

AESCHYLUS , PLUMPTRE E. H.

**ÆSCHYLOS
TRAGEDIES AND
FRAGMENTS**

Aeschylus

Æschylos Tragedies and Fragments

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Æschylos Tragedies and Fragments

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The reception accorded to the pocket edition of Dean Plumptre's "Dante" has encouraged the publishers to issue in the same format the Dean's masterly translation of the Tragedies of Æschylos.

In preparing the present issue they have followed the carefully revised text of the second edition, and have included the scholarly and suggestive annotations with which the Dean invariably delighted to enrich his work as a translator.

The seven Plays, which are all that remain of the seventy or eighty with which Æschylos is credited, are presented in their chronological order. Passages in which the reading or the rendering is more or less conjectural, and in which, accordingly, the aid of the commentator is advisable, are marked by an asterisk; and passages which are regarded as spurious by editors of authority have been placed in brackets.

In translating the Choral Odes the Dean used such unrhymed metres – observing the strophic and antistrophic arrangement – as seemed to him most analogous in their general rhythmical effect to those of the original. He added in an appendix, however, for the sake of those who preferred the rhymed form with which they were familiar, a rhymed version of the chief Odes of the Oresteian trilogy. Those in the other dramas did not appear to him to be of equal interest, or to lend themselves with equal facility to a like attempt. The Greek text on which the translation is based is, for the most part, that of Mr. Paley's edition of 1861.

A translation was also given of the Fragments which have survived the wreck of the lost plays, so that the work contains all that has been left to us associated with the name of Æschylos.

In the present edition a chronological outline has been substituted for the biographical sketch of the poet, who from his daring enlargement of the scope of the drama, the magnificence of his spectacular effects and the splendour of his genius, was rightly honoured as "the Father of Tragedy."

CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF ÆSCHYLOS

B.C.	
527	Peisistratos died.
525	Birth at Eleusis, in Attica, of Æschylos, son of Euphorion.
510	Expulsion of the Peisistratidæ. Democratic constitution of Cleisthenes.
	Approximate date of incident in the legend that Æschylos was set to watch grapes as they were ripening for the vintage, and fell asleep; and lo! as he slept Dionysos appeared to him and bade him give himself to write tragedies for the great festival of the god. And when he awoke, he found himself invested with new powers of thought and utterance, and the work was as easy to him as if he had been trained to it for many years (Pausan, <i>Att.</i> i. 21, § 3). ¹
500	Birth of Anaxagoras.
499	Æschylos exhibited his first tragedy, in unsuccessful competition with Pratinas and Chærilos.
	The wooden scaffolding broke beneath the crowd of spectators, and the accident led the Athenians to build their first stone theatre for the Dionysiac festivals.
	Partly out of annoyance at his defeat, it is said, and partly in a spirit of adventure, Æschylos sailed for Sicily.
497	Death of Pythagoras (?).
495	Birth of Sophocles at Colonus.
491	Æschylos at Athens.
490	The Battle of Marathon. Æschylos and his brothers, Kynægeiros and Ameinias, so distinguished themselves, that the Athenians ordered their heroic deeds to be commemorated in a picture.
	Death of Theognis (?).
488	Prize awarded to Simonides for an elegy on Marathon. Æschylos, piqued, it is said, at his failure in the competition, again departed to Sicily.
485	Xerxes succeeded Dareios.
484	Æschylos won, in a dramatic contest with Pratinas, Chærilos, and Phrynichos, the first of a series of thirteen successes.
	Birth of Herodotos.
480	Athens burnt by Xerxes.
	Æschylos fought at Artemisium and Salamis. At Salamis his brother Ameinias lost his hand, and was awarded the prize of valour.
	Sophocles led the Chorus of Victory.
	Birth of Euripides.
479	Æschylos at the Battle of Platea.
477	Commencement of Athenian supremacy.
473	Æschylos carried off the first prize with <i>The Persians</i> (the first of the extant plays), which belonged to a tetralogy that included two tragedies, <i>Phineus</i> and <i>Glaukos</i> , and a satyric drama, <i>Prometheus the Fire-stealer</i> .
	<i>The Persians</i> has the interest of being a contemporary record of the great sea-fight at Salamis by an eye-witness.
471	Æschylos appears to have produced this year his next tetralogy, of which <i>The Seven against Thebes</i> survives.
	The play was directed against the policy of aiming at the supremacy of Athens by attacking other Greek States, and, in brief, maintained the policy of Aristides as against that of Themistocles.
	Birth of Thucydides.
468	Sophocles gained his first victory in tragedy with his <i>Triptolemos</i> ; Æschylos defeated.
	Æschylos charged with impiety, on the ground that he had profaned the Mysteries by introducing on the stage rites known only to the initiated; tried and acquitted; departure for Syracuse.
467	Æschylos at the court of Hieron at Syracuse, where he is said to have composed dramas on local legends, such as <i>The Women of Ætna</i> .
	Death of Simonides.
461	Ostracism of Kimon; ascendancy of Pericles.
460-59	Probable date of <i>The Suppliants</i> , if the play be connected with the alliance between Argos and Athens (B.C. 461), and the war with the Persian forces in Egypt, upon which the Athenians had entered as allies of the Libyan Prince Inaros. (B.C. 460.)
	The date of <i>Prometheus Bound</i> has been referred to B.C. 470 on the strength of a description of Ætna (vv. 370-380), which is supposed to be a reference to the eruption of B.C. 477. Internal evidence, however, seems to warrant the view that <i>The Suppliants</i> and the <i>Prometheus Bound</i> were separated by only a brief interval of time.
458	Æschylos in Athens. He found new men and new methods; institutions, held most sacred as the safeguard of Athenian religion, were being criticised and attacked; the Court of Areiopagos was threatened with abolition under pretence of reform.
	Production of the Oresteian Trilogy (or, rather, tetralogy, as in addition to the <i>Agamemnon</i> , the <i>Libation-powers</i> , and the <i>Eumenides</i> , there was a satyric drama, <i>Proteus</i>).
	This trilogy was a conservative protest, religious, social, and political, which culminated in the assertion of the divine authority of the Areiopagos.
	Popular feeling was once more excited against the poet, who left Athens never to return, and settled at Gela, in Sicily, under the patronage of Hieron.
456	Death of Æschylos, aged 69.
	An oracle foretold that he was to die by a blow from heaven, and according to the legend, an eagle, mistaking the poet's head for a stone as he sat writing, dropped a tortoise on it to break the shell.
	He was buried at Gela, and his epitaph, ascribed to himself, ran: "Beneath this stone lies Æschylos, son of Euphorion. At fertile Gela he died. Marathon can tell of his tested manhood, and the Persians who there felt his mettle."
	He is said to have produced between seventy and eighty plays, of which only seven survive.

Примечание 1¹

¹ *Cf.*, the legend of Caedmon, “the Father of English Song.”

THE PERSIANS ²

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Atossa
Ghost of Dareios
Messenger
Xerxes
Chorus of Persian Elders

ARGUMENT. – *When Xerxes came to the throne of Persia, remembering how his father Dareios had sought to subdue the land of the Hellenes, and seeking to avenge the defeat of Datis and Artaphernes on the field of Marathon, he gathered together a mighty host of all nations under his dominion, and led them against Hellas. And at first he prospered and prevailed, crossed the Hellespont, and defeated the Spartans at Thermopylæ, and took the city of Athens, from which the greater part of its citizens had fled. But at last he and his armament met with utter overthrow at Salamis. Meanwhile Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, with her handmaids and the elders of the Persians, waited anxiously at Susa, where was the palace of the great king, for tidings of her son.*

THE PERSIANS

Scene. – *Susa, in front of the palace of Xerxes, the tomb*

of Dareios occupying the position of the thymele

Enter Chorus of Persian Elders

We the title bear of Faithful,³

² *Note.*— Within two years after the battle of Salamis, the feeling of natural exultation was met by Phrynichos in a tragedy bearing the title of *The Phœnikians*, and having for its subject the defeat of Xerxes. As he had come under the displeasure of the Athenian *demos* for having brought on the stage the sufferings of their Ionian kinsmen in his *Capture of Miletos*, he was apparently anxious to regain his popularity by a “sensation” drama of another kind; and his success seems to have prompted Æschylos to a like attempt five years later, B.C. 473. The Tetralogy to which the play belonged, and which gained the first prize on its representation, included the two tragedies (unconnected in subject) of *Phineus* and *Glaucos*, and the satyric drama of *Prometheus the Fire-stealer*. The play has, therefore, the interest of being strictly a contemporary narrative of the battle of Salamis and its immediate consequences, by one who may himself have been present at it, and whose brother Ameinias (Herod, viii. 93) distinguished himself in it by a special act of heroism. As such, making all allowance for the influence of dramatic exigencies, and the tendency to colour history so as to meet the tastes of patriotic Athenians, it may claim, where it differs from the story told by Herodotos, to be a more trustworthy record. And it has, we must remember, the interest of being the only extant drama of its class, the only tragedy the subject of which is not taken from the cycle of heroic myths, but from the national history of the time. Far below the Oresteian Trilogy as it may seem to us as a work of art, having more the character of a spectacle than a poem, it was, we may well believe, unusually successful at the time, and it is said to have been chosen by Hiero for reproduction in Syracuse after Æschylos had settled there under his patronage.

