belted daughters, weeps
 For thee, Prometheus ;
 And Scythian tribes, on Earth's remotest verge,
 Where lone Mæotis* spreads her wintry waters,
 Do weep for thee.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The flower of Araby's wandering warriors weep
 For thee, Prometheus ;³⁰
 And they who high their airy holds have perched
 On Caucasus' ridge, with pointed lances bristling,
 Do weep for thee.

EPODE.

One only vexed like thee, and even as thou,
 In adamant bound,
 A Titan, and a god scorned by the gods,
 Atlas I knew.
 He on his shoulders the surpassing weight
 Of the celestial pole stoutly upbore,
 And groaned beneath.
 Roars billowy Ocean, and the Deep sucks back
 Its waters when he sobs ; from Earth's dark caves
 Deep hell resounds ;
 The fountains of the holy-streaming rivers
 Do moan with him.

Prom. Deem me not self-willed, nor with pride high-strung,
 That I am dumb ; my heart is gnawed to see
 Myself thus mocked and jeered. These gods, to whom
 Owe they their green advancement but to me ?
 But this ye know ; and, not to teach the taught,
 I'll speak of it no more. Of human kind,
 My great offence in aiding them, in teaching

* The Sea of Azof.

The babe to speak, and rousing torpid mind
To take the grasp of itself—of this I'll talk ;
Meaning to mortal men no blame, but only
The true recital of mine own deserts.
For, soothly, having eyes to see they saw not,³¹
And hearing heard not ; but like dreamy phantoms,
A random life they led from year to year,
All blindly floundering on. No craft they knew
With woven brick or jointed beam to pile
The sunward porch ; but in the dark earth burrowed
And housed, like tiny ants in sunless caves.
No signs they knew to mark the wintry year :
The flower-strewn Spring, and the fruit-laden Summer,
Uncalendared, unregistered, returned—
Till I the difficult art of the stars revealed,
Their risings and their settings. Numbers, too,
I taught them (a most choice device)³² and how
By marshalled signs to fix their shifting thoughts,
That Memory, mother of Muses, might achieve
Her wondrous works. I first slaved to the yoke
Both ox and ass. I, the rein-loving steeds
(Of wealth's gay-flaunting pomp the chiefest pride)
Joined to the car ; and bade them ease the toils
Of labouring men vicarious. I the first
Upon the lint-winged car of mariner
Was launched, sea-wandering. Such wise arts I found
To soothe the ills of man's ephemeral life ;
But for myself, plunged in this depth of woe,
No prop I find.

Chorus. Sad chance ! Thy wit hath slipt
From its firm footing then when needed most,
Like some unlearned leech who many healed,
But being sick himself, from all his store,
Cannot cull out one medicinal drug.

Prom. Hear me yet farther ; and in hearing marvel,
What arts and curious shifts my wit devised.
Chiefest of all, the cure of dire disease
Men owe to me. Nor healing food, nor drink,
Nor unguent knew they, but did slowly wither
And waste away for lack of pharmacy,
Till taught by me to mix the soothing drug,
And check corruption's march. I fixed the art
Of divination with its various phase

Of dim revealings, making dreams speak truth,
 Stray voices, and encounters by the way
 Significant ; the flight of taloned birds
 On right and left I marked—these fraught with ban,
 With blissful augury those ; their way of life,
 Their mutual loves and enmities, their flocks,
 And friendly gatherings ; the entrails' smoothness,
 The hue best liked by the gods, the gall, the liver
 With all its just proportions. I first wrapped
 In the smooth fat the thighs ; first burnt the loins,
 And from the flickering flame taught men to spell
 No easy lore, and cleared the fire-faced signs ³³
 Obscure before. Yet more : I probed the Earth,
 To yield its hidden wealth to help man's weakness—
 Iron, copper, silver, gold. None but a fool,
 A prating fool, will stint me of this praise.
 And thus, with one short word to sum the tale,
 Prometheus taught all arts to mortal men.

Chorus. Do good to men, but do it with discretion.

Why shouldst thou harm thyself? Good hope I nurse
 To see thee soon from these harsh chains unbound,
 As free, as mighty, as great Jove himself.

Prom. This may not be ; the destined course of things
 Fate must accomplish ; I must bend me yet
 'Neath wrongs on wrongs, ere I may 'scape these bonds.
 Though Art be strong, Necessity is stronger.

Chorus. And who is lord of strong Necessity ? ³⁴

Prom. The triform Fates, and the sure-memored Furies.

Chorus. And mighty Jove himself must yield to them ?

Prom. No more than others Jove can 'scape his doom. ³⁵

Chorus. What doom?—No doom hath he but endless sway.

Prom. 'Tis not for thee to know : tempt not the question.

Chorus. There's some dread mystery in thy chary speech,
 Close-veiled.

Prom. Urge this no more : the truth thou'lt know
 In fitting season ; now it lies concealed
 In deepest darkness ! for relenting Jove
 Himself must woo this secret from my breast.

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE I.

Never, O never may Jove,
 Who in Olympus reigns omnipotent lord,

Plant his high will against my weak opinion !³⁶

Let me approach the gods
With blood of oxen and with holy feasts,
By father Ocean's quenchless stream, and pay
No backward vows :
Nor let my tongue offend ; but in my heart
Be lowly wisdom graven.

ANTISTROPHE I.

For thus old Wisdom speaks :
Thy life 'tis sweet to cherish, and while the length
Of years is thine, thy heart with cheerful hopes
And lightsome joys to feed.
But thee—ah me ! my blood runs cold to see thee,
Pierced to the marrow with a thousand pains.
Not fearing Jove,
Self-willed thou hast respect to man, Prometheus,
Much more than man deserveth.

STROPHE II.

For what is man ? * behold !
Can he requite thy love—child of a day—
Or help thy extreme need ? Hast thou not seen
The blind and aimless strivings,
The barren blank endeavour,
The pithless deeds, of the fleeting dreamlike race ?
Never, O nevermore,
May mortal wit Jove's ordered plan deceive.

ANTISTROPHE II.

This lore my heart hath learned
From sight of thee, and thy sharp pains, Prometheus.
Alas ! what diverse strain I sang thee then,
Around the bridal chamber,
And around the bridal bath,
When thou my sister fair, Hesione,
Won by rich gifts didst lead³⁷
From Ocean's caves thy spousal bed to share.

*Enter Io.*³⁸

What land is this ?—what race of mortals
Owns this desert ? who art thou,

* "Of all the things that breathe the air, and creep upon the Earth,
The weakest thing that breathes and creeps on nurturing Earth is Man."
HOMER'S ODYS. xviii. 130.

Rock-bound with these wintry fetters,
 And for what crime tortured thus?
 Worn and weary with far travel,
 Tell me where my feet have borne me!
 O pain! pain! pain! it stings and goads me again,
 The fateful brize!—save me, O Earth!³⁹—Avaunt
 Thou horrible shadow of the Earth-born Argus!
 Could not the grave close up thy hundred eyes,
 But thou must come,
 Haunting my path with thy suspicious look,
 Unhoused from Hades?
 Avaunt! avaunt!—why wilt thou hound my track,
 The famished wanderer on the waste sea-shore?

STROPHE.

Pipe not thy sounding wax-compacted reed
 With drowsy drone at me! Ah wretched me!
 Wandering, still wandering o'er wide Earth, and driven
 Where? where? O tell me where?
 O Son of Kronos, in what damned sin
 Being caught hast thou to misery yoked me thus,
 Pricked me to desperation, and my heart
 Pierced with thy furious goads?
 Blast me with lightnings! bury me in Earth! To the gape
 Of greedy sea-monsters give me! Hear, O hear
 My prayer, O King!
 Enough, enough, these errant toils have tried me;
 And yet no rest I find: nor when, nor where
 These woes shall cease may know.

*Chorus.*⁴⁰ Dost hear the plaint of the ox-horned maid?

Prom. How should I not? the Inachian maid who knows not,
 Stung by the god-sent brize? the maid who smote
 Jove's lustful heart with love: and his harsh spouse
 Hounds her o'er Earth with chase interminable.

ANTISTROPHE.

Io. My father's name thou know'st, and my descent!
 Who art thou? god or mortal? Speak! what charm
 Gives wretch like thee, the certain clue to know
 My lamentable fate?
 Aye, and the god-sent plague thou know'st; the sting
 That spurs me o'er the far-stretched Earth; the goad
 That mads me sheer, wastes, withers, and consumes,
 A worn and famished maid,

Whipt by the scourge of jealous Hera's wrath !

Ah me ! ah me ! Misery has many shapes,
But none like mine.

O thou, who named my Argive home, declare
What ills await me yet ; what end ; what hope ?
If hope there be for Io.

Chorus. I pray thee speak to the weary way-worn maid.

Prom. I'll tell thee all thy wish, not in enigmas
Tangled and dark, but in plain phrase, as friend
Should speak to friend. Thou see'st Prometheus, who
To mortal men gifted immortal fire.

Io. O thou, to man a common blessing given,
What crime hath bound thee to this wintry rock ?

Prom. I have but ceased rehearsing all my wrongs.

Io. And dost thou then refuse the boon I ask ?

Prom. What boon ? ask what thou wilt, and I will answer.

Io. Say, then, who bound thee to this ragged cliff ?

Prom. Stern Jove's decree, and harsh Hephaestus' hand.

Io. And for what crime ?

Prom. Let what I've said suffice.

Io. This, too, I ask—what bound hath fate appointed
To my far-wandering toils ?

Prom. This not to know
Were better than to learn.

Io. Nay, do not hide
This thing from me !

Prom. If 'tis a boon, believe me,
I grudge it not.

Io. Then why so slow to answer ?

Prom. I would not crush thee with the cruel truth.

Io. Fear not ; I choose to hear it.

Prom. Listen then.

Chorus. Nay, hear me rather. With her own mouth this maid
Shall first her bygone woes rehearse ; next thou
What yet remains shalt tell.

Prom. Even so. [*To Io.*] Speak thou ;
They are the sisters of thy father, Io ;⁴¹
And to wail out our griefs, when they who listen
Our troubles with a willing tear requite,
Is not without its use.

Io. I will obey,
And in plain speech my chanceful story tell ;
Though much it grieves me to retrace the source,

Whence sprung this god-sent pest, and of my shape
 Disfigurement abhorred. Night after night
 Strange dreams around my maiden pillow hovering
 Whispered soft temptings. "*O thrice-blessed maid,
 Why pin'st thou thus in virgin loneliness,
 When highest wedlock courts thee? Struck by the shaft
 Of fond desire for thee Jove burns, and pants
 To twine his loves with thine. Spurn not, O maid,
 The proffered bed of Jove; but hie thee straight
 To Lerne's bosomed mead,⁴² where are the sheep-folds
 And ox-stalls of thy sire, that so the eye
 Of Jove, being filled with thee, may cease from craving.*"
 Such nightly dreams my restless couch possessed
 Till I, all tears, did force me to unfold
 The portent to my father. He to Pytho*
 Sent frequent messengers, and to Dodona,
 Searching the pleasure of the gods; but they
 With various-woven phrase came back, and answers
 More doubtful than the quest. At length, a clear
 And unambiguous voice came to my father,
 Enjoining, with most strict command, to send me
 Far from my home, and from my country far,
 To the extreme bounds of Earth an outcast wanderer,
 Else that the fire-faced bolt of Jove should smite
 Our universal race. By such responses,
 Moved of oracular Loxias, my father
 Reluctant me reluctant drove from home,
 And shut the door against me. What he did
 He did perforce; Jove's bit was in his mouth.
 Forthwith my wit was frenzied, and my form
 Assumed the brute. With maniac bound I rushed,
 Horned as thou see'st, and with the sharp-mouthed sting
 Of gad-fly pricked infuriate to the cliff
 Of Lerne, and Cenchréa's limpid wave;
 While Argus, Earth-born cow-herd, hundred-eyed,
 Followed the winding traces of my path
 With sharp observance. Him swift-swooping Fate
 Snatched unexpected from his sleepless guard;
 But I from land to land still wander on,
 Scourged by the wrath of Heaven's relentless Queen.
 Thou hast my tale; the sequel, if thou know'st it,
 Is thine to tell; but do not seek, I pray thee,

* i.e. Delphi.—See Schol. to Iliad II. 519.

In pity for me, to drop soft lies ; for nothing
Is worse than the smooth craft of practised phrase.

Chorus. Enough, enough ! Woe's me that ever
Such voices of strange grief should rend my ear !
That such a tale of woe,
Insults, and wrongs, and horrors, should freeze me through.
As with a two-edged sword !

O destiny ! destiny ! woes most hard to see,
More hard to bear ! Alas ! poor maid for thee !

Prom. Thy wails anticipate her woes ; restrain
Thy trembling tears till thou hast heard the whole.

Chorus. Proceed : to know the worst some solace brings
To the vexed heart.

Prom. Your first request I granted,
And lightly ; from her own mouth, ye have heard
The spring of harm, the stream expect from me,
How Hera shall draw out her slow revenge.
Meanwhile, thou seed of Inachus, lend an ear
And learn thy future travel. First to the east ⁴⁸
Turn thee, and traverse the unploughed Scythian fields,
Whose wandering tribes their wattled homes transport
Aloft on well-wheeled wains, themselves well slung
With the far-darting bow. These pass, and, holding
Thy course by the salt sea's sounding surge, pass through
The land ; next, on thy left, thou'lt reach the Chalybs,
Workers in iron. These too avoid—for they
Are savage, and harsh to strangers. Thence proceeding,
Thou to a stream shalt come, not falsely named
Hubristes : but the fierce ill-forded wave
Pass not till Caucasus, hugest hill, receives thee,
There where the flood its gushing strength foams forth
Fresh from the rocky brow. Cross then the peaks
That neighbour with the stars, and thence direct
Southward thy path to where the Amazons
Dwell, husband-hated, who shall one day people
Thermódon's bank, and Themiscyre, and where
Harsh Salmydessus whets his ravening jaws,
The sailor's foe, stepmother to the ships.
These maids shall give thee escort. Next thou'lt reach
The narrow Cimmerian isthmus, skirting bleak
The waters of Mæotis. Here delay not,
But with bold breast cross thou the strait. Thy passage
Linked with the storied name of Bosphorus

Shall live through endless time. Here, leaving Europe,
The Asian soil receives thee. Now, answer me,
Daughters of Ocean, doth not Jove in all things
Prove his despotic will?—In lawless love
Longing to mingle with this mortal maid,
He heaps her with these woes. A bitter suitor,
Poor maid, was thine, and I have told thee scarce
The prelude of thy griefs.

Io. Ah! wretched me!

Prom. Alas, thy cries and groans!—What wilt thou do,
When the full measure of thy woes is told thee?

Chorus. What! more? her cup of woes not full?

Prom. 'Twill flow

And overflow, a sea of whelming woes.

Io. Why do I live? Why not embrace the gain
That, with one cast, this toppling cliff secures,
And dash me headlong on the ground, to end
Life and life's sorrows? Once to die is better
Than thus to drag sick life.

Prom. Thou'rt happy, *Io*,
That death from all thy living wrongs may free thee;
But I, whom Fate hath made immortal, see
No end to my long-lingering pains appointed,
Till Jove from his usurping sway be hurled.

Io. Jove from his tyranny hurled—can such thing be?

Prom. Doubtless 'twould feast thine eyes to see't?

Io. Ay, truly,
Wronged as I am by him.

Prom. Then, learn from me
That he is doomed to fall.

Io. What hand shall wrest
Jove's sceptre?

Prom. Jove's own empty wit.

Io. How so?

Prom. From evil marriage reaping evil fruit.

Io. Marriage! of mortal lineage or divine?

Prom. Ask me no further. This I may not answer.

Io. Shall his spouse thrust him from his ancient throne?

Prom. The son that she brings forth shall wound his father.

Io. And hath he no redemption from this doom?

Prom. None, till he loose me from these hated bonds.

Io. But who, in Jove's despite, shall loose thee?

Prom. One

From thine own womb descended.

Io. How? My Son?

One born of me shall be thy Saviour!—When?

Prom. When generations ten have passed, the third.⁴⁴

Io. Thou speak'st ambiguous oracles.

Prom. I have spoken

Enough for thee. Pry not into the Fates.

Io. Wilt thou hold forth a hope to cheat my grasp?

Prom. I give thee choice of two things: choose thou one.

Io. What things? Speak, and I'll choose.

Prom. Thou hast the choice

To hear thy toils to the end, or learn his name

Who comes to save me.

Chorus. Nay, divide the choice;

One half to her concede, to me the other,

Thus doubly gracious: to the maid her toils,

To me thy destined Saviour tell.

Prom. So be it!

Being thus whetted in desire, I would not

Oppose your wills. First *Io*, what remains

Of thy far-sweeping wanderings hear, and grave

My words on the sure tablets of thy mind.

When thou hast crossed the narrow stream that parts⁴⁵

The continents, to the far flame-faced East

Thou shalt proceed, the highway of the Sun;

Then cross the sounding Ocean, till thou reach

Cisthené and the Gorgon plains, where dwell

Phorcys' three daughters, maids with frosty eld

Hoar as the swan, with one eye and one tooth

Shared by the three; them Phœbus beamy-bright

Beholds not, nor the nightly Moon. Near them

Their winged sisters dwell, the Gorgons dire,

Man-hating monsters, snaky-locked, whom eye

Of mortal ne'er might look upon and live.

This for thy warning. One more sight remains,

That fills the eye with horror: mark me well;

The sharp-beaked Griffins, hounds of Jove, avoid.

Fell dogs that bark not; and the one-eyed host

Of Arimasian horsemen with swift hoofs

Beating the banks of golden-rolling Pluto.

A distant land, a swarthy people next

Receives thee: near the fountains of the Sun

They dwell by Aethiops' wave. This river trace

Until thy weary feet shall reach the pass
 Whence from the Bybline heights the sacred Nile
 Pours his salubrious flood.⁴⁶ The winding wave
 Thence to triangled Egypt guides thee, where
 A distant home awaits thee, fated mother
 Of no unstoried race. And now, if aught
 That I have spoken doubtful seem or dark,
 Repeat the question, and in plainer speech
 Expect reply. I feel no lack of leisure.

Chorus. If thou hast more to speak to her, speak on;
 Or aught omitted to supply, supply it;
 But if her tale is finished, as thou say'st,
 Remember our request.

Prom. Her tale is told,
 But for the more assurance of my words
 The path of toils through which her feet had struggled
 Before she reached this coast I will declare;
 Lightly, and with no cumbrous comment, touching
 Thy latest travel only, wandering Io.
 When thou hadst trod the Molossian plains, and reached
 Steep-ridged Dodona, where Thesprotian Jove
 In council sits, and from the articulate oaks
 (Strange wonder!) speaks prophetic, there thine ears
 This salutation with no doubtful phrase
 Received: "*All hail, great spouse of mighty Jove
 That shall be!*"—say, was it a pleasing sound?
 Thence by the sting of jealous Hera goaded,
 Along the coast of Rhea's bosomed sea*
 Thy steps were driven: thence with mazy course
 Tossed hither;⁴⁷ gaining, if a gain, this solace,
 That future times, by famous Io's name,
 Shall know that sea.† These things may be a sign
 That I, beyond the outward show, can pierce
 To the heart of truth. What yet remains, I tell
 To thee and them in common, tracing back
 My speech to whence it came. There is a city
 In extreme Egypt, where with outspread loam
 Nile breasts the sea, its name Canopus. There
 Jove to thy sober sense shall bring thee back,
 Soft with no fearful touch, and thou shalt bear
 A son, dark Epaphus, whose name shall tell
 The wonder of his birth;⁴⁸ he shall possess

* Rhea's bosomed sea—the Hadriatic.

† The Ionian sea.

What fruitful fields fat Nile broad-streaming laves.
 Four generations then shall pass ; the fifth
 In fifty daughters * glorying shall return
 To ancient Argos, fatal wedlock shunning
 With fathers' brothers' sons ; these, their wild hearts
 Fooled with blind lust, as hawks the gentle doves,
 Shall track the fugitive virgins ; but a god
 Shall disappoint their chase, and the fair prey
 Save from their lawless touch ; the Apian soil
 Shall welcome them to death, and woman's hands
 Shall dare the deed amid the nuptial watches.
 Each bride shall rob her lord of life, and dip
 The sharp steel in his throat. Such nuptial bliss
 May all my enemies know ! Only one maid
 Of all the fifty, with a blunted will,
 Shall own the charm of love, and spare her mate,
 And of two adverse reputations choose
 The coward, not the murderess. She shall be
 The mother of a royal race in Argos.
 To tell what follows, with minute remark,
 Were irksome ; but from this same root shall spring
 A hero, strong in the archer's craft, whose hand
 Shall free me from these bonds. Such oracle spake
 Titanian Themis, my time-honoured mother,
 But how and why were a long tale to tell,
 Nor being told would boot thine ear to hear it.

Io. Ah me ! pain ! pain ! ah me !
 Again the fevered spasm hath seized me,
 And the stroke of madness smites !
 Again that fiery sting torments me,
 And my heart doth knock my ribs !
 My aching eyes in dizziness roll,
 And my helmless feet are driven
 Whither gusty frenzy blows !
 And my tongue with thick words struggling
 Like a sinking swimmer plashes
 'Gainst the whelming waves of woe !

[*Exit.*

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE.

Wise was the man, most wise,
 Who in deep-thoughted mood conceived, and first

* The Danaids, daughters of Danaus, who colonized Argos from Egypt. This forms the subject of the next play—the Suppliants.

In pictured speech and pregnant phrase declared
 That marriage, if the Fates shall bless the bond,
 Must be of like with like ;
 And that the daughters of an humble house
 Shun tempting union with the pomp of wealth
 And with the pride of birth.

ANTISTROPHE.

Never, O ! never may Fate,
 All-powerful Fate which rules both gods and men,
 See me approaching the dread Thunderer's bed,
 And sharing marriage with the Olympian king,
 An humble Ocean-maid !
 May wretched Io, chased by Hera's wrath,
 Unhusbanded, unfriended, fill my sense
 With profitable fear.

EPODE.

Me may an equal bond
 Bind with my equal : never may the eye
 Of a celestial suitor fix the gaze
 Of forceful love on me.
 This were against all odds of war to war,
 And in such strife entangled I were lost ;
 For how should humble maid resist the embrace,
 Against great Jove's decree ?

Prom. Nay, but this Jove, though insolent now, shall soon
 Be humbled low. Such wedlock even now
 He blindly broods, as shall uprear his kingdom,
 And leave no trace behind ; then shall the curse,
 Which Kronos heaped upon his ingrate son,
 When hurled unjustly from his hoary throne,
 Be all fulfilled. What remedy remains
 For that dread ruin I alone can tell ;
 I only know. Then let him sit aloft,
 Rolling his thunder, his fire-breathing bolt
 Far-brandishing ; his arts are vain ; his fall,
 Unless my aid prevent, his shameful fall,
 Is doomed. Against himself to life he brings
 A champion fierce, a portent of grim war,
 Who shall invent a fiercer flame than lightning,
 And peals to outpeal the thunder, who shall shiver
 The trident mace that stirs the sea, and shakes
 The solid Earth, the spear of strong Poseidon.

Thus shall the tyrant learn how much to serve
Is different from to sway.

Chorus. Thou dost but make

Thy wishes father to thy slanderous phrase.

Prom. I both speak truth and wish the truth to be.

Chorus. But who can think that Jove shall find a master?

Prom. He shall be mastered! Ay, and worse endure.

Chorus. Dost thou not blench to cast such words about thee?

Prom. How should I fear, being a god and deathless?

Chorus. But he can scourge with something worse than death.

Prom. Even let him scourge! I'm armed for all conclusions.

Chorus. Yet they are wise who worship Adrastéa.⁴⁹

Prom. Worship, and pray; fawn on the powers that be;

But Jove to me is less than very nothing.

Let him command, and rule his little hour

To please himself; long time he cannot sway.

But lo! where comes the courier of this Jove,

The obsequious minion of this upstart King,

Doubtless the bearer of some weighty news.

Enter HERMES.

Hermes. Thee, cunning sophist, dealing bitter words

Most bitterly against the gods, the friend

Of ephemeral man, the thief of sacred fire,

Thee, Father Jove commands to curb thy boasts,

And say what marriage threatens his stable throne.

Answer this question in plain phrase, no dark

Tangled enigmas; do not add, Prometheus,

A second journey to my first: and, mark me!

Thy obduracy cannot soften Jove.

Prom. This solemn mouthing, this proud pomp of phrase

Beseems the lackey of the gods. New gods

Ye are, and, being new, ye ween to hold

Unshaken citadels. Have I not seen

Two Monarchs ousted from that throne? the third

I yet shall see precipitate hurled from Heaven

With baser, speedier, ruin. Do I seem

To quail before this new-forged dynasty?

Fear is my farthest thought. I pray thee go

Turn up the dust again upon the road

Thou cam'st. Reply from me thou shalt have none.

Hermes. This haughty tone hath been thy sin before:

Thy pride will strand thee on a worser woe.

Prom. And were my woe tenfold what now it is,
I would not barter it for thy sweet chains;
For liefer would I lackey this bare rock
Than trip the messages of Father Jove.
The insolent thus with insolence I repay.

Hermes. Thou dost delight in miseries; thou art wanton.

Prom. Wanton! delighted! would my worst enemies
Might wanton in these bonds, thyself the first!

Hermes. Must I, too, share the blame of thy distress?

Prom. In one round sentence, every god I hate
That injures me who never injured him.

Hermes. Thou'rt mad, clean mad; thy wit's diseased, Prometheus.

Prom. Most mad! if madness 'tis to hate our foes.

Hermes. Prosperity's too good for thee: thy temper
Could not endure't.

Prom. Alas! this piercing pang!

Hermes. "Alas!"—this word Jove does not understand.

Prom. As Time grows old he teaches many things.

Hermes. Yet Time that teaches all leaves thee untaught.

Prom. Untaught in sooth, thus parleying with a slave!

Hermes. It seems thou wilt not grant great Jove's demand.

Prom. Such love as his to me should be repaid
With like!

Hermes. Dost beard me like a boy? Beware.

Prom. Art not a boy, and something yet more witless,
If thou expectest answer from my mouth?
Nor insult harsh, nor cunning craft of Jove
Shall force this tale from me, till he unloose
These bonds. Yea! let him dart his levin bolts,
With white-winged snows and subterranean thunders
Mix and confound the elements of things!
No threat, no fear, shall move me to reveal
The hand that hurls him from his tyrant's throne.

Hermes. Bethink thee well: thy vaunts can help thee nothing.

Prom. I speak not rashly: what I said I said.

Hermes. If thou art not the bought and sold of folly,
Dare to learn wisdom from thy present ills.

Prom. Speak to the waves: thou speak'st to me as vainly!
Deem not that I, to win a smile from Jove,
Will spread a maiden smoothness o'er my soul,
And importune the foe whom most I hate
With womanish upliftings of the hands.
Thou'lt see the deathless die first!

Hermes.

I have said

Much, but that much is vain : thy rigid nature
To thaw with prayer is hopeless. A young colt
That frets the bit, and fights against the reins,
Art thou, fierce-champing with most impotent rage ;
For wilful strength that hath no wisdom in it
Is less than nothing.⁵⁰ But bethink thee well ;
If thou despise my words of timely warning,
What wintry storm, what threefold surge of woes
Whelms thee inevitable. Jove shall split
These craggy cliffs with his cloud-bosomed bolt,
And sink thee deep : the cold rock shall embrace thee
There thou shalt lie, till he shall please to bring thee
Back to the day, to find new pains prepared :
For he will send his Eagle-messenger,
His winged hound,* in crimson food delighting,
To tear thy rags of flesh with bloody beak,
And daily come an uninvited guest
To banquet on thy gory liver. This,
And worse expect, unless some god endure
Vicarious thy tortures,⁵¹ and exchange
His sunny ether for the rayless homes
Of gloomy Hades, and deep Tartarus.
Consider well. No empty boast I speak,
But weighty words well weighed : the mouth of Jove
Hath never known a lie, and speech with him
Is prophet of its deed. Ponder and weigh,
Close not thy stubborn ears to good advice.

Chorus. If we may speak, what Hermes says is wise,
And fitting the occasion. He advises
That stubborn will should yield to prudent counsel
Obey : thy wisdom should not league with folly.

Prom. Nothing new this preacher preaches :

Seems it strange that foe should suffer
From the vengeance of his foe ?

I am ready. Let him wreathe
Curls of scorching flame around me ;

Let him fret the air with thunder,

And the savage-blustering winds !

Let the deep abysmal tempest

Wrench the firm roots of the Earth !

Let the sea upheave her billows,

* See the Agamemnon, Note 15.

Mingling the fierce rush of waters
 With the pathway of the stars !
 Let the harsh-winged hurricane sweep me
 In its whirls, and fling me down
 To black Tartarus : there to lie
 Bound in the iron folds of Fate.
 I will bear : but cannot die.

Hermes. Whom the nymphs have struck with madness
 Raves as this loud blusterer raves ;
 Seems he not a willing madman,
 Let him reap the fruits he sowed !⁵²
 But ye maids, who share his sorrows,
 Not his crimes, with quick removal
 Hie from this devoted spot,
 Lest with idiocy the thunder
 Harshly blast your maundering wits.

Chorus. Wouldst thou with thy words persuade us,
 Use a more persuasive speech ;
 Urge no reasons to convince me
 That an honest heart must hate.
 With his sorrows I will sorrow :
 I will hate a traitor's name ;
 Earth has plagues, but none more noisome
 Than a faithless friend in need.

Hermes. Ponder well my prudent counsel,
 Nor, when evil hunts thee out,
 Blame great Jove that he doth smite thee
 With an unexpected stroke.
 Not the gods ; thy proper folly
 Is the parent of thy woes.*
 Jove hath laid no trap to snare thee,
 But the scapeless net of ruin
 Thou hast woven for thyself.

Prom. Now his threats walk forth in action,
 And the firm Earth quakes indeed.
 Deep and loud the ambient Thunder
 Bellows, and the flaring Lightning
 Wreathes his fiery curls around me,
 And the Whirlwind rolls his dust ;
 And the Winds from rival regions
 Rush in elemental strife,
 And the Ocean's storm-vexed billows

* Compare *Odyssey*, I. 32.

Mingle with the startled stars !
Doubtless now the tyrant gathers
All his hoarded wrath to overwhelm me.
Mighty Mother, worshipped Themis,
Circling Ether that diffusest
Light, a common joy to all,
Thou beholdest these my wrongs !

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

THE SUPPLIANTS

A LYRICO-DRAMATIC SPECTACLE

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby
Some have entertained angels unawares.

ST. PAUL.

πρὸς γὰρ Διὸς εἰσὶν ἅπαντες
Ξεῖνοί τε πτωχοὶ τε.

HOMER.

PERSONS

CHORUS OF DANAIDES.

DANAUS.

PELASGUS, King of Argos, and Attendants.

HERALD

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

DANAUS, according to the received Greek story, was an Egyptian, who founded a colony in Argos, at some date between the age of the oldest Argive king Inachus, and the Trojan war. In the reality of this sea-faring adventurer, modern historians, following the faith of the ancient Greeks, have generally acquiesced, till, latterly, the Germans, with that instinctive hostility to external tradition which characterises them, have boldly ventured to explain both the Egyptian and his colony away into a symbol, or an inanity. Of our most recent writers, however, THIRLWALL, after considering all the German speculations on the subject, is not ashamed to say a word in favour of the possibility or probability of an Egyptian colony in Argos;* while CLINTON† (Introd. pp. 6, 7), boldly announces the principle that "we may acknowledge as real persons all those whom there is no reason for rejecting. The presumption is in favour of the early tradition. . . . Cadmus and Danaus appear to be real persons; for it is conformable to the state of mankind, and perfectly credible that Phœnician and Egyptian adventurers, in the ages to which these persons are ascribed, should have found their way to the coasts of Greece." GROTE, however, seems to have acted most wisely in refusing to decide whether any particular legend of the earliest times is mythical or historical, on the ground that, though many of the legends doubtless contain truth, they contain it only "in a sort of chemical combination with fiction, which we have no means of decomposing"—(II. p. 50). This play of Æschylus, therefore, cannot boast of any accessory historical superadded to the principal poetic interest.

Danaus, the legend tells, though an Egyptian born, was not of Egyptian descent. The original mother of his race was Io, daughter of Inachus, king of Argos, and priestess of Hera in that place. How this much-persecuted maid found her way from the banks of the "Erasinus old" to the shores of the nurturing Nile, we have seen in the previous piece. Danaus had a brother called Ægyptus, the father of fifty sons, as himself was of fifty daughters. These fifty sons Ægyptus sought to unite in wedlock to the equal-numbered progeny of his brother; but the chaste maidens, whether because they actually thought it unholy (as it certainly is, in the general case, unadvisable) for first cousins to marry first cousins, or

* Vol. I., c. 3.

† FAST., HELLEN., Introd. pp. 6, 7.

because the suit was pressed in a manner not the most respectful, or from a combination of both motives, refused to enter into the bond ; and, to escape the importunities of their stronger male suitors, fled, under the guidance of their father, over the seas to Greece. As kind chance, or, rather, Divine Providence, would have it, they were wafted to that very part of Greece whence their famous ancestress Io had originally proceeded, when the god-sent gadfly drove her, in a career of tempestuous wanderings, through great part of Europe and Asia, to Egypt. With their landing on this coast the present opera commences ; and the action which it represents is the very simple one of the reception of the Libyan fugitives, by the Argive monarch Pelasgus (otherwise called Gelanor), and their participation in the rights and privileges of Argive citizenship. The transference of their affections from Nile to Erasinus is solemnly sung in the concluding chaunt. The Danaides are now Argives.

Considered by itself, the action of this piece is the most meagre that can be conceived, and, as the poet has handled it, contains little that can stir the deeper feelings of the heart, or strike the imagination strongly. That the king of the Argives should feel serious doubts as to the propriety of receiving such a band of foreigners into his kingdom, formidable not in their own strength, indeed, but in respect of the pursuing party, by whom they were claimed, was most natural ; equally natural, however, and, in a poetic point of view, necessary, that his political fears should finally be outweighed by his benevolent regard for the rights of unprotected virgins, and his pious fear of the wrath of Jove, the protector of suppliants. The alternation of mind between these contending feelings, till a final resolve is taken on the side of the right, affords no field for the higher faculty of the dramatist to display itself. As we have it, accordingly, the *Suppliants* is, perhaps, the weakest performance of Æschylus. But the fact is, there is the best reason to believe that the great father of tragedy never meant this piece to stand alone, but wrote it merely to usher in the main action, which followed in the other pieces of a trilogy ; the names of which pieces—*Αιγύπτιοι*, and *Δαναίδες*—are preserved in the list of the author's pieces still extant. Of this, the whole conclusion of the present piece, and especially the latter half of the last choral chaunt, furnishes the most conclusive evidence.

The remainder of the story, which formed the main action of the trilogy, is well known. Immediately after the reception of the fugitives, by the Argives, their pursuers arrive, and land on the coast. This arrival is announced in the last scene of the present piece. On

this, Danaus, unwilling to lead his kind host into a war, pretends to yield to the suit still as eagerly pressed, and the marriage is agreed on. But a terrible revenge had been devised. At the very moment that he hands over his unwilling but obedient daughters to the subjection of their hated cousins, he gives them secret instructions to furnish themselves each with a dagger, and, during the watches of the nuptial night, to dip the steel in the throats of their unsuspecting lords. The bloody deed was completed. Only one of all the fifty daughters, preferring the fame of true womanhood to the claims of filial homage, spared her mate. Hypermnestra saved her husband Lynceus. This conduct, of course, brought the daughter into collision with her father and her father's family ; and one of those strifes of our mysterious moral nature was educed, which, as we have seen in the trilogy of the Orestiad, it was one great purpose of the Æschylean drama to reconcile. If the murder occupied the second piece, as the progress of the story naturally brings with it, a third piece, according to the analogy of the Eumenides, would be necessary to bring about the reconciliation, and effect that purifying of the passions which Aristotle points out as the great moral result of tragic composition. That Aphrodite was the great celestial agent employed in the finale of the Suppliants, as Pallas Athena is in the Furies, has been well divined ; a beautiful fragment in celebration of love, and in favour of Hypermnestra remains ; but to attempt a reconstruction of these lost pieces at the present day, though an amusement of which the learned Germans are fond, is foreign to the habits of the British mind. Those who feel inclined to see what ingenuity may achieve in this region, are referred to Welcker's Trilogie, and Gruppe's Ariadne.

The moral tone and character of this piece is in the highest degree pleasing and satisfactory. The Supreme Jove, whose prominent attribute is power, here receives a glorification as the protector of the persecuted, and the refuge of the distressed. On the duty of hospitality, under the sanction of *Zeús ξένιος* and *ἰκεσιος*, as practised among the ancient Greeks, I refer the reader with pleasure to Grote's History of Greece, Vol. II., p. 114.

"The scene," says Potter, "is near the shore, in an open grove, close to the altar and images of the gods presiding over the sacred games, with a view of the sea and ships of Egyptus on one side, and of the town of Argos on the other, with hills, and woods, and vales, a river flowing between them : all, together with the persons of the drama, forming a picture that would have well employed the united pencils of Poussin and Claude."

the Orestes, unwilling to lead his kind host into a war, presents to
 yield to the suit as easily pressed, and the marriage is consum-
 mated. But a terrible revenge had been devised. At the very moment
 that he hands over his unwilling but obedient daughter to the
 execution of their hated cousin, he gives them secret instructions
 to murder themselves each with a dagger, and during the watches
 of the nuptial night to dip the steel in the throats of their respective
 partners. The bloody deed was completed. Only one of the
 two daughters, preserving the trace of true womanhood to the close
 of their lives, spared her sister. Hypocritically saved her name
 from Lyncus. This conduct of course brought the daughter into
 collision with her father and her father's family; and one of those
 scenes of our mysterious moral nature was enacted, which we
 have seen in the history of the Greeks. It was one great purpose
 of the Athenian drama to reconcile. In the tragedy, occurred the
 second piece, as the progress of the story naturally brings with it
 a third piece, as owing to the analogy of the Euripidean world
 be necessary to bring about the reconciliation, and after that
 purifying of the passions which Aristotle points out as the great
 moral result of tragic composition. That Aphrodite was the
 great celestial agent employed in the finale of the Sophoclean
Pallas Athena is in the *Finis*, has been well divined; a beautiful
 fragment in celebration of love and in favour of Hypermnestra
 remains; but to attempt a reconstruction of these lost pieces at the
 present day, though an amusement of which the learned Germans
 are fond, is foreign to the habits of the British mind. Those who
 feel inclined to see what may be achieved in this regard, may
 refer to Weichert's *Trilogie* and Gruppe's *Antikens*.
 The moral tone and character of this piece is in the highest
 degree pleasing and satisfactory. The heroine, love, whose pure
 innocent attitude is here, here receives a glorification as the
 protectress of the persecuted, and the refuge of the distressed. On
 the day of hospitality under the sanction of her father and her
 as practised among the ancient Greeks. I refer the reader with
 pleasure to Grote's *History of Greece*, Vol. II. p. 114. The scene
 "The scene, save lower," is near the shore in an open grove
 close to the altar and temple of the gods presiding over the sacred
 games, with a view of the sea and ships of Egypt on one side, and
 of the town of Argos on the other, with hills and woods and valleys
 a river flowing between them; all together with the persons of the
 drama, forming a picture that would have well employed the united
 pencils of Poussin and Claude.

THE SUPPLIANTS

CHORUS, *entering the stage in procession. March time.*

Jove, the suppliant's high protector,¹
Look from Heaven, benignly favouring
Us the suppliant band, swift-oared
Hither sailing, from the seven mouths
Of the fat fine-sanded Nile!²
From the land that fringes Syria,
Land divine, in flight we came,
Not by public vote forth-driven,
Not by taint of blood divorced
From our native state,* but chastely
Our abhorrent foot withdrawing
From impure ungodly wedlock
With Ægyptus' sons, too nearly
Cousined with ourselves. For wisely,
This our threatened harm well-weighing,
Danaus, our sire, prime counsellor,
And leader of our sistered band,
Timely chose this least of sorrows
O'er the salt-sea wave to flee;
And here on Argive soil to plant us,
Whence our race its vaunted spring
Drew divinely, when great Jove
Gently thrilled the brize-stung heifer³
With his procreant touch, and breathed
Godlike virtue on her womb.
Where on Earth should we hope refuge
On more friendly ground than this,
In our hands these green boughs bearing
Wreathed with precatory wool?†
Ye blissful gods supremely swaying⁴
Land and city, and lucid streams;
And ye in sepulchres dark, severely

* See Introductory Remarks to the Eumenides.

† The usual insignia of Suppliants. Wool was commonly used in the adornment of insignia hallowed by religion.—See Dict. Antiq., *voc. infula* and *apex*.; and Note 72 to the Choephoræ, and Clem. Alex. Prot. § 10.

The Suppliants

Worshipped 'neath the sunless ground ;
 And thou, the third, great Jove the Saviour,
 Guardian of all holy homes,
 With your spirit gracious-wafted,
 Breathe fair welcome on this band
 Of suppliant maids. But in the depth
 Of whirling waves engulph the swarm
 Of insolent youths, Ægyptus' sons,
 Them, and their sea-cars swiftly oared,
 Ere this slimy shore receive
 Their hated footprint. Let them labour,
 With wrath-spitting seas confronted :
 By the wild storm wintry-beating,
 Thunder-crashing, lightning flashing,
 By the tyrannous blast shower-laden
 Let them perish, ere they mount
 Marriage beds which right refuses,⁵
 Us, their father's brother's daughters
 To their lawless yoke enthralling !

The CHORUS assemble in a band round the centre of the Orchestra, and sing the Choral Hymn.

STROPHE I.

Give ear to our prayer, we implore thee,
 Thou son, and the mother that bore thee—
 The calf and the heifer divine ! *
 From afar be thine offspring's avenger,
 Even thou, once a beautiful ranger
 O'er these meads with the grass-cropping kine !
 And thou, whom she bore to her honor,
 When the breath of the Highest was on her,
 And the touch of the finger divine ;
 Thine ear, mighty god, we implore thee
 To the prayer of thine offspring incline !

ANTISTROPHE I.

O Thou who with blessing anointed,
 Wert born when by Fate 'twas appointed,
 With thy name to all ages a sign ! †
 In this land of the mother that bore thee,
 Her toils we remember before thee,
 Where she cropped the green mead with the kine.

* Epaphus and Io.

† Epaphus, from ἐπαφή. See Note 3 immediately above.

O strange were her fortunes, and stranger
 The fate that hath chased me from danger
 To the home of the heifer divine.
 O son, with the mother that bore thee,
 Stamp my tale with thy truth for a sign!

STROPHE AND ANTISTROPHE II.

While we cry, should there haply be near us
 An Argive, an augur,* to hear us,
 When our shrill-piercing wail
 His ear shall assail,
 'Tis the cry he will deem, and none other,
 Of Procne, the woe-wedded mother,
 The hawk-hunted nightingale; †
 Sad bird, when its known streams it leaveth,
 And with fresh-bleeding grief lonely grieveth,
 And telleth the tale,
 With a shrill-voiced wail,
 How the son that she loved, and none other,
 Was slain by his fell-purposed mother,
 The woe-wedded nightingale!

STROPHE III.

Even so from the Nile summer-tinted,
 With Ionian wailings unstinted,⁶
 My cheek with the keen nail I tear;
 And I pluck, where it bloweth,
 Grief's blossom that groweth
 In this heart first acquainted with care;
 And I fear the fierce band,
 From the far misty land,⁷
 Whom the swift ships to Argos may bear.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Ye gods of my race, seeing clearly
 The right which ye cherish so dearly,
 To the haughty your hatred declare!
 'Gainst the right ye will never
 Chaste virgins deliver,
 The bed of the lawless to share;
 From the god-fenced altar
 Each awe-struck assaulter
 Back shrinks. Our sure bulwark is there.

* This is explained by what follows. An augur, of course, was the proper person to recognise the notes of birds, or what resembled them.

† See Note 76 to Agamemnon.

The Suppliants

STROPHE IV.

O would that Jove might show to men
 His counsel as he planned it ;
 But ah ! he darky weaves the scheme,
 No mortal eye hath scanned it.
 It burns through darkness brightly clear
 To whom the god shall show it ;
 But mortal man, through cloudy fear,
 Shall search in vain to know it.

ANTISTROPHE IV.

Firm to the goal his purpose treads,
 His will knows no frustration ;
 When with his brow the mighty god
 Hath nodded consummation.
 But strangely, strangely weave their maze
 His counsels, dusky wending,
 Concealed in densely-tangled ways
 From human comprehending.

STROPHE V.

From their high-towering hopes the proud
 In wretched rout he casteth.
 No force he wields ; his simple will,
 His quiet sentence blasteth.
 All godlike power is calm ;⁸ and high
 On thrones of glory seated,
 Jove looks from Heaven with tranquil eye,
 And sees his will completed.

ANTISTROPHE V.

Look down, O mighty god, and see
 How this harsh wedlock planning,
 That dry old tree in saplings green,
 The insolent lust is fanning !
 Madly he hugs the frenzied plan
 With perverse heart unbending,
 Hot-spurred, till Ruin seize the man,
 Too late to think of mending.

STROPHE VI.

Ah ! well-a-day ! ah ! well-a-day !⁹
 Thus sadly I hymn the sorrowful lay,

With a shrill-voiced cry,
 With a sorrow-streaming eye,
 Well-a-day, woe's me !

Thus I grace my own tomb with the wail pouring free,
 Thus I sing my own dirge, ah me ! *

Ye Apian hills, be kind to me,
 And throw not back the stranger's note,
 But know the Libyan wail.
 Behold how, rent to sorrow's note,
 My linen robes all loosely float,
 And my Sidonian veil.

ANTISTROPHE VI.

Ah ! well-a-day ! ah ! well-a-day !
 My plighted vows I'll duly pay,
 Ye gods, if ye will save
 From the foe, and from the grave
 My trembling life set free !

Surges high, surges high, sorrow's many-billowed sea,
 And woe towers on woe. Ah me !
 Ye Apian hills,¹⁰ be kind to me,
 And throw not back the stranger's note
 But know the Libyan wail !
 Behold how, rent to sorrow's note,
 My linen robes all loosely float,
 And my Sidonian veil !

STROPHE VII.

And yet, in that slight timbered house, well-armed
 With frequent-plashing oar,
 Stiff sail and cordage straining, all unharmed
 By winter's stormy roar,
 We reached this Argive shore.
 Safely so far. May Jove, the all-seeing, send
 As the beginning, so the prosperous end.
 And may he grant, indeed,
 That we, a gracious mother's gracious seed,
 By no harsh kindred wooed,
 May live on Apian ground unyoked and unsubdued !

* PAL. quotes from Massinger's *Emperor of the East*, "To a sad tune I sing my own dirge," which I have adopted.

The Suppliants

ANTISTROPHE VII.

May she, the virgin daughter of high Jove,*
 Our virgin litany hear,
 Our loving homage answering with more love!
 She that, with face severe,
 Repelled, in awful fear,
 Each rude aggressor, in firm virtue cased,
 Nor knew the lustful touch divinely chaste.
 And may she grant, indeed,
 That we, a gracious mother's gracious seed,
 By no harsh kindred wooed,
 May live on Apian ground unyoked and unsubdued.

STROPHE VIII.

But if no aid to us may be,
 Libya's swart sun-beaten daughters,
 The rope shall end our toils; and we,
 Beneath the ground, shall fare to thee,
 Thou many-guested Jove,†
 To thee our suppliant boughs we'll spread,
 Thou Saviour of the weary Dead,
 Far from the shining thrones of blissful gods above.
 Ah, Jove too well we know
 What wrath divine scourged ancient Io, wailing
 Beneath thy consort's anger heaven-scaling;
 And even so,
 On Io's seed may blow
 A buffeting blast from her of black despairful woe.

ANTISTROPHE VIII.

O Jove, how then wilt thou be free
 From just reproach of Libya's daughters,
 If thou in us dishonoured see
 Him whom the heifer bore to thee
 Whom thou didst chiefly love.
 If thou from us shalt turn thy face,
 What suppliant then shall seek thy grace?
 O hear my prayer enthroned in loftiest state above!
 For well, too well, we know
 What wrath divine scourged ancient Io, wailing
 Beneath thy consort's anger heaven-scaling;

* Artemis, or Diana.

† τον πολυξενώτατον Ζῆνα, that is, PLUTO.

And even so,
On Io's seed may blow
A buffeting blast from her of black despairful woe.

Enter DANAUS.

Danaus. Be wise, my daughters. In no rash flight with me,
A hoary father, and a faithful pilot,
Ye crossed the seas; nor less is wisdom needful
Ashore; be wise, and on your heart's true tablet
Engrave my words. For lo! where mounts the dust,
A voiceless herald of their coming; hear
Their distant-rumbling wheels! A host I see
Of bright shield-bearing and spear-shaking men,
Swift steeds, and rounded cars.¹¹ Of our here landing,
Timely apprised, the chiefs that rule this country
Come with their eyes to read us. But be their coming
Harmless, or harsh with fell displeasure, here
On this high-seat of the Agonian gods¹²
Is safety for my daughters; for an altar
Is a sure tower of strength, a shield that bears
The rattling terror dintless. Go ye, therefore,
Embrace these altars, in your sistered hands¹³
These white-wreathed precatory boughs presenting,
Which awful Jove reveres; and with choice phrase
Wisely your pity-moving tale-commend
When they shall ask you; as becomes the stranger,
The bloodless motive of your flight declaring
With clear recital. The bold tongue eschewing,
With sober-fronted face and quiet eye
Your tale unfold. The garrulous prate, the length
Of slow-drawn speech beware. Such fault offends
This people sorely. Chiefly know to yield:
Thou art the weaker—a poor helpless stranger—
The bold-mouthed phrase suits ill with thy condition.

Chorus. Father, thou speakest wisely: nor unwisely
Thy words would we receive, in memory's ward
Storing thy hests; ancestral Jove be witness!

Danaus. Even so; and with benignant eye look down!¹⁴

Chorus. * * * *

Danaus. Delay not. In performance show thy strength.

Chorus. Even there where thou dost sit, I'd sit beside thee!

Danaus. O Jove show pity ere pity come too late!

Chorus. Jove willing, all is well.

Danaus. Him, therefore, pray,
 There where his bird the altar decorates : ¹⁵ pray
 Apollo, too, the pure, the exiled once ¹⁶
 From bright Olympus.

Chorus. The sun's restoring rays
 We pray : the god what fate he knew will pity.

Danaus. May he with pity and with aid be near !

Chorus. Whom next shall I invoke ?

Danaus. Thou see'st this trident
 And know'st of whom the symbol ?

Chorus. May the same
 That sent us hither kindly now receive us !

Danaus. Here's Hermes likewise, as Greece knows the god. ¹⁷

Chorus. Be he my herald, heralding the free !

Danaus. This common altar of these mighty gods
 Adore : within these holy precincts lodged,
 Pure doves from hawks of kindred plumage fleeing,
 Foes of your blood, polluters of your race.
 Can bird eat bird and be an holy thing ? ¹⁸
 Can man be pure, from an unwilling father
 Robbing unwilling brides ? Who does these deeds
 Will find no refuge from lewd guilt in Hades ;
 For there, as we have heard, another Jove
 Holds final judgment on the guilty shades.
 But now be ready. Here await their coming ;
 May the gods grant a victory to our prayers !

Enter KING.

King. Whom speak we here ? Whence come ? Certes no Greeks.
 Your tire rich-flaunting with barbaric pride
 Bespeaks you strangers. Argos knows you not,
 Nor any part of Greece. Strange surely 'tis
 That all unheralded, unattended all,
 And of no host the acknowledged guest, unfearing
 Ye tread this land. ¹⁹ If these boughs, woolly-wreathed,
 That grace the altars of the Agonian gods
 Speak what to Greeks they should speak, ye are suppliants.
 Thus much I see : what more remains to guess
 I spare ; yourselves have tongues to speak the truth.

Chorus. That we are strangers is most true ; but whom
 See we in thee ? a citizen ? a priest ?
 A temple warder with his sacred wand ?
 The ruler of the state ?

King. Speak with a fearless tongue, and plainly. I
 Of old earth-born Palæcthon am the son,²⁰
 My name Pelasgus, ruler of this land ;
 And fathered with my name the men who reap
 Earth's fruits beneath my sway are called Pelasgi ;
 And all the land where Algos flows, and Strymon,²¹
 Toward the westering sun my sceptre holds.
 My kingdom the Perrhæbians bound, and those
 Beyond high Pindus, by Pæonia, and
 The Dodonéan heights ; the briny wave
 Completes the circling line ; within these bounds
 I rule ; but here, where now thy foot is planted,
 The land is Apia, from a wise physician
 Of hoary date so called. He, from Naupactus,
 Apollo's son, by double right, physician
 And prophet both,²² crossed to this coast, and freed it
 By holy purifyings, from the plague
 Of man-destroying monsters, which the ground
 With ancient taint of blood polluted bore.
 This plague his virtue medicinal healed,
 That we no more unfriendly fellowship
 Hold with the dragon-brood. Such worthy service
 With thankful heart the Argive land received,
 And Apis lives remembered in her prayers.
 Of this from me assured, now let me hear
 Your whence, and what your purpose. Briefly speak ;
 This people hates much phrase.

Chorus. Our tale is short.
 We by descent are Argives, from the seed
 Of the heifer sprung, whose womb was blest in bearing ;
 And this in every word we can confirm
 By manifest proofs.

King. That ye are Argives, this
 My ear receives not ; an unlikely tale !
 Like Libyan women rather ; not a line
 I trace in you that marks our native race.
 Nile might produce such daughters ; ye do bear
 A Cyprian character in your female features,
 The impressed likeness of some plastic male.*
 Of wandering Indians I have heard, that harness
 Camels for mules, huge-striding, dwelling near
 The swarthy Æthiop land ; ye may be such ;
 Or, had ye war's accoutrement, the bow,

* See Note 46 to the Eumenides.

Ye might be Amazons, stern, husband-hating,
Flesh-eating maids. But speak, that I may know
The truth. How vouch ye your descent from Argos?

Chorus. They say that Io, on this Argive ground,
Erst bore the keys to Hera,²³ then 'tis said,
So runs the general rumour—²⁴

King. I have heard.

Was it not so, Jove with the mortal maid
Mingled in love?

Chorus. Even so; in love they mingled,
Deceiving Hera's bed.

King. And how then ended
The Olympian strife?

Chorus. Enraged, the Argive goddess
To a heifer changed the maid.

King. And the god came
To the fair horned heifer?

Chorus. Like a leaping bull,
Transformed he came;²⁵ so the hoar legend tells.

King. And what did then the potent spouse of Jove?

Chorus. She sent a watchman ringed with eyes to watch.

King. This all-beholding herdsman, who was he?

Chorus. Argus the son of Earth, by Hermes slain.

King. How further fared the ill-fated heifer, say?

Chorus. A persecuting brize was sent to sting her.

King. And o'er the wide earth goaded her the brize?

Chorus. Just so; thy tale with mine accordant chimes.

King. Then to Canopus, and to Memphis came she?

Chorus. There, touched by Jove's boon hand, she bore a son.

King. The heifer's boasted offspring, who was he?

Chorus. Epaphus, who plainly with his name declares

His mother's safety wrought by touch of Jove.

King. * * * * *

Chorus. Libya, dowered with a fair land's goodly name.

King. And from this root divine what other shoots?

Chorus. Belus, my father's father, and my uncle's.

King. Who is thy honoured father?

Chorus. Danaus;

And fifty sons his brother hath, my uncle.

King. This brother who? Spare not to tell the whole.

Chorus. Ægyptus. Now, O king, our ancient race
Thou knowest. Us from our prostration raising,
Thou raisest Argos.

King. Argives in sooth ye seem,
By old descent participant of the soil;
But by what stroke of sore mischance harsh-smitten,
Dared ye to wander from your native seats?

Chorus. Pelasgian prince, a motley-threaded web
Is human woe; a wing of dappled plumes.
Past hope and faith it was that we, whose blood
From Argive Io flows, to Io's city,
In startled flight, should measure back our way,
To escape from hated marriage.

King. How say'st thou?
To escape from marriage thou art here, displaying
These fresh-cropt branches, snowy-wreathed, before
The Agonian gods?

Chorus. Ay! Never, never may we
Be thrall'd to Ægyptus' sons!

King. Speak'st thou of hate
To them, or of a bond your laws forbid?

Chorus. Both this and that.²⁷ Who should be friends were foes,
And blood with blood near-mingled basely flows.

King. But branch on branch well grafted goodlier grows.

Chorus. Urge not this point; but rather think one word
From thee the wretched rescues.

King. How then shall I
My friendly disposition show?

Chorus. We ask
But this—from our pursuers save us.

King. What!
Shall I for unknown exiles breed a war?

Chorus. Justice will fight for him who fights for us.

King. Doubtless; if Justice from the first hath stamped
Your cause for hers.

Chorus [*pointing to the altar*]. The state's high poop here crowned
Revere.

King. This green environment of shade,
Mantling the seats of the gods I see, and shudder.

Chorus. The wrath of suppliant Jove²⁸ is hard to bear.

STROPHE I.

O hear my cry, benignly hear!
Thou son of Palæcthon, hear me!
The fugitive wandering suppliant hear!
Thou king of Pelasgians, hear me!

The Suppliants

Like a heifer young by the wolf pursued²⁹
 O'er the rocks so cliffy and lonely,
 And loudly it lows to the herdsman good,
 Whose strength can save it only.

King. My eyes are tasked ; there, 'neath the shielding shade
 Of fresh-lopt branches I behold you clinging
 To these Agonian gods ; but what I do
 Must spare the state from harm. I must provide
 That no unlooked-for unprepared event
 Beget new strife ; of this we have enough.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Chorus. Great Jove that allotteth their lot to all,
 By his sentence of right shall clear thee,
 Dread Themis that heareth the suppliants' call,
 No harm shall allow to come near thee.
 Though I speak to the old with the voice of the young,
 Do the will of the gods, and surely
 Their favour to thee justly weighed shall belong,
 When thy gifts thou offerest purely.

King. Not at my hearth with precatory boughs
 Ye lie. The state, if guilty taint from you
 Affect the general weal, will for the state
 Take counsel. I nor pledge nor promise give,
 Till all the citizens hear what thou shalt say.

STROPHE II.

Chorus. Thou art the state, and the people art thou,³⁰
 The deed that thou doest who judges ?
 The hearth and the altar before thee bow,
 The grace that thou grantest who grudges ?
 Thou noddest ; the will that thou willest is thine,
 Thy vote with no voter thou sharest ;
 The throne is all thine, and the sceptre divine,
 And thy guilt, when thou sinnest, thou bearest.

King. Guilt lie on those that hate me ! but your prayers
 Harmless I may not hear ; and to reject them
 Were harsh. To do, and not to do alike
 Perplex me ; on the edge of choice I tremble.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Chorus. Him worship who sitteth a watchman in Heaven,
 And looks on this life of our labour ;

Nor looketh in vain, when the wretched is driven
From the gate of his pitiless neighbour.

On our knees when we fall, and for mercy we call,
If his right thou deny to the stranger,
Jove shall look on thy home, from his thunder dome,
Sternly wrathful, the suppliants' avenger.

King. But if Ægyptus' sons shall claim you, pleading
Their country's laws, and their near kinship, who
Shall dare to stand respondent? You must plead
Your native laws, so the laws plead for you,
And speak you free from who would force your love.

STROPHE III.

Chorus. Ah ne'er to the rough-handed youth let me yield,
But rather alone, 'neath the wide starry field,
Let me wander, an outcast, a stranger!
The ill-sorted yoke I abhor: and do thou,
With Justice to second thee, judge for me now,
And fear Him above, the Avenger!

King. Not I shall judge: it is no easy judgment.
What I have said, I said. Without the people
I cannot do this thing; ³¹ being absolute king,
I would not. Justly, if mischance shall follow,
The popular tongue will blame the ruler, who,
To save the stranger, ruined his own flock.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Chorus. Where kindred with kindred contendeth in war,
Jove looks on the strife, and decides from afar,
Where he holdeth the scales even-handed; *
O why wilt thou doubt to declare for the right?
He blesseth the good, but in anger will smite,
Where the sons of the wicked are banded.

King. To advise for you in such confounding depths,
My soul should be a diver, to plunge down
Far in the pool profound with seeing eye,
And feel no dizziness. 'Tis no light matter
Here to unite your safety and the state's.
If that your kindred claim you as their right,
And we withstand, a bloody strife ensues.
If from these altars of the gods we tear you,
Your chosen refuge, we shall surely bring

* See Iliad viii. 69, and other passages, describing the "golden scales of Jove," in which the fates of men are weighed.

The Suppliants

The all-destroying god, the stern Alastor,*
 To house with us, whom not the dead in Hades
 Can flee. Is here no cause to ponder well?

STROPHE I.

Chorus. Ponder well ;
 With thee to dwell,
 A righteous-minded host receive us !
 Weary-worn,
 Exiles lorn,
 From the godless men that grieve us
 Save to-day ;
 Nor cast-a-way
 Homeless, houseless, hopeless leave us !

ANTISTROPHE I.

 Shall rash assaulters
 From these altars
 Rudely drag the friendless stranger ?
 Thou art king,
 'Neath thy wing
 Cowers in vain the weak from danger ?
 Thy terror show
 To our fierce foe,
 Fear, O fear our High Avenger !

STROPHE II.

 Where they see
 The gods and thee,
 Shall their lawless will not falter ?
 Shall they tear
 My floating hair,
 As a horse dragged by the halter ?
 Wilt thou bear
 Him to tear
 My frontlets fair,
 My linen robes—the bold assaulter ?

ANTISTROPHE II.

 One the danger,
 If the stranger
 Thou reject, or welcome wisely :
 For thee and thine
 To Mars a fine

* See the Agamemnon, Note 94.

Thou shalt pay the same precisely :

From Egypt far

Fearing war,

Thou shalt mar

Thy peace with mighty Jove, not wisely.

King. Both ways I'm marred. Even here my wits are stranded.

With these or those harsh war to make, strong Force

Compels my will. Nailed am I like a vessel

Screwed to the dock, beneath the shipwright's tool.

Which way I turn is woe. A plundered house

By grace of possessory Jove³² may freight

New ships with bales that far outweigh the loss ;

And a rash tongue that overshoots the mark

With barbéd phrase that harshly frets the heart,

With one smooth word, may charm the offence away.

But ere the sluice of kindred blood be opened,

With vows and victims we must pray the gods

Importunate, if perchance such fateful harm

They may avert. Myself were little wise

To mingle in this strife : of such a war

Most ignorant is most blest : but may the gods

Deceive my fears, and crown your hopes with blessing !

Chorus. Now hear the end of my respectful prayers.

King. I hear. Speak on. Thy words shall not escape me.

Chorus. Thou see'st this sash, this zone my stole begirding.

King. Fit garniture of women. Yes ; I see it.

Chorus. This zone well-used may serve us well.

King.

How so ?

Chorus. If thou refuse to pledge our safety, then—

King. Thy zone shall pledge it how ?

Chorus.

Thou shalt behold

These ancient altars with new tablets hung.

King. Thou speak'st in riddles. Explain.

Chorus.

These gods shall see me

Here hanging from their shrines.

King.

Hush, maiden ! Hush !

Thy words pierce through my marrow !

Chorus.

Thou hast heard

No blind enigma now. I gave it eyes.

King. Alas ! with vast environment of ills

I'm hedged all round. Misfortune, like a sea,

Comes rushing in : the deep unfathomed flood

I fear to cross, and find no harbour nigh.

Thy prayer if I refuse, black horror rises
 Before me, that no highest-pointed aim
 May overshoot. If posted fore these walls
 I give thy kindred battle, I shall be
 Amerced with bitter loss, who reckless dared
 For woman's sake to incarnadine the plain
 With brave men's blood. Yet I perforce must fear
 The wrath of suppliant Jove, than which no terror
 Awes human hearts more strongly. Take these branches,
 Thou aged father of these maids, and place them
 On other altars of the native gods,
 Where they may speak, true heralds of thy mission,
 To all the citizens: and, mark me, keep
 My words within thy breast: for still the people
 To spy a fault in whoso bears authority
 Have a most subtle sight. Trust your good cause.
 Thy pitiful tale may move their righteous ire
 Against your haughty-hearted persecutors,
 And 'neath their wings they'll shield you. The afflicted
 Plead for themselves: their natural due is kindness.

Danaus. Your worth we know to prize, and at their weight
 Our high protector's friendly words we value.
 But send, we pray, attendant guides to show us
 The pillar-compassed seats divine,⁸³ the altars
 That stand before their temples, who protect
 This city and this land, and to insure
 Our safety mid the people: for our coming
 (Being strangers from the distant Nile, and not
 Like you that drink the stream of Inachus
 In features or in bearing) might seem strange.
 Too bold an air might rouse suspicion; men
 Oft-times have slain their best friends unawares.

King [*to the Attendants*]. See him escorted well! conduct him
 hence

To the altars of the city, to the shrines
 Of the protecting gods, wasting no speech
 On whom you meet. Attend the suppliant stranger!

[*Exeunt Attendants with DANAUS.*]

Chorus. These words to him: and, with his sails well trimmed,
 Fair be his voyage! But I, what shall I do,
 My anchor where?

King. Here leave these boughs that prove
 Thy sorrows.

Chorus. Here at thy rever'd command

I leave them.

King. This ample wood shall shade thee ; wait thou here !

Chorus. No sacred grove is this : how should it shield me ?

King. We will not yield thee to the vultures' claws.

Chorus. But worse than vultures, worse than dragons threat us.

King. Gently. To fair words give a fair reply.

Chorus. I'm terror-struck. Small marvel that I fret.

King. Fear should be far, when I the king am near.*

Chorus. With kind words cheer me, and kind actions too.

King. Thy father will return anon ; meanwhile

I go to call the assembly of the people,³⁴

And in thy favour move them, if I can.

Thy father, too, I'll aptly train, how he

Should woo their favour. Wait ye here, and pray

The native gods to crown your heart's desire.

I go to speed the business ; may Persuasion

And Chance, with happy issue pregnant, guide me !

CHORAL HYMN.

STROPHE I.

King of all kings, high-blest above

Each blest celestial nature,

Strength of the strong, all-glorious Jove,

All crowning Consummator !³⁵

Hear thou our prayer : the proud confound ;

With hate pursue the hateful,

And plunge in purpling pools profound

The black-bench'd bark, the fateful !

ANTISTROPHE I.

Our ancient line from thee we trace

Our root divinely planted ;

Look on these sisters with the grace

To that loved maid once granted,

Our mother Io ; and renew

Sweet memory in the daughters

Of her thy gentle touch who knew

By Nile's deep-rolling waters.

STROPHE II.

Here, even here, where 'mid the browsing kine,

My Argive mother fed her eye divine,

With rich mead's flowery store,

* See PALEO