NOTES TO THE PERSIANS

Note 1 (p. 301). "Forth they went with arrow and bow."

The bow was as characteristic of Persian as the spear of Hellenic warfare; and, accordingly, they are contrasted below, p. 305. The Persian Darics bore the figure of an archer. DICT. ANTIQ. *voci* DARIC. "The army of Xerxes, generally," says GROTE, "was armed with missile weapons, and light shields, or no shield at all; not properly equipped either for fighting in regular order, or for resisting the line of spears and shields which the Grecian heavy-armed infantry brought to bear upon them." —Vol. V. p. 43. This was seen with striking evidence when an engagement took place on confined ground as at Thermopylæ, Do. p. 117.

Note 2 (p. 302). ". . . golden Sardes."

So Creon, in the Antigone of Sophocles, in wrathful suspicion that Tiresias is in conspiracy to prophesy against him for filthy lucre, is made to exclaim (v. 1037)—

> "Traffic as ye will!
> In the amber-ore that opulent Sardes sends,
> And Indian gold."

So also, "golden Babylon," below; which will recall to the Christian reader the famous words, "Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased, the golden city ceased!"—Isaiah xiv. 4. In the same way XERXES is called "the god-like son of a golden race," in the choral hymn which immediately follows the present introductory chaunt. SOUTHEY, the most learned of our poets, has not forgotten this orientalism when he says—

> "Hark! at the golden palaces
> The Brahmin strikes the hour."—CURSE OF KEHAMA V.

where see the note.

Note 3 (p. 302). "The well-poised dart."

The Mysians had on their heads a peculiar sort of helmet belonging to the country, small shields, and javelins burnt at the point.—HERODOT. VII. 74.—STAN.

Note 4 (p. 302). "The Asian tribes that wear the sword."

The *μάχαιρα* here is the *acinaces*, or short scimitar, of which the fashion may be seen in the *Dict. Antiq.* under that word.

Note 5 (p. 303). "Shepherd of many sheep."

A phraseology inherited from the times when "Mesha, king of Moab, was a *sheepmaster*, and rendered unto the king of Israel 100,000 lambs, and 100,000 rams, with the wool."—2 Kings iii. 4. So Agamemnon, in Homer (Od. III. 156), is called *ποιμήν λάων*—the shepherd of the people. See above, p. 413, Note 48.

Note 6 (p. 304). "But, when the gods deceive."

The sudden change of tone here from unlimited confidence in the strength of their own armament, to a pious doubt arising from the consideration that the gods often disappoint "the best laid schemes of men and mice," and that "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong"; this is at once extremely characteristic of ancient Hellenic piety (see the Note on *ὕβρις*, p. 348), and serves here the dramatic purpose of making the over-weening pride of Xerxes, by contrast, appear more sinful. With regard to the style of religious conception here, and the general doctrine that the gods deceive mortal men, especially at moments of extraordinary prosperity and on the point of some sudden reversal, the student will read *Grote's* Greece, Vol. V. p. 13.

Note 7 (p. 306).

"Let us fall down before her with humble prostration."

This very humble way of expressing respect was quite oriental, and altogether abhorrent to the feelings of the erect Greek, boasting of his liberty. The reader of history may call to mind how this was one of the points of oriental court state, the mooting of which in his later years caused a breach between Alexander the Great and his captains. For references, see STAN.

Note 8 (p. 307).

"And dipped my hands in the fair-flowing fount."

This purification, as STAN. has noted, was customary among the ancients, after an ill-omened dream. He quotes ARISTOPHANES, Ran. 1338.

> "But come, attendants, light a lamp
> And take a pail, and from the stream
> Water bring, and warm it well,
> To wash away the god-sent dream"—

and other passages.

Note 9 (p. 307). "I saw an eagle flying to the altar."

The sight in reality, or in vision, of one bird plucking another under various modifications, was familiar to the ancient divination, as the natural expression of conquest and subjugation. So in the Odyssey shortly before the opening of the catastrophe—

> "Thus as he spake, on his right hand a bird of omen flew,
> A hawk, Apollo's messenger swift, and held within its claws
> A pigeon, which it rudely plucked, and scattered on the ground
> Its feathery plumes, between the skies and where Telemachus stood."—XV. 525.

In such matters, the ancients did not strain after originality, as a modern would do, but held closely by the most natural, obvious, and most significant types.

Note 10 (p. 308).

"Where, O friends, is famous Athens on the broad face of the earth?"

Here commences a series of questions with regard to Attic geography, topography, and statistics, which to the most inexperienced reader will appear to come in here not in the most natural way. That the mother of Xerxes should have actually been so ignorant of the state of Athens, as she is here dramatically represented, seems scarcely supposable. But that she

and the mighty persons of the East generally were grossly ignorant of, and greatly underrated the resources of the small state that was rising in the West, is plain, both from the general habit of the oriental mind, and from what Herodotus (V. 105, quoted by PAL.) narrates of Darius, that, when he heard of the burning of Sardes by the Athenians and the Ionians, he asked "*who the Athenians were.*" On this foundation, a dramatic poet, willing "to pay a pleasant compliment to Athenian vanity" (BUCK.), might well erect such a series of interrogatories as we have in the text, though it may be doubted whether he has done it with that tact which a more perfect master of the dramatic art—Shakespere, for instance—would have displayed. There are not a few other passages in the Greek drama where this formal style of questioning *ab ovo* assumes somewhat of a ludicrous aspect.

Note 11 (p. 309).

"Slaves are they to no man living, subject to no earthly name."

As in the quickness of their spirits, the sharpness of their wits, and their love of glory, so particularly in the forward boast of freedom, the ancient Hellenes were very like the modern French. 'Twere a curious parallel to carry out; and that other one also, which would prove even more fertile in curious results, between the ancient Romans and the modern English.

Note 12 (p. 310).

"The sundered planks, and the drifted dead."

I do not think there can be any doubt as to the meaning of the original here, *πλαγκτοῖς ἓν διπλάκεσσιν—among the wandering planks*—δίπλαξ can mean nothing but a double or very strong *plank*, *plate*, or (if applied to a dress, as in HOMER) *fold*. There is no need of supposing any "clinging to the planks," as LIN., following BUTLER, does. Nevertheless, I have given, likewise, in my translation, the full force of BLOM.'s idea that δίπλαξ means the *ebb and flow of the sea*. This, indeed, lies already in φέρεσθαι. CONZ. agrees with my version. "*Wie treiben stürmend umher sie die Planken!*"

Note 13 (p. 311). ". . . There Amestris."

PAL. asserts confidently that the three following verses are corrupt. One of them sins against Porson's canon of the Cretic ending, and (what is of much more consequence) connects the name of Ariomardus with Sardes, which we found above (p. 302), connected with Thebes. For the sake of consistency, I have taken PORSON'S hint, and introduced Metragathus here, from v. 43.

Note 14 (p. 312). ". . . Pallas saves her city."

The apportionment of the last clause of this, and the whole of the following lines, I give according to WELL. and PAL., which BUCK. also approves in his note. The translation, in such a case, is its own best vindication.

Note 15 (p. 312). "There came a Greek."

The sending of this person was a device of Themistocles, to hasten on a battle, and keep the Greeks from quarrelling amongst themselves. The person sent was Sicinnus his slave, "seemingly an Asiatic Greek, who understood Persian, and had perhaps been sold during the late Ionic revolt,

but whose superior qualities are marked by the fact, that he had the care and teaching of the children of his master."—GROTE.

Note 16 (p. 312). "And darkness filled the temple of the sky."

The word *τέμενος*, says Passow, in the post-Homeric writers of the classical age was used almost exclusively in reference to sacred, or, as we should say, consecrated property. I do not think, therefore, that LIN. does full justice to this word when he translates it merely "the *region of the air*"; as little can I be content with CONZ.'s "*Hallen.*" DROYSEN preserves the religious association to well-instructed readers, by using the word *Hain*; but surely *temple* is better in the present connection and to a modern ear. Lucretius (Lib. I. near the end) has "*Coeli tonitralia templa.*"

Note 17 (p. 314). ". . . dance-loving Pan."

PAN, "the simple shepherd's awe-inspiring god" (Wordsworth, Exc. IV.), was in the mind of the Athenians intimately associated with the glory of the Persian wars, and regarded as one of their chief patrons at Marathon (Herod. VI. 105). This god was the natural patron of all wild and solitary places, such as are seldom disturbed by any human foot save that of the Arcadian shepherds, whose imagination first produced this half-solemn half-freakish creation; and in this view no place could be more appropriate to him than "the barren and rocky Psyttaleia" (STRABO, 395). That he was actually worshipped there, we have, besides the present passage of our poet, the express testimony of Pausanias (I. 36)—"What are called Panic terrors were ascribed to Pan; for loud noises whose cause could not be easily traced were not unfrequently heard in mountainous regions; and the gloom and loneliness of forests and mountains fill the mind with a secret horror, and dispose it to superstitious apprehensions."—KEIGHTLEY.

Note 18 (p. 315). ". . . slowly with much hard toil."

The verse in the original—

Θρῄκην περάσαντες μόγις πολλῷ πονῳ

—is remarkable for being divided into two equal halves, in violation of the common cæsuras, the laws of which Porson has pointed out so curiously. Whether there was a special cause for this in the present case—the wish, namely, on the part of the poet to make a harsh line suit a harsh subject, I shall not assert, as the line does not fall particularly harsh on my ear; I have at least done something, by the help of rough consonants and monosyllables, to make my English line come up to the great metrician's idea of the Greek.

Note 19 (p. 317). "By the mute sea-monsters riven."

It needs hardly be mentioned here that the restless state of the dead body in death by drowning, implied, according to the sensuous metaphysics of the vulgar Greeks, an equally restless condition of the soul in Hades. Hence the point of Achilles' wrath against Lycaon, in Iliad XXI. 122—

> "Go, and with the fishes lay thee; they shall lick thy bloody wound
> With a greedy unconcern; thy mother shall not weep for thee
> There, nor dew thy bier with sorrow; but Scamander's whirling flood
> To the bosom deep shall bear thee of the broad and briny sea."

And, in the same book, of another victim of the same inexorable wrath it is said—

"To the eels and to the fishes, occupation meet he gave,
As they gnawed his flesh, and nicely picked the fat from off his bones."—v. 203.

Note 20 (p. 318). "Of the pale green olive, ever leafy-fair."

I think it right so to translate, because such is actually the colour of the olive; but I must state, at the same time, that the word in the original is *ξανθῆς*, which has been imitated by Virgil, Æn. V. 309. How the same word should mean both *yellow* and *green*, I cannot understand. No doubt the light green of many trees, when the leafage first comes out in spring, has a yellowish appearance; but the ever-green olive is always *γλαυκός*, as Sophocles has it (O. C. 701). What we call *olive-coloured* is a mixture of green and yellow; does this come from the colour of the fruit or the oil?

Note 21 (p. 318). "The god Darius."

The word *δαίμονα* here used is that by which both Homer and Æschylus designate the highest celestial beings, from which practice we see what an easy transition there was in the minds of the early Christians to the deification of the martyrs, and the canonization of the saints. Compare Æn. V. v. 47. There is nothing in Popery which is not seated in the deepest roots of human nature.

Note 22 (p. 319). "O Aïdóneus, thy charge release."

i.e. Pluto. The reader must not be surprised to see Æschylus putting the names of Greek gods and Greek feelings and ideas generally into the mouths of Persian characters. His excuse lies partly in the fact, that these divine powers and human feelings, though in a Greek form, belonged to the universal heart of man, and partly in the extreme nationality of the old Hellenic culture, which was not apt to go abroad with curiously inquiring eyes into the regions of the barbarian. A national poet, moreover, addressing the masses, must beware of being too learned. Shakespere, in his foreign dramas, though less erudite, is much more effective than Southey in his Epics.

Note 23 (p. 319). "Come, dread lord!"

The word in the original here is *βαλὴν*, a Phœnician word, the same as *Baal* and *Belus*, meaning *lord*.—See Gesenius, *voce Baal*. This root appears significantly in some Carthaginian names, as HANNIBAL, HASDRUBAL, etc.

Note 24 (p. 319). "The disc of thy regal tiara showing."

This word belongs as characteristically to the ancient kings of the East, in respect of their head-gear, as the *triregno* or triple crown, in modern language, belongs to the Pope, and the iron crown to the sovereigns of Lombardy. Accordingly we find Virgil giving it to Priam—

"Sceptrumque sacerque tiaras."—ÆNEID VII. 247.

See further, Dr. Smith's Dict. Antiq. *in voce tiara*, and also *φάλαρον*, which I translate *disc*. As for the *sandals*, the reader will observe that *saffron* is a colour, like *purple*, peculiarly regal and luxurious—*στολίδα κροκόεσσαν ἀνεῖσα τρυφᾶς*.—Eurip. Phæniss. 1491.—*Matth.*

Note 25 (p. 320). "Why should'st thou die, and leave the land,
Thou master of the mighty hand?
Why should thy son with foolish venture
Shake thy sure Empire to its centre?"

Here I may say with BUCK., "I have given the best sense I can to the text, but nothing is here certain but the uncertainty of the reading." For a translator, *δι ἄνοιαν*, proposed by BLOM., is convenient enough.

Note 26 (p. 320). "Triremes no more?"

ναες ἄναες ἄναες—A phraseology of which we have found many instances, and of which the Greeks are very fond. So in Homer, before the fight between Ulysses and Irus, one of the spectators foreseeing the discomfiture of the latter, says—

Ἦ τάχα Ἶρος ἄΙρος ἐπίσπαστον κακον ἕξει
ὀιην ἐκ ρακέων ὁ γέρων ἐπιγουνίδα φαινει.

"Irus soon shall be no Irus, crushed by such dire weight of woes,
Self-incurred; beneath his tatters what a thigh the old man shows!'

Note 27 (p. 322).

"But when man to run is eager, swift is the god to add a spur."

This is sound morality and orthodox theology, even at the present hour. *Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat.* Observe here how high Æschylus rises in moral tone above Herodotus, who, in the style that offends us so much in Homer, represents Xerxes, after yielding to the sensible advice of his father's counsellor Artabanus, as urged on to his ruin by a god-sent vision thrice repeated (VII. 12–18). The whole expedition, according to the historian, is as much a matter of divine planning as the death of Hector by Athena's cruel deceit in Iliad XXII. 299. Even Artabanus is carried along by the stream of evil counsel, confessing that *δαιμονίη τις γίνεται ὁρμὴ, there is an impulse from the gods* in the matter which a man may not resist.—See GROTE.

Note 28 (p. 323).

"Converse with the sons of folly taught thy eager son to err."

The original word for *eager* here is the same as that translated above *impetuous—θούριος*, and had a peculiar significancy to a Greek ear, as being that epithet by which Mars is constantly designated in the Iliad; and this god, as the readers of that poem well know, signifies only the wild, unreasoning hurricane power of battle, as distinguished from the calmly-calculated, surely-guided hostility of the wise Athena. With regard to the matter of fact asserted in this line, it is literally true that the son of Darius was not of himself originally much inclined to the Greek expedition (*ἐπὶ μεν τὴν Ἑλλάδα ὀυδαμῶς πρόθυμος ἦν κατ ἀρχὰς στρατέυεσθαι.*—Herod. VII. 5), but, like all weaklings in high places, was wrought upon by others; in this case, specially, by his cousin Mardonius, according to the account of Herodotus.—See GROTE, Vol. V. p. 4.

Note 29 (p. 323). "... First the Mede was king
Of the vast host of people."

Two peculiarities in this enumeration of the early Persian kings will strike the reader. *First*, Two of the Median kings—ASTYAGES and CYAXARES, according to the common account, are named before CYRUS the Great, who, as being the first native Persian sovereign, is commonly regarded as the founder of the later Persian empire. *Second*, Between MARDUS (commonly called SMERDIS), and Darius, the father of Xerxes, two intermediate names—contrary to common account—are introduced. I do not believe our historical materials are such as entitle us curiously to scrutinize these matters.

Note 30 (p. 328). "A Maryandine wailer."

The *Maryandini* were a Bithynian people, near the Greek city of Heraclea, Xenoph. Anab. VI. 2; Strabo XII. p. 542. The peasants in that quarter were famous for singing a rustic wail, which is alluded to in the text. See POLLUX, Lib. iv. *περὶ ᾀσμάτων ἐθνικῶν.* The *Mysians* mentioned, p. 331, below, were their next door neighbours; and the Phrygians generally, who in a large sense include the Mysians and Bithynians, were famous for their violent and passionate music, displayed principally in the worship of Cybele. So the Phrygian in Euripides (Orest. 1384) is introduced wailing *ἁρμάτειον μέλος βαρβαρῳ βοᾷ.* The critics who have considered this last scene of the cantata ridiculous, have not attended either to human nature or to the customs of the Persians, as STAN. quotes them from HEROD. ix. 24, and CURTIUS iii. 12.

Note 31 (p. 328).

Leader of the Chorus. I have here adopted LIN.'s view, that the Leader of the Chorus here addresses the whole body; and, for the sake of symmetry, have repeated the couplet in the Antistrophe. No violence is thus done to the meaning of *ἐκπεύθου.* Another way is, with PAL., to put the line into the mouth of Xerxes—"*Cry out and ask me!*"

Note 32 (p. 331). "Oaring with the oars of woe!"

I have carefully retained the original phraseology here, as being characteristic of the Greek tragedians, perhaps of the maritime propensities of the Athenians. See in SEVEN AGAINST THEBES, p. 286 above, and CHŒOPHORÆ, p. 112, Strophe VII. Euripides, in Iphig. Aul. 131, applies the same verb to the lower extremities, making Agamemnon say to his old servant *ερέσσον σὸν πόδα*—as if one of our jolly tars should say in his pleasant slang, "*Come along, my boy, put the oars to your old hull, and move off!*"

Note 33 (p. 332). "Sons of Susa, with delicate feet."

I should be most happy for the sake of Æschylus, and my translation, to think there was nothing in the *ἀβροβάται* of this passage but the natural expression of grief so simply given in the scriptural narrative, 1 Kings xxi. 27; and in that stanza of one of Mr. Tennyson's most beautiful poems—

"Full knee-deep lies the wintry snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing;

Toll ye the church bell sad and slow,
And *tread softly*, and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying."

But there is more in ἁβρός than mere *gentleness*, and to the Greek ear it would no doubt speak of the general luxuriance and effeminacy of the Persian manners. To put such an allusion into the mouth of Xerxes on the present occasion is no doubt in the worst possible taste; but the Greeks were too intensely national in their feelings to take a curious account of such matters.

LIST OF EDITIONS
COMMENTARIES AND TRANSLATIONS
USED BY THE TRANSLATOR

Editions of the whole Plays.

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VICTORIUS: ex officina Stephani; 1557.
FOULIS: Glasguæ; 1746.
SCHÜTZ: 2 vols. Oxon.; 1810.
BUTLER: Cantab.; 1809–16, ex editione Stanleii; 4 vols. 4to.
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SCHOLEFIELD: Cantab.; 1828.
PALEY: Cantab.; 1844–47. 2 vols. 8vo.

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THE AGAMEMNON.

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KENNEDY (with an English version, and Voss, German one). Dublin; 1829.
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Commentaries, Dissertations, Monograms, &c.

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T. A. BUCKLEY: English prose. London: 1849.

WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT: Agamemnon metrisch übersetzt. Leipzig; 1816.

SYMMONS: the Agamemnon in English verse. London; 1824.
HARFORD: „ „ „ 1831.
TH. MEDWYN: „ „ „ 1832.
SEWELL: „ „ „ 1846.

SCHOEMANN: die Eumeniden, German verse. Greifswald; 1845.
TH. MEDWYN: the Prometheus, in English verse. London; 1832.
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SWAYNE: ,, ,, London; 1846.
C. P. CONZ: die Perser, and die Sieben vor Tüebae. Tübingen; 1817.

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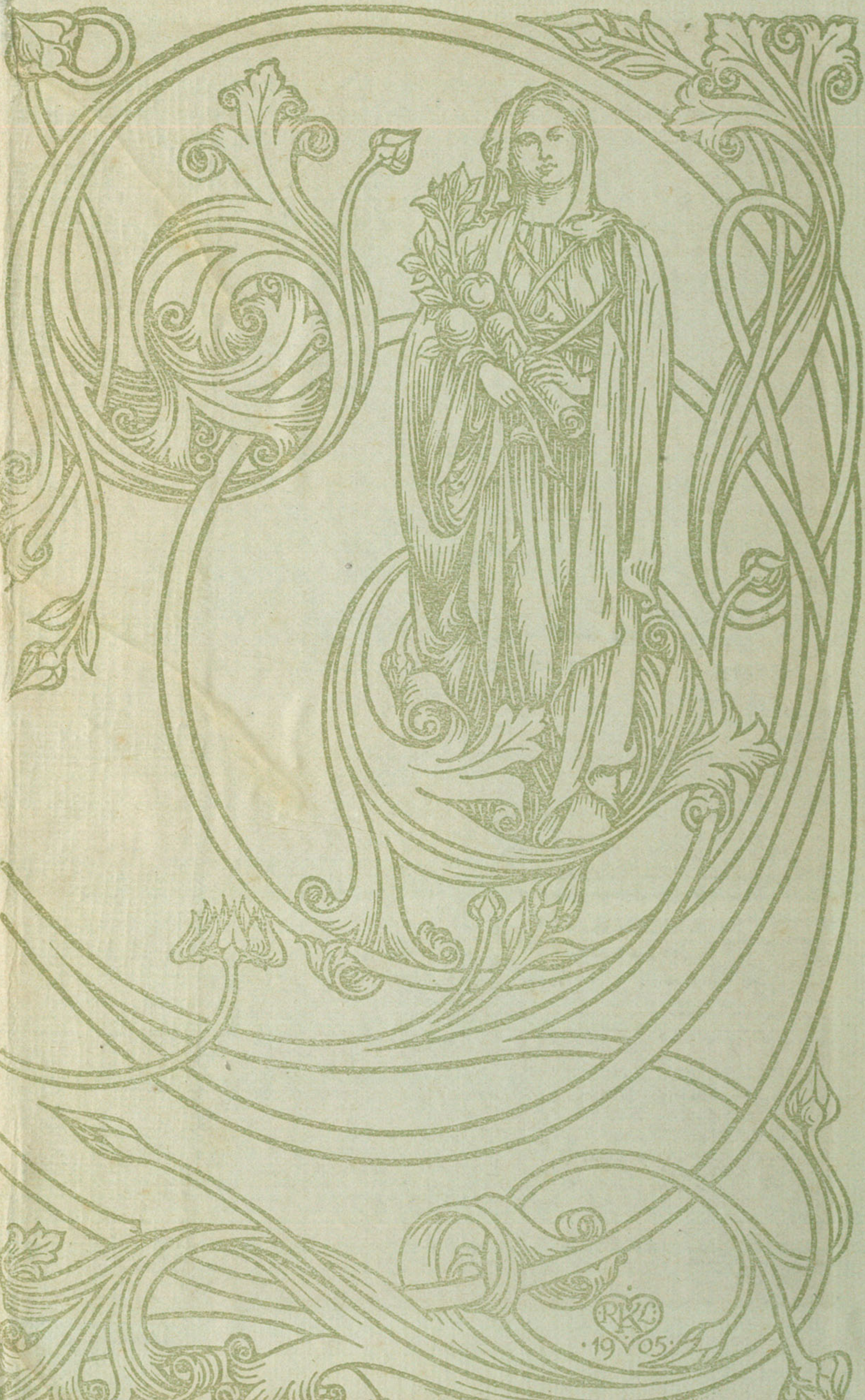
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