³ “The Faithful,” or “trusty,” seems to have been a special title of honour given to the veteran councillors of the king (Xenoph. *Anab.* i. 15), just as that of the “Immortals” was chosen for his body-guard (Herod, vii. 83).

Friends of Persians gone to Hellas,
Watchers left of treasure city,⁴
Gold-abounding, whom, as oldest,
Xerxes hath himself appointed,
He, the offspring of Dareios,
As the warders of his country.
And about our king's returning,
And our army's, gold-abounding,
Over-much, and boding evil,
Does my mind within me shudder
(For our whole force, Asia's offspring,
Now is gone), and for our young chief
Sorely frets: nor courier cometh,
Nor any horseman, bringing tidings
To the city of the Persians.
From Ecbatana departing,
Susa, or the Kissian fortress,⁵
Forth they sped upon their journey,
Some in ships, and some on horses,
Some on foot, still onward marching,
In their close array presenting
Squadrons duly armed for battle:
Then Armistres, Artaphernes,
Megabazes, and Astaspes,
Mighty leaders of the Persians,
Kings, and of the great King servants,⁶
March, the chiefs of mighty army.
Archers they and mounted horsemen.
Dread to look on, fierce in battle,
Artembares proud, on horseback,
And Masistres, and Imæos,
Archer famed, and Pharandakes,
And the charioteer Sosthanes.
Neilos mighty and prolific
Sent forth others, Susikanes,
Pegastagon, Egypt's offspring,
And the chief of sacred Memphis;
Great Arsames, Ariomardos,
Ruler of primeval Thebæ,
And the marsh-men,⁷ and the rowers,

⁴ Susa was pre-eminently the treasury of the Persian kings (Herod., v. 49; Strabo, xv. p. 731), their favourite residence in spring, as Ecbatana in Media was in summer and Babylon in winter.

⁵ Kissia was properly the name of the district in which Susa stood; but here, and in v. 123, it is treated as if it belonged to a separate city. Throughout the play there is, indeed, a lavish use of Persian barbaric names of persons and places, without a very minute regard to historical accuracy.

⁶ Here, as in Herodotus and Greek writers generally, the title, "the King," or "the great King," was enough. It could be understood only of the Persian. The latter name had been borne by the kings of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 28). A little later it passed into the fuller, more boastful form of "The King of kings."

⁷ The inhabitants of the Delta of the Nile, especially those of the marshy districts near the Heracleotic mouth, were famed as supplying the best and bravest soldiers of any part of Egypt. – Comp. Thucyd. i. 110.

Dread, and in their number countless.
And there follow crowds of Lydians,
Very delicate and stately,⁸
Who the people of the mainland
Rule throughout – whom Mitragathes
And brave Arkteus, kingly chieftains,
Led, from Sardis, gold-abounding,
Riding on their many chariots,
Three or four a-breast their horses,
Sight to look upon all dreadful.
And the men of sacred Tmôlos⁹
Rush to place the yoke of bondage
On the neck of conquered Hellas.
Mardon, Tharabis, spear-anvils,¹⁰
And the Mysians, javelin-darting,¹¹
Babylôn too, gold-abounding,
Sends a mingled cloud, swept onward,
Both the troops who man the vessels,
And the skilled and trustful bowmen;
And the race the sword that beareth,
Follows from each clime of Asia,
At the great King's dread commandment.
These, the bloom of Persia's greatness,
Now are gone forth to the battle;
And for these, their mother country,
Asia, mourns with mighty yearning;
Wives and mothers faint with trembling
Through the hours that slowly linger,
Counting each day as it passes.

Strophe I

The king's great host, destroying cities mighty,
Hath to the land beyond the sea passed over,
Crossing the straits of Athamantid Helle,¹²
On raft by ropes secured,

⁸ The epithet was applied probably by Æschylos to the Lydians properly so called, the barbaric race with whom the Hellenes had little or nothing in common. They, in dress, diet, mode of life, their distaste for the contests of the arena, seemed to the Greeks the very type of effeminacy. The Ionian Greeks, however, were brought under the same influence, and gradually acquired the same character. The suppression of the name of the Ionians in the list of the Persian forces may be noticed as characteristic. The Athenian poet would not bring before an Athenian audience the shame of their Asiatic kinsmen.

⁹ Tmôlos, sacred as being the mythical birth-place of Dionysos.

¹⁰ "Spear-anvils," *sc.*, meeting the spear of their foes as the anvils would meet it, turning its point, themselves steadfast and immovable.

¹¹ So Herodotos (vii. 74) in his account of the army of Xerxes describes the Mysians as using for their weapons those darts or "javelins" made by hardening the ends in the fire.

¹² Helle the daughter of Athamas, from whom the Hellespont took its name. For the description of the pontoons formed by boats, which were moored together with cables and finally covered with faggots, comp. Herod., vii. 36.

And thrown his path, compact of many a vessel,
As yoke upon the neck of mighty ocean.

Antistrophe I

Of populous Asia thus the mighty ruler
'Gainst all the land his God-sent host directeth
In two divisions, both by land and water,
Trusting the chieftains stern,
The men who drive the host to fight, relentless —
He, sprung from gold-born race, a hero godlike.¹³

Strophe II

Glancing with darkling look, and eyes as of ravening dragon,
With many a hand, and many a ship, and Syrian chariot driving,¹⁴
He upon spearmen renowned brings battle of conquering arrows.¹⁵

Antistrophe II

Yea, there is none so tried as, withstanding the flood of the mighty,
To keep within steadfast bounds that wave of ocean resistless;
Hard to fight is the host of the Persians, the people stout-hearted.

Mesode

Yet ah! what mortal can ward the craft of the God all-deceiving?
Who, with a nimble foot, of one leap is easily sovereign?
For Atè, fawning and kind, at first a mortal betraying,
Then in snares and meshes decoys him,
Whence one who is but man in vain doth struggle to 'scape from.

¹³ “Gold-born,” *sc.*, descended from Perseus, the child of Danaë.

¹⁴ Syrian, either in the vague sense in which it became almost synonymous with Assyrian, or else showing that Syria, properly so called, retained the fame for chariots which it had had at a period as early as the time of the Hebrew Judges (Judg. v. 3). Herodotus (vii. 140) gives an Oracle of Delphi in which the same epithet appears.

¹⁵ The description, though put into the mouth of Persians, is meant to flatter Hellenic pride. The Persians and their army were for the most part light-armed troops only, barbarians equipped with javelins or bows. In the sculptures of Persepolis, as in those of Nineveh and Khorsabad, this mode of warfare is throughout the most conspicuous. They, the Hellenes, were the *hoplites*, warriors of the spear and the shield, the cuirass and the greaves.

Strophe III

For Fate of old, by the high Gods' decree,
Prevailed, and on the Persians laid this task,
Wars with the crash of towers,
And set the surge of horsemen in array,
And the fierce sack that lays a city low.

Antistrophe III

But now they learnt to look on ocean plains,¹⁶
The wide sea hoary with the violent blast,
Waxing o'er confident
In cables formed of many a slender strand,
And rare device of transport for the host.

Strophe IV

So now my soul is torn,
As clad in mourning, in its sore affright,
Ah me! ah me! for all the Persian host!
Lest soon our country learn
That Susa's mighty fort is void of men.

Antistrophe IV

And through the Kissians' town
Shall echo heavy thud of hands on breast.
Woe! woe! when all the crowd of women speak
This utterance of great grief,
And byssine robes are rent in agony.

Strophe V

¹⁶ A touch of Athenian exultation in their life as seamen. To them the sea was almost a home. They were familiar with it from childhood. To the Persians it was new and untried. They had a new lesson to learn, late in the history of the nation, late in the lives of individual soldiers.

For all the horses strong,
And host that march on foot,
Like swarm of bees, have gone with him who led
The vanguard of the host.
Crossing the sea-washed, bridge-built promontory
That joins the shores of either continent.¹⁷

Antistrophe V

And beds with tears are wet
In grief for husbands gone,
And Persian wives are delicate in grief,
Each yearning for her lord;
And each who sent her warrior-spouse to battle
Now mourns at home in dreary solitude.
But come, ye Persians now,
And sitting in this ancient hall of ours,
Let us take thought deep-counselling and wise,
(Sore need is there of that,)
How fareth now the great king Xerxes, he
Who calls Dareios sire,
Bearing the name our father bore of old?
Is it the archers' bow that wins the day?
Or does the strength prevail
Of iron point that heads the spear's strong shaft?
But lo! in glory like the face of gods,
The mother of my king, my queen, appears:
Let us do reverent homage at her feet;
Yea, it is meet that all
Should speak to her with words of greeting kind.

Enter Atossa in a chariot of state

Chor. O sovereign queen of Persian wives deep-zoned,
Mother of Xerxes, reverend in thine age,
Wife of Dareios! hail!
'Twas thine to join in wedlock with a spouse
Whom Persians owned as God,¹⁸
And of a God thou art the mother too,

¹⁷ The bridge of boats, with the embankment raised upon it, is thought of as a new headland putting out from the one shore and reaching to the other.

¹⁸ Stress is laid by the Hellenic poet, as in the *Agamemnon* (v. 895), and in v. 707 of this play, on the tendency of the East to give to its kings the names and the signs of homage which were due only to the Gods. The Hellenes might deify a dead hero, but not a living sovereign. On different grounds the Jews shrank, as in the stories of Nebuchadnezzar and Dareios (Dan. iii. 6), from all such acts.

Unless its ancient Fortune fails our host.

Atoss. Yes, thus I come, our gold-decked palace leaving,
The bridal bower Dareios with me slept in.
Care gnaws my heart, but now I tell you plainly
A tale, my friends, which may not leave me fearless,
Lest boastful wealth should stumble at the threshold,
And with his foot o'erturn the prosperous fortune
That great Dareios raised with Heaven's high blessing.
And twofold care untold my bosom haunteth:
We may not honour wealth that has no warriors,
Nor on the poor shines light to strength proportioned;
Wealth without stint we have, yet for our eye we tremble;
For as the eye of home I deem a master's presence.
Wherefore, ye Persians, aid me now in counsel;
Trusty and old, in you lies hope of wisdom.

Chor. Queen of our land! be sure thou need'st not utter
Or thing or word twice o'er, which power may point to;
Thou bid'st us counsel give who fain would serve thee.

Atoss. Ever with many visions of the night¹⁹
Am I encompassed, since my son went forth,
Leading a mighty host, with aim to sack
The land of the Ionians. But ne'er yet
Have I beheld a dream so manifest
As in the night just past. And this I'll tell thee:
There stood by me two women in fair robes;
And this in Persian garments was arrayed,
And that in Dorian came before mine eyes;
In stature both of tallest, comeliest size;
And both of faultless beauty, sisters twain
Of the same stock.²⁰ And they twain had their homes,
One in the Hellenic, one in alien land.
And these two, as I dreamt I saw, were set
At variance with each other. And my son
Learnt it, and checked and mollified their wrath,
And yokes them to his chariot, and his collar
He places on their necks. And one was proud
Of that equipment,²¹ and in harness gave
Her mouth obedient; but the other kicked,
And tears the chariot's trappings with her hands,

¹⁹ In the Greek, as in the translation, there is a change of metre, intended apparently to represent the transition from the tone of eager excitement to the ordinary level of discourse.

²⁰ With reference either to the *mythos* that Asia and Europa were both daughters of Okeanos, or to the historical fact that the Asiatic Ionians and the Dorians of Europe were both of the same Hellenic stock. The contrast between the long flowing robes of the Asiatic women, and the short, scanty kilt-like dress of those of Sparta must be borne in mind if we would see the picture in its completeness.

²¹ Athenian pride is flattered with the thought that they had resisted while the Ionian Greeks had submitted all too willingly to the yoke of the Barbarian.

And rushes off uncurbed, and breaks its yoke
Asunder. And my son falls low, and then
His father comes, Dareios, pitying him.
And lo! when Xerxes sees him, he his clothes
Rends round his limbs. These things I say I saw
In visions of the night; and when I rose,
And dipped my hands in fountain flowing clear,²²
I at the altar stood with hand that bore
Sweet incense, wishing holy chrism to pour
To the averting Gods whom thus men worship.
And I beheld an eagle in full flight
To Phoebos' altar-hearth; and then, my friends,
I stood, struck dumb with fear; and next I saw
A kite pursuing, in her wingèd course,
And with his claws tearing the eagle's head,
Which did nought else but crouch and yield itself.
Such terrors it has been my lot to see,
And yours to hear: For be ye sure, my son,
If he succeed, will wonder-worthy prove;
But if he fail, still irresponsible
He to the people, and in either case,
He, should he but return, is sovereign still.²³

Chor. We neither wish, O Lady, thee to frighten
O'ermuch with what we say, nor yet encourage:
But thou, the Gods adoring with entreaties,
If thou hast seen aught ill, bid them avert it,
And that all good things may receive fulfilment
For thee, thy children, and thy friends and country.
And next 'tis meet libations due to offer
To Earth and to the dead. And ask thy husband,
Dareios, whom thou say'st by night thou sawest,
With kindly mood from 'neath the Earth to send thee
Good things to light for thee and for thine offspring,
While adverse things shall fade away in darkness.
Such things do I, a self-taught seer, advise thee
In kindly mood, and any way we reckon
That good will come to thee from out these omens.

Atoss. Well, with kind heart, hast thou, as first expounder,
Out of my dreams brought out a welcome meaning
For me, and for my sons; and thy good wishes,
May they receive fulfilment! And this also,
As thou dost bid, we to the Gods will offer
And to our friends below, when we go homeward.

²² Lustrations of this kind, besides their general significance in cleansing from defilement, had a special force as charms to turn aside dangers threatened by foreboding dreams. Comp. Aristoph. *Frogs*, v. 1264; Persius, *Sat.* ii. 16.

²³ The political bearing of the passage as contrasting this characteristic of the despotism of Persia with the strict account to which all Athenian generals were subject, is, of course, unmistakable.

But first, my friends, I wish to hear of Athens,
Where in the world do men report it standeth?²⁴

Chor. Far to the West, where sets our king the Sun-God.

Atoss. Was it this city my son wished to capture?

Chor. Aye, then would Hellas to our king be subject.

Atoss. And have they any multitude of soldiers?

Chor. A mighty host, that wrought the Medes much mischief.

Atoss. And what besides? Have they too wealth sufficing?

Chor. A fount of silver have they, their land's treasure.²⁵

Atoss. Have they a host in archers' skill excelling?

Chor. Not so, they wield the spear and shield and bucklers.²⁶

Atoss. What shepherd rules and lords it o'er their people?

Chor. Of no man are they called the slaves or subjects.

Atoss. How then can they sustain a foe invading?

Chor. So that they spoiled Dareios' goodly army.

Atoss. Dread news is thine for sires of those who're marching.

Chor. Nay, but I think thou soon wilt know the whole truth;
This running one may know is that of Persian:²⁷
For good or evil some clear news he bringeth.

Enter Messenger

Mess. O cities of the whole wide land of Asia!

²⁴ The question, which seems to have rankled in the minds of the Athenians, is recorded as an historical fact, and put into the mouth of Dareios by Herodotos (v. 101). He had asked it on hearing that Sardis had been attacked and burnt by them.

²⁵ The words point to the silver mines of Laureion, which had been worked under Peisistratos, and of which this is the first mention in Greek literature.

²⁶ Once more the contrast between the Greek *hoplite* and the light-armed archers of the invaders is dwelt upon. The next answer of the Chorus dwells upon the deeper contrast, then prominent in the minds of all Athenians, between their democratic freedom and the despotism of Persia. Comp. Herod. v. 78.

²⁷ The system of postal communications by means of couriers which Dareios had organised had made their speed in running proverbial (Herod. vii. 97).

O soil of Persia, haven of great wealth!
How at one stroke is brought to nothingness
Our great prosperity, and all the flower
Of Persia's strength is fallen! Woe is me!
'Tis ill to be the first to bring ill news;
Yet needs must I the whole woe tell, ye Persians:
All our barbaric mighty host is lost.²⁸

Strophe I

Chor. O piteous, piteous woe!
O strange and dread event!
Weep, O ye Persians, hearing this great grief!

Mess. Yea, all things there are ruined utterly;
And I myself beyond all hopes behold
The light of day at home.

Antistrophe I

Chor. O'er-long doth life appear
To me, bowed down with years,
On hearing this unlooked-for misery.

Mess. And I, indeed, being present and not hearing
The tales of others, can report, ye Persians,
What ills were brought to pass.

Strophe II

Chor. Alas, alas! in vain
The many-weaponed and commingled host
Went from the land of Asia to invade
The soil divine of Hellas.

Mess. Full of the dead, slain foully, are the coasts
Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shore.

²⁸ With the characteristic contempt of a Greek for other races, Æschylos makes the Persians speak of themselves throughout as 'barbarians,' 'barbaric.'

Antistrophe II

Chor. Alas, alas! sea-tossed
The bodies of our friends, and much disstained:
Thou say'st that they are drifted to and fro

In far out-floating garments.²⁹

Mess. E'en so; our bows availed not, but the host
Has perished, conquered by the clash of ships.

Strophe III

Chor. Wail, raise a bitter cry
And full of woe, for those who died in fight.
How every way the Gods have wrought out ill,
Ah me! ah me, our army all destroyed.

Mess. O name of Salamis that most I loathe!
Ah, how I groan, remembering Athens too!

Antistrophe III

Chor. Yea, to her enemies
Athens may well be hateful, and our minds
Remember how full many a Persian wife
She, for no cause, made widows and bereaved.

Atoss. Long time I have been silent in my woe,
Crushed down with grief; for this calamity
Exceeds all power to tell the woe, or ask.
Yet still we mortals needs must bear the griefs
The Gods send on us. Clearly tell thy tale,
Unfolding the whole mischief, even though
Thou groan'st at evils, who there is not dead,
And which of our chief captains we must mourn,
And who, being set in office o'er the host,
Left by their death their office desolate.

Mess. Xerxes still lives and sees the light of day.

²⁹ Perhaps – “On planks that floated onward,” or – “On land and sea far spreading.”

Atoss. To my house, then, great light thy words have brought,
Bright dawn of morning after murky night.

Mess. Artembares, the lord of myriad horse,
On the hard flinty coasts of the Sileni
Is now being dashed; and valiant Dadakes,
Captain of thousands, smitten with the spear,
Leapt wildly from his ship. And Tenagon,
Best of the true old Bactrians, haunts the soil
Of Aias' isle; Lilaios, Arsames,
And with them too Argestes, there defeated,
Hard by the island where the doves abound,³⁰
Beat here and there upon the rocky shore.
[And from the springs of Neilos, Ægypt's stream,
Arkteus, Adeues, Pheresseues too,
These with Pharnuchos in one ship were lost;]
Matallos, Chrysa-born, the captain bold
Of myriads, leader he of swarthy horse
Some thrice ten thousand strong, has fallen low,
His red beard, hanging all its shaggy length,
Deep dyed with blood, and purpled all his skin.
Arabian Magos, Bactrian Artames,
They perished, settlers in a land full rough.
[Amistris and Amphistreus, guiding well
The spear of many a conflict, and the noble
Ariomardos, leaving bitter grief
For Sardis; and the Mysian Seisames.]
With twelve score ships and ten came Tharybis;
Lyrnæan he in birth, once fair in form,
He lies, poor wretch, a death inglorious dying:
And, first in valour proved, Syennesis,
Kilikian satrap, who, for one man, gave
Most trouble to his foes, and nobly died.
Of leaders such as these I mention make,
And out of many evils tell but few.

Atoss. Woe, woe! I hear the very worst of ills,
Shame to the Persians, cause of bitter wail;
But tell me, going o'er the ground again,
How great the number of the Hellenes' navy,
That they presumed with Persia's armament
To wage their warfare in the clash of ships.

Mess. As far as numbers went, be sure the ships
Of Persia had the better, for the Hellenes

³⁰ Possibly Salamis itself, as famed for the doves which were reared there as sacred to Aphrodite, but possibly also one of the smaller islands in the Saronic gulf, which the epithet would be enough to designate for an Athenian audience. The "coasts of the Sileni" in v. 305 are identified by scholiasts with Salamis.

Had, as their total, ships but fifteen score,
And other ten selected as reserve.³¹
And Xerxes (well I know it) had a thousand
Which he commanded – those that most excelled³²
In speed were twice five score and seven in number;
So stands the account. Deem'st thou our forces less
In that encounter? Nay, some Power above
Destroyed our host, and pressed the balance down
With most unequal fortune, and the Gods
Preserve the city of the Goddess Pallas.

Atoss. Is the Athenians' city then unsacked?

Mess. Their men are left, and that is bulwark strong.³³

Atoss. Next tell me how the fight of ships began.
Who led the attack? Were those Hellenes the first,
Or was't my son, exulting in his strength?

Mess. The author of the mischief, O my mistress,
Was some foul fiend or Power on evil bent;
For lo! a Hellene from the Athenian host³⁴
Came to thy son, to Xerxes, and spake thus,
That should the shadow of the dark night come,
The Hellenes would not wait him, but would leap
Into their rowers' benches, here and there,
And save their lives in secret, hasty flight.
And he forthwith, this hearing, knowing not
The Hellene's guile, nor yet the Gods' great wrath,
Gives this command to all his admirals,
Soon as the sun should cease to burn the earth
With his bright rays, and darkness thick invade
The firmament of heaven, to set their ships
In threefold lines, to hinder all escape,
And guard the billowy straits, and others place
In circuit round about the isle of Aias:
For if the Hellenes 'scaped an evil doom,
And found a way of secret, hasty flight,
It was ordained that all should lose their heads.³⁵
Such things he spake from soul o'erwrought with pride,

³¹ Perhaps – “And ten of these selected as reserve.”

³² As regards the number of the Persian ships, 1000 of average, and 207 of special swiftness. Æschylos agrees with Herodotos, who gives the total of 1207. The latter, however, reckons the Greek ships not at 310, but 378 (vii. 89, viii. 48).

³³ The fact that Athens had actually been taken, and its chief buildings plundered and laid waste, was, of course, not a pleasant one for the poet to dwell on. It could hardly, however, be entirely passed over, and this is the one allusion to it. In the truest sense it was still “unsacked:” it had not lost its most effective defence, its most precious treasure.

³⁴ As the story is told by Herodotos (vii. 75), this was Sikinnos, the slave of Themistocles, and the stratagem was the device of that commander to save the Greeks from the disgrace and ruin of a *sauve qui peut* flight in all directions.

³⁵ The Greeks never beheaded their criminals, and the punishment is mentioned as being specially characteristic of the barbaric Persians.

For he knew not what fate the Gods would send;
And they, not mutinous, but prompt to serve,
Then made their supper ready, and each sailor
Fastened his oar around true-fitting thole;
And when the sunlight vanished, and the night
Had come, then each man, master of an oar,
Went to his ship, and all men bearing arms,
And through the long ships rank cheered loud to rank;
And so they sail, as 'twas appointed each,
And all night long the captains of the fleet
Kept their men working, rowing to and fro;
Night then came on, and the Hellenic host
In no wise sought to take to secret flight.
And when day, bright to look on with white steeds,
O'erspread the earth, then rose from the Hellenes
Loud chant of cry of battle, and forthwith
Echo gave answer from each island rock;
And terror then on all the Persians fell,
Of fond hopes disappointed. Not in flight
The Hellenes then their solemn pæans sang:
But with brave spirit hasting on to battle.
With martial sound the trumpet fired those ranks;
And straight with sweep of oars that flew through foam,
They smote the loud waves at the boatswain's call;
And swiftly all were manifest to sight.
Then first their right wing moved in order meet;³⁶
Next the whole line its forward course began,
And all at once we heard a mighty shout, —
“O sons of Hellenes, forward, free your country;
Free too your wives, your children, and the shrines
Built to your fathers' Gods, and holy tombs
Your ancestors now rest in. Now the fight
Is for our all.” And on our side indeed
Arose in answer din of Persian speech,
And time to wait was over; ship on ship
Dashed its bronze-pointed beak, and first a barque
Of Hellas did the encounter fierce begin,³⁷
And from Phœnikian vessel crashes off
Her carved prow. And each against his neighbour
Steers his own ship: and first the mighty flood
Of Persian host held out. But when the ships
Were crowded in the straits,³⁸ nor could they give
Help to each other, they with mutual shocks,
With beaks of bronze went crushing each the other,

³⁶ The Æginetans and Megarians, according to the account preserved by Diodoros (xi. 18), or the Lacedæmonians, according to Herodotos (viii. 65).

³⁷ This may be meant to refer to the achievements of Ameinias of Pallene, who appears in the traditional life of Æschylos as his youngest brother.

³⁸ Sc., in Herod. viii. 60, the strait between Salamis and the mainland.

Shivering their rowers' benches. And the ships
Of Hellas, with manœuvring not unskilful,
Charged circling round them. And the hulls of ships
Floated capsized, nor could the sea be seen,
Strown, as it was, with wrecks and carcasses;
And all the shores and rocks were full of corpses.
And every ship was wildly rowed in fight,
All that composed the Persian armament.
And they, as men spear tunnies,³⁹ or a haul
Of other fishes, with the shafts of oars,
Or spars of wrecks went smiting, cleaving down;
And bitter groans and wailings overspread
The wide sea-waves, till eye of swarthy night
Bade it all cease: and for the mass of ill,
Not, though my tale should run for ten full days,
Could I in full recount them. Be assured
That never yet so great a multitude
Died in a single day as died in this.

Atoss. Ah, me! Great then the sea of ill that breaks
On Persia and the whole barbaric host.

Mess. Be sure our evil fate is but half o'er:
On this has supervened such bulk of woe,
As more than twice to outweigh what I've told.

Atoss. And yet what fortune could be worse than this?
Say, what is this disaster which thou tell'st,
That turns the scale to greater evils still?

Mess. Those Persians that were in the bloom of life,
Bravest in heart and noblest in their blood,
And by the king himself deemed worthiest trust,
Basely and by most shameful death have died.

Atoss. Ah! woe is me, my friends, for our ill fate!
What was the death by which thou say'st they perished?

Mess. There is an isle that lies off Salamis,⁴⁰
Small, with bad anchorage for ships, where Pan,
Pan the dance-loving, haunts the sea-washed coast.
There Xerxes sends these men, that when their foes,
Being wrecked, should to the islands safely swim,
They might with ease destroy th' Hellenic host,

³⁹ Tunny-fishing has always been prominent in the occupations on the Mediterranean coasts, and the sailors who formed so large a part of every Athenian audience would be familiar with the process here described, of striking or harpooning them. Aristophanes (*Wasps*, 1087) coins (or uses) the word "to tunny" (θυπνύζω) to express the act. Comp. Herod. i. 62.

⁴⁰ *Sc.*, Psyttaleia, lying between Salamis and the mainland. Pausanias (i. 36-82) describes it in his time as having no artistic shrine or statue, but full everywhere of roughly carved images of Pan, to whom the island was sacred. It lay just opposite the entrance to the Peiræos. The connexion of Pan with Salamis and its adjacent islands seems implied in Sophocles, *Aias*, 695.

And save their friends from out the deep sea's paths;
But ill the future guessing: for when God
Gave the Hellenes the glory of the battle,
In that same hour, with arms well wrought in bronze
Shielding their bodies, from their ships they leapt,
And the whole isle encircled, so that we
Were sore distressed,⁴¹ and knew not where to turn;
For here men's hands hurled many a stone at them;
And there the arrows from the archer's bow
Smote and destroyed them; and with one great rush,
At last advancing, they upon them dash
And smite, and hew the limbs of these poor wretches,
Till they each foe had utterly destroyed.
[And Xerxes when he saw how deep the ill,⁴²
Groaned out aloud, for he had ta'en his seat,
With clear, wide view of all the army round,
On a high cliff hard by the open sea;
And tearing then his robes with bitter cry,
And giving orders to his troops on shore,
He sends them off in foul retreat. This grief
'Tis thine to mourn besides the former ills.]

Atoss. O hateful Power, how thou of all their hopes
Hast robbed the Persians! Bitter doom my son
Devised for glorious Athens, nor did they,
The invading host who fell at Marathon,
Suffice; but my son, counting it his task
To exact requital for it, brought on him
So great a crowd of sorrows. But I pray,
As to those ships that have this fate escaped,
Where did'st thou leave them? Can'st thou clearly tell?

Mess. The captains of the vessels that were left,
With a fair wind, but not in meet array,
Took flight: and all the remnant of the army
Fell in Bœotia – some for stress of thirst
About the fountain clear, and some of us,
Panting for breath, cross to the Phokians' land,
The soil of Doris, and the Melian gulf,
Where fair Spercheios waters all the plains
With kindly flood, and then the Achæan fields
And city of the Thessali received us,
Famished for lack of food;⁴³ and many died
Of thirst and hunger, for both ills we bore;

⁴¹ The manoeuvre was, we learn from Herodotos (viii. 95), the work of Aristides, the personal friend of Æschylos, and the statesman with whose policy he had most sympathy.

⁴² The lines are noted as probably a spurious addition, by a weaker hand, to the text, as introducing surplusage, as inconsistent with Herodotos, and as faulty in their metrical structure.

⁴³ So Herodotos (viii. 115) describes them as driven by hunger to eat even grass and leaves.

And then to the Magnetian land we came,
And that of Macedonians, to the stream
Of Axios, and Bolbe's reed-grown marsh,
And Mount Pangaios and the Edonian land.
And on that night God sent a mighty frost,
Unwonted at that season, sealing up
The whole course of the Strymon's pure, clear flood;⁴⁴
And they who erst had deemed the Gods as nought,
Then prayed with hot entreaties, worshipping
Both earth and heaven. And after that the host
Ceased from its instant calling on the Gods,
It crosses o'er the glassy, frozen stream;
And whosoe'er set forth before the rays
Of the bright God were shed abroad, was saved;
For soon the glorious sun with burning blaze
Reached the mid-stream and warmed it with its flame,
And they, confused, each on the other fell.
Blest then was he whose soul most speedily
Breathed out its life. And those who yet survived
And gained deliverance, crossing with great toil
And many a pang through Thrakè, now are come,
Escaped from perils, no great number they,
To this our sacred land, and so it groans,
This city of the Persians, missing much
Our country's dear-loved youth. Too true my tale,
And many things I from my speech omit,
Ills which the Persians suffer at God's hand.

Chor. O Power resistless, with what weight of woe
On all the Persian race have thy feet leapt!

Atoss. Ah! woe is me for that our army lost!
O vision of the night that cam'st in dreams,
Too clearly did'st thou show me of these ill!
But ye (*to Chorus*) did judge them far too carelessly;
Yet since your counsel pointed to that course,
I to the Gods will first my prayer address.
And then with gifts to Earth and to the Dead,
Bringing the chrism from my store, I'll come.
For our past ill, I know, 'tis all too late,
But for the future, I may hope, will dawn
A better fortune! But 'tis now your part
In these our present ill, in counsel faithful
To commune with the Faithful; and my son,
Should he come here before me, comfort him,

⁴⁴ No trace of this passage over the frozen Strymon appears in Herodotos, who leaves the reader to imagine that it was crossed, as before, by a bridge. It is hardly, indeed, consistent with dramatic probability that the courier should have remained to watch the whole retreat of the defeated army; and on this and other grounds, the latter part of the speech has been rejected by some critics as a later addition.

And home escort him, lest he add fresh ill
To all these evils that we suffer now. [*Exit*]

Chor. Zeus our king, who now to nothing
Bring'st the army of the Persians,
Multitudinous, much boasting;
And with gloomy woe hast shrouded
Both Ecbatana and Susa;
Many maidens now are tearing
With their tender hands their mantles,
And with tear-floods wet their bosoms,
In the common grief partaking;
And the brides of Persian warriors,
Dainty even in their wailing,
Longing for their new-wed husbands,
Reft of bridal couch luxurious,
With its coverlet so dainty,
Losing joy of wanton youth-time,
Mourn in never-sated wailings.
And I too in fullest measure
Raise again meet cry of sorrow,
Weeping for the loved and lost ones.

Strophe I

For now the land of Asia mourneth sore,
Left desolate of men,
'Twas Xerxes led them forth, woe! woe!
'Twas Xerxes lost them all, woe! woe!
'Twas Xerxes who with evil counsels sped
Their course in sea-borne barques.
Why was Dareios erst so free from harm,
First Bowman of the state,
The leader whom the men of Susa loved,

Antistrophe I

While those who fought as soldiers or at sea,
These ships, dark-hulled, well-rowed,
Their own ships bore them on, woe! woe!
Their own ships lost them all, woe! woe!
Their own ships, in the crash of ruin urged,

And by Ionian hands?⁴⁵
The king himself, we hear, but hardly 'scapes,
Through Thrakè's widespread steppes,
And paths o'er which the tempests wildly sweep.

Strophe II

And they who perished first, ah me!
Perforce unburied left, alas!
Are scattered round Kychreia's shore,⁴⁶ woe! woe!
Lament, mourn sore, and raise a bitter cry,
Grievous, the sky to pierce, woe! woe!
And let thy mourning voice uplift its strain
Of loud and full lament.

Antistrophe II

Torn by the whirling flood, ah me!
Their carcasses are gnawed, alas!
By the dumb brood of stainless sea, woe! woe!
And each house mourneth for its vanished lord;
And childless sires, woe! woe!
Mourning in age o'er griefs the Gods have sent,
Now hear their utter loss.

Strophe III

And throughout all Asia's borders
None now own the sway of Persia,
Nor bring any more their tribute,
Owning sway of sovereign master.
Low upon the Earth, laid prostrate,
Is the strength of our great monarch

Antistrophe III

No more need men keep in silence

⁴⁵ The Ionians, not of the Asiatic Ionia, but of Attica.

⁴⁶ Kychreia, the archaic name of Salamis.

Tongues fast bound: for now the people
May with freedom speak at pleasure;
For the yoke of power is broken;
And blood-stained in all its meadows
Holds the sea-washed isle of Aias
What was once the host of Persia.

Re-enter Atossa

Atoss. Whoe'er, my friends, is vexed in troublous times,
Knows that when once a tide of woe sets in,
A man is wont to fear in everything;
But when Fate flows on smoothly, then to trust
That the same Fate will ever send fair gales.
So now all these disasters from the Gods
Seem in mine eyes filled full of fear and dread,
And in mine ears rings cry unpæanlike,
So great a dread of all has seized my soul:
And therefore now, without or chariot's state
Or wonted pomp, have I thus issued forth
From out my palace, to my son's sire bringing
Libations loving, gifts propitiatory,
Meet for the dead; milk pure and white from cow
Unblemished, and bright honey that distils
From the flower-working bee, and water drawn
From virgin fountain, and the draught unmarred
From mother wild, bright child of ancient vine;
And here too of the tree that evermore
Keeps its fresh life in foliage, the pale olive,
Is the sweet-smelling fruit, and twinèd wreaths
Of flowers, the children of all-bearing earth.⁴⁷
But ye, my friends, o'er these libations poured
In honour of the dead, chant forth your hymns,
And call upon Dareios as a God:
While I will send unto the Gods below
These votive offerings which the earth shall drink.

*[Goes to the tomb of Dareios in the centre
of the stage]*

Chor. O royal lady, honoured of the Persians,
Do thou libations pour
To the dark chambers of the dead below;
And we with hymns will pray

⁴⁷ The ritual described is Hellenic rather than Persian, and takes its place (Soph. *Electr.* 836; Eurip. *Iphig. Taur.* 583; Homer, *Il.* xxiii. 219) as showing what offerings were employed to soothe or call up the spirits of the dead. Comp. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxx.

The Powers that act as escorts of the dead
To give us kindly help beneath the earth.
But oh, ye holy Ones in darkness dwelling,
Hermes and Earth, and thou, the Lord of Hell,
Send from beneath a soul
Up to the light of earth;
For should he know a cure for these our ills,
He, he alone of men, their end may tell.

Strophe I

Doth he, the blest one hear,
The king, like Gods in power,
Hear me, as I send forth
My cries in barbarous speech,
Yet very clear to him, —
Sad, varied, broken cries
So as to tell aloud
Our troubles terrible?
Ah, doth he hear below?

Antistrophe I

But thou, O Earth, and ye,
The other Lords of those
Beneath the grave that dwell;
Grant that the godlike one
May come from out your home,
The Persians' mighty God,
In Susa's palace born;
Send him, I pray you, up,
The like of whom the soil
Of Persia never hid.

Strophe II

Dear was our chief, and dear to us his tomb,
For dear the life it hides;
Aidoneus, O Aidoneus, send him forth,
Thou who dost lead the dead to Earth again,
Yea, send Dareios... What a king was he!

Antistrophe II

For never did he in war's bloody woe
Lose all his warrior-host,
But Heaven-taught Counsellor the Persians called him,
And Heaven-taught Counsellor in truth he proved,
Since he still ruled his hosts of subjects well.

Strophe III

Monarch, O ancient monarch, come, oh, come,
Come to the summit of sepulchral mound,
Lifting thy foot encased
In slipper saffron-dyed,
And giving to our view
Thy royal tiara's crest:⁴⁸
Speak, O Dareios, faultless father, speak.

Antistrophe III

Yea, come, that thou, O Lord, may'st hear the woes,
Woes new and strange, our lord has now endured;
For on us now has fallen
A dark and Stygian mist,
Since all the armed youth
Has perished utterly;
Speak, O Dareios, faultless father, speak.

Epode

O thou, whose death thy friends
Bewail with many tears,
Why thus, O Lord of lords,
In double error of wild frenzy born,
Have all our triremes good
Been lost to this our land,
Ships that are ships no more, yea, ships no more?

⁴⁸ The description obviously gives the state dress of the Persian kings. They alone wore the tiara erect. Xen. *Kyrop.* viii. 3, 13.

The Ghost of Dareios appears on the summit of the

mound

Dar. O faithful of the Faithful, ye who were
Companions of my youth, ye Persian elders,

What troubles is't my country toils beneath?
The whole plain groans, cut up and furrowed o'er,⁴⁹
And I, beholding now my queen beloved
Standing hard by my sepulchre, feared much,
And her libations graciously received;
But ye wail loud near this my sepulchre,
And shouting shrill with cries that raise the dead,
Ye call me with your plaints. No easy task
Is it to come, for this cause above all,
That the great Gods who reign below are apter
To seize men than release: yet nathless I,
Being great in power among them, now am come.
Be quick then, that none blame me as too late;⁵⁰
What new dire evils on the Persians weigh?

Chor. I fear to look on thee,
Fear before thee to speak,
With all the awe of thee I felt of old.

Dar. But since I came by thy complaints persuaded,
From below rising, spin no lengthened tale;
But shortly, clearly speak, and tell thy story,
And leave awhile thine awe and fear of me.

Chor. I dread thy wish to grant,
I dread to say thee nay,⁵¹
Saying things that it is hard for friends to speak.

Dar. Nay, then, since that old dread of thine prevents thee,
Do thou [*to Atossa*], the ancient partner of my bed,
My noble queen, from these thy plaints and moanings
Cease, and say something clearly. Human sorrows
May well on mortals fall; for many evils,

⁴⁹ Either that he has felt the measured tread of the mourners round his tomb, as they went wailing round and round, or that he has heard the rush of armies, and seen the plain tracked by chariot-wheels, and comes, not knowing all these things, to learn what it means.

⁵⁰ The words point to the widespread belief that when the souls of the dead were permitted to return to the earth, it was with strict limitations as to the time of their leave of absence.

⁵¹ Perhaps – “I dread to speak the truth.”

Some on the sea, and some on dry land also,
Happen to men if life be far prolongèd.

Atoss. O thou, who in the fate of fair good fortune
Excelled'st all men, who, while yet thou sawest
The sun's bright rays, did'st lead a life all blessed,
Admired, yea, worshipped as a God by Persians,
Now, too, I count thee blest in that thou died'st
Before thou saw'st the depth of these our evils.
For now, Dareios, thou shalt hear a story
Full, yet in briefest moment. Utter ruin,
To sum up all, is come upon the Persians.

Dar. How so? Hath plague or discord seized my country?

Atoss. Not so, but all the host is lost near Athens.

Dar. What son of mine led that host hither, tell me?⁵²

Atoss. Xerxes o'er-hasty, emptying all the mainland.

Dar. Made he this mad attempt by land or water?

Atoss. By both; two lines there were of two great armies.

Dar. How did so great a host effect its passage?

Atoss. He bridged the straits of Helle, and found transit.

Dar. Did he prevail to close the mighty Bosphoros?

Atoss. So was it; yet some God, it may be, helped him.

Dar. Alas! some great God came and stole his wisdom.

Atoss. Yea, the end shows what evil he accomplished.

Dar. And how have they fared, that ye thus bewail them?

Atoss. The naval host, o'ercome, wrecked all the land-force.

Dar. What! Is the whole host by the spear laid prostrate?

Atoss. For this doth Susa's city mourn her losses.

Dar. Alas, for that brave force and mighty army!

⁵² According to Herodotos (vii. 225) two brothers of Xerxes fell at Thermopylæ.

Atoss. The Bactrians all are lost, not old men merely.

Dar. Poor fool! how he hath lost his host's fresh vigour!

Atoss. Xerxes, they say, alone, with but few others...

Dar. What is his end, and where? Is there no safety?

Atoss. Was glad to gain the bridge that joins two mainlands.

Dar. And has he reached this mainland? Is that certain?

Atoss. Yea, the report holds good. Here is no discord.⁵³

Dar. Ah me! Full swift the oracles' fulfilment!
And on my son hath Zeus their end directed.
I hoped the Gods would work them out more slowly;
But when man hastens, God too with him worketh.
And now for all my friends a fount of evils
Seems to be found. And this my son, not knowing,
In youth's rash mood, hath wrought; for he did purpose
To curb the sacred Hellespont with fetters,
As though it were his slave, and sought to alter
The stream of God, the Bosporos, full-flowing,
And his well-hammered chains around it casting,
Prevailed to make his mighty host a highway;
And though a mortal, thought, with no good counsel,
To master all the Gods, yea, e'en Poseidon.
Nay, was not my poor son oppressed with madness?
And much I fear lest all my heaped-up treasure
Become the spoil and prey of the first comer.

Atoss. Such things the o'er-hasty Xerxes learns from others,
By intercourse with men of evil counsel;⁵⁴
Who say that thou great wealth for thy son gained'st
By thy spear's might, while he with coward spirit
Does his spear-work indoors, and nothing addeth
Unto his father's glory. Such reproaches
Hearing full oft from men of evil counsel,
He planned this expedition against Hellas.

Dar. Thus then a deed portentous hath been wrought,
Ever to be remembered, such as ne'er
Falling on Susa made it desolate,
Since Zeus our king ordained this dignity,

⁵³ As Herodotos (viii. 117) tells the story, the bridge had been broken by the tempest before Xerxes reached it.

⁵⁴ Probably Mardonios and Onomacritos the Athenian soothsayer are referred to, who, according to Herodotos (vii. 6, viii. 99) were the chief instigators of the expedition.

That one man should be lord of Asia's plains.
Where feed her thousand flocks, and hold the rod
Of sovran guidance: for the Median first⁵⁵
Ruled o'er the host, and then his son in turn
Finished the work, for reason steered his soul;
And Kyros came as third, full richly blest,
And ruled, and gained great peace for all his friends;
And he won o'er the Lydians and the Phrygians,
And conquered all the wide Ionian land;⁵⁶
For such his wisdom, he provoked not God.
And Kyros' son came fourth, and ruled the host;
And Mardos fifth held sway, his country's shame,⁵⁷
Shame to the ancient throne; and him with guile
Artaphrenes⁵⁸ the brave smote down, close leagued
With men, his friends, to whom the work was given.
[Sixth, Maraphis and seventh Artaphrenes,]
And I obtained this post that I desired,
And with a mighty host great victories won.
Yet no such evil brought I on the state;
But my son Xerxes, young, thinks like a youth,
And all my solemn charge remembers not;
For know this well, my old companions true,
That none of us who swayed the realm of old,
Did e'er appear as working ills like these.

Chor. What then, O King Dareios? To what end
Lead'st thou thy speech? And how, in this our plight,
Could we, the Persian people, prosper best?

Dar. If ye no more attack the Hellenes' land,
E'en though the Median host outnumbered theirs.
To them the very land is true ally.

Chor. What meanest thou? How fights the land for them?

Dar. *It slays with famine those vast multitudes.

Chor. We then a host, select, compact, will raise.

⁵⁵ Astyages, the father-in-law of Kyaxares and grandfather of Kyros. In this case Æschylos must be supposed to accept Xenophon's statement that Kyaxares succeeded to Astyages. Possibly, however, the Median may be Kyaxares I., the father of Astyages, and so the succession here would harmonise with that of Herodotos. The whole succession must be looked on as embodying the loose, floating notions of the Athenians as to the history of their great enemy, rather than as the result of inquiry.

⁵⁶ Stress is laid on the violence to which the Asiatic Ionians had succumbed, and their resistance to which distinguished them from the Lydians or Phrygians, whose submission had been voluntary.

⁵⁷ Mardos. Under this name we recognise the Pseudo-Smerdis of Herodotos (iii. 67), who, by restoring the dominion of the Median Magi, the caste to which he himself belonged, brought shame upon the Persians.

⁵⁸ Possibly another form of Intaphernes, who appears in Herodotos (iii. 70) as one of the seven conspirators against the Magian Pseudo-Smerdis.

Dar. Nay, e'en the host which now in Hellas stays⁵⁹
Will ne'er return in peace and safety home.

Chor. How say'st thou? Does not all the barbarous host
Cross from Europa o'er the straits of Hellè?

Dar. But few of many; if 'tis meet for one
Who looks upon the things already done
To trust the oracles of Gods; for they,
Not these or those, but all, are brought to pass:
If this be so, then, resting on vain hopes,⁶⁰
He leaves a chosen portion of his host:
And they abide where, watering all the plain,
Asôpos pours his fertilising stream
Dear to Bœotian land; and there of ill
The topmost crown awaits them, penalty
Of wanton outrage and of godless thoughts;
For they to Hellas coming, held not back
In awe from plundering sculptured forms of Gods⁶¹
And burning down their temples; and laid low
Are altars, and the shrines of Gods o'erthrown,
E'en from their base. They therefore having wrought
Deeds evil, now are suffering, and will suffer
Evil not less, and not as yet is seen
E'en the bare groundwork of the ill, but still
They grow up to completeness. Such a stream
Of blood and slaughter soon shall flow from them
By Dorian spear upon Plataean ground,⁶²
And heaps of corpses shall to children's children,
Though speechless, witness to the eyes of men
That mortal man should not wax overproud;
For wanton pride from blossom grows to fruit,
The full corn in the ear, of utter woe,
And reaps a tear-fraught harvest. Seeing then,
Such recompense of these things, cherish well
The memory of Athens and of Hellas;
Let no man in his scorn of present fortune,
And thirst for other, mar his good estate;
Zeus is the avenger of o'er-lofty thoughts,
A terrible controller. Therefore now,
Since voice of God bids him be wise of heart,

⁵⁹ The force of 300,000 men left in Greece under Mardonios (Herod. viii. 113), afterwards defeated at Plataea.

⁶⁰ Comp. the speech of Mardonios urging his plan on Xerxes (Herod. viii. 100).

⁶¹ This was of course a popular topic with the Athenians, whose own temples had been outraged. But other sanctuaries also, the temples at Delphi and Abæ, had shared the same fate, and these sins against the Gods of Hellas were naturally connected in the thoughts of the Greeks with the subsequent disasters of the Persians. In Egypt these outrages had an iconoclastic character. In Athens they were a retaliation for the destruction of the temple at Sardis (Herod. v. 102).

⁶² The reference to the prominent part taken by the Peloponnesian forces in the battle of Plataea is probably due to the political sympathies of the dramatist.

Admonish him with counsel true and good
To cease his daring sacrilegious pride;
And thou, O Xerxes' mother, old and dear,
Go to thy home, and taking what apparel
Is fitting, go to meet thy son; for all
The costly robes around his limbs are torn
To rags and shreds in grief's wild agony.
But do thou gently soothe his soul with words;
For he to thee alone will deign to hearken;
But I must leave the earth for darkness deep:
And ye, old men, farewell, although in woe,
And give your soul its daily bread of joy;
For to the dead no profit bringeth wealth.

[Exit, disappearing in the earth.]

Chor. I shudder as I hear the many woes
Both past and present that on Persians fall.

Atoss. [O God, how many evils fall on me!⁶³
And yet this one woe biteth more than all,
Hearing my son's shame in the rags of robes
That clothe his limbs. But I will go and take
A fit adornment from my house, and try
To meet my son. We will not in his troubles
Basely abandon him whom most we love.]

Strophe I

Chor. Ah me! a glorious and a blessed life
Had we as subjects once,
When our old king, Dareios, ruled the land,
Meeting all wants, dispassionate, supreme,
A monarch like a God.

Antistrophe I

For first we showed the world our noble hosts;
And laws of tower-like strength
Directed all things; and our backward march
After our wars unhurt, unsuffering led
Our prospering armies home.

⁶³ The speech of Atossa is rejected by Paley, on internal grounds, as spurious.

Strophe II

How many towns he took,
Not crossing Halys' stream⁶⁴
Nor issuing from his home,
There where in Strymon's sea,
The Acheloian Isles⁶⁵
Lie near the coasts of Thracian colonies.

Antistrophe II

And those that lie outside the Ægæan main,
The cities girt with towers,
They hearkened to our king;
And those who boast their site
By Hellè's full, wide stream,
Propontis with its bays, and mouth of Pontos broad.

Strophe III

And all the isles that lie
Facing the headland jutting in the sea,⁶⁶
Close bound to this our coast;
Lesbos, and Samos with its olive groves;
Chios and Paros too;
Naxos and Myconos, and Andros too
On Tenos bordering.

Antistrophe III

And so he ruled the isles
That lie midway between the continents,
Lemnos, and Icaros,

⁶⁴ Apparently an allusion to the oracle given to Cræsos, that he, if he crossed the Halys, should destroy a great kingdom.

⁶⁵ The name originally given to the Echinades, a group of islands at the mouth of the Acheloös, was applied generically to all islands lying near the mouth of all great rivers, and here, probably, includes Imbros, Thasos, and Samothrakè.

⁶⁶ The geography is somewhat obscure, but the words seem to refer to the portion of the islands that are named as opposite (in a southerly direction) to the promontory of the Troad.

Rhodes and Cnidos and the Kyprian towns,
Paphos and Soli famed,
And with them Salamis,
Whose parent city now our groans doth cause;⁶⁷

Epode

And many a wealthy town and populous,
Of Hellenes in the Ionian region dwelling,
He by his counsel ruled;
His was the unconquered strength of warrior host,
Allies of mingled race.
And now, beyond all doubt,
In strife of war defeated utterly,
We find this high estate
Through wrath of God o'ertumed,
And we are smitten low,
By bitter loss at sea.

Enter Xerxes in kingly apparel, but with his robes rent,

with Attendants

Xer. Oh, miserable me!
Who this dark hateful doom
That I expected least
Have met with as my lot,
With what stern mood and fierce
Towards the Persian race
Is God's hand laid on us!
What woe will come on me?
Gone is my strength of limb,
As I these elders see.
Ah, would to Heaven, O Zeus,
That with the men who fell
Death's doom had covered me!

Chor. Ah, woe, O King, woe! woe!
For the army brave in fight,
And our goodly Persian name,

⁶⁷ Salamis in Kypros had been colonised by Teukros, the son of Aias, and had received its name in remembrance of the island in the Saronic Gulf.

And the fair array of men,
Whom God hath now cut off!
And the land bewails its youth
Who for our Xerxes fell,
For him whose deeds have filled
Hades with Persian souls;
For many heroes now
Are Hades-travellers,
Our country's chosen flower,
Mighty with darts and bow;
For lo! the myriad mass
Of men has perished quite.
Woe, woe for our fair fame!
And Asia's land, O King,
Is terribly, most terribly, o'erthrown.

Xer. I then, oh misery!
Have to my curse been proved
Sore evil to my country and my race.

Chor. Yea, and on thy return
I will lift up my voice in wailing loud,
Cry of sore-troubled thought,
As of a mourner born
In Mariandynian land,⁶⁸
Lament of many tears.

Antistrophe I

Xer. Yea, utter ye a wail
Dreary and full of grief;
For lo! the face of Fate
Against me now is turned.

Chor. Yea, I will raise a cry
Dreary and full of grief,
Giving this tribute due
To all the people's woes,
And all our loss at sea,
Troubles of this our State
That mourneth for her sons;
Yea, I will wail full sore,
With flood of bitter tears.

⁶⁸ The Mariandynoi, a Paphlagonian tribe, conspicuous for their orgiastic worship of Adonis, had become proverbial for the wildness of their plaintive dirges.

Strophe II

Xer. For Ares, he whose might
Was in our ships' array,
Giving victory to our foes,
Has in Ionians, yea,
Ionians, found his match,
And from the dark sea's plain,
And that ill-omened shore,
Has a fell harvest reaped.

Chor. Yea, wail, search out the whole;
Where are our other friends?
Where thy companions true,
Such as Pharandakes,
Susas, Pelagon, Psammis, Dotamas,
Agdabatas, Susiskanes,
From Ecbatana who started?

Antistrophe II

Xer. I left them low in death,
Falling from Tyrian ship,
On Salaminian shores,
Beating now here, now there,
On the hard rock-girt coast.

Chor. Ah, where Pharnuchos then,
And Ariomardos brave?
And where Sevalkes king,
Lilæos proud of race,
Memphis and Tharybis,
Masistras, and Artembares,
Hystæchmas? This I ask.

Strophe III

Xer. Woe! woe is me!
They have looked on at Athens' ancient towers,
Her hated towers, ah me!
All, as by one fell stroke,
Unhappy in their fate

Lie gasping on the shore.

Chor. And he, thy faithful Eye,⁶⁹
Who told the Persian host,
Myriads on myriads o'er,⁷⁰
Alpistos, son and heir
Of Batanôchos old

.

And the son of brave Sesames,
Son himself of Megabates?
Parthos, and the great Æbares,
Did'st thou leave them, did'st thou leave them?
Ah, woe! ah, woe is me,
For those unhappy ones!
Thou to the Persians brave
Tellest of ills on ills.

Antistrophe III

Xer. Ah, thou dost wake in me
The memory of the spell of yearning love
For comrades brave and true,
Telling of cursed ills,
Yea, cursed, hateful doom;
And lo, within my frame
My heart cries out, cries out.

Chor. Yea, another too we long for,
Xanthes, captain of ten thousand
Mardian warriors, and Anchaes
Arian born, and great Arsakes
And Diæxis, lords of horsemen,
Kigdagatas and Lythimnas,
Tolmos, longing for the battle:
Much I marvel, much I marvel,⁷¹
For they come not, as the rear-guard
Of thy tent on chariot mounted.⁷²

⁶⁹ The name seems to have been an official title for some Inspector-General of the Army. Comp. Aristoph. *Acharn.* v. 92.

⁷⁰ As in the account which Herodotos gives (vii. 60) of the way in which the army of Xerxes was numbered, *sc.*, by enclosing 10,000 men in a given space, and then filling it again and again till the whole army had passed through.

⁷¹ Another reading gives —“They are buried, they are buried.”

⁷² Perhaps referring to the waggon-chariots in which the rider reclines at ease, either protected by a canopy, or, as in the Assyrian

Strophe IV

Xer. Gone those rulers of the army.

Chor. Gone are they in death inglorious.

Xer. Ah woe! ah woe! Alas! alas!

Chor. Ah! the Gods have sent upon us
Ill we never thought to look on,
Eminent above all others;
Ne'er hath Atè seen its equal.

Antistrophe IV

Smitten we by many sorrows,
Such as come on men but seldom.

Chor. Smitten we, 'tis all too certain...

Xer. Fresh woes! fresh woes! ah me!

Chor. Now with adverse turn of fortune,
With Ionian seamen meeting,
Fails in war the race of Persians.

Strophe V

Xer. Too true. Yea I and that vast host of mine
Are smitten down.

Chor. Too true – the Persians' majesty and might
Have perished utterly.

Xer. See'st thou this remnant of my armament?

Chor. I see it, yea, I see.

Xer. (*pointing to his quiver.*) Dost see thou that
which arrows wont to hold?..

Chor. What speak'st thou of as saved?

Xer. This treasure-store for darts.

Chor. Few, few of many left!

Xer. Thus we all helpers lack.

Chor. Ionian soldiers flee not from the spear.

Antistrophe V

Xer. Yea, very brave are they, and I have seen
Unlooked-for woe.

Chor. Wilt tell of squadron of our sea-borne ships
Defeated utterly?

Xer. I tore my robes at this calamity.

Chor. Ah me, ah me, ah me.

Xer. Ay, more than all 'ah me's'!

Chor. Twofold and threefold ills!

Xer. Grievous to us – but joy,
Great joy, to all our foes!

Chor. Lopped off is all our strength.

Xer. Stripped bare of escort I!

Chor. Yea, by sore loss at sea
Disastrous to thy friends.

Strophe VI

Xer. Weep for our sorrow, weep,
Yea, go ye to the house.

Chor. Woe for our griefs, woe, woe!

Xer. Cry out an echoing cry.

Chor. Ill gift of ills on ills.

Xer. Weep on in wailing chant.

Chor. Oh! ah! Oh! ah!

Xer. Grievous our bitter woes.

Chor. Ah me, I mourn them sore.

Antistrophe VI

Xer. Ply, ply your hands and groan;
Yea, for my sake bewail.

Chor. I weep in bitter grief.

Xer. Cry out an echoing cry.

Chor. Yea, we may raise our voice,
O Lord and King, in wail.

Xer. Raise now shrill cry of woe.

Chor. Ah me! Ah! Woe is me!

Xer. Yea, with it mingle dark...

Chor. And bitter, grievous blows.

Strophe VII

Xer. Yea, beat thy breast, and cry
After the Mysian type.

Chor. Oh, misery! oh, misery!

Xer. Yea, tear the white hair off thy flowing beard.

Chor. Yea; with clenched hands, with clenched hands, I say,
In very piteous guise.

Xer. Cry out, cry out aloud.

Chor. That also will I do.

Antistrophe VII

Xer. And with thy fingers tear
Thy bosom's folded robe.

Chor. Oh, misery! oh, misery!

Xer. Yea, tear thy hair in wailing for our host.

Chor. Yea, with clenched hands, I say, with clenched hands,
In very piteous guise.

Xer. Be thine eyes wet with tears.

Chor. Behold the tears stream down.

Epode

Xer. Raise a re-echoing cry.

Chor. Ah woe! ah woe!

Xer. Go to thy home with wailing loud and long.

Chor. O land of Persia, full of lamentations!

Xer. Through the town raise your cries.

Chor. We raise them, yea, we raise.

Xer. Wail, wail, ye men that walked so daintily.

Chor. O land of Persia, full of lamentations!
Woe; woe!

Xer. Alas for those who in the triremes perished!

Chor. With broken cries of woe will I escort thee.

*[Exeunt in procession, wailing, and
rending their robes.]*

THE SEVEN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THEBES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Eteocles
Scout
Herald
Ismene
Antigone
Chorus of Theban Maidens

ARGUMENT. —When *Ædipus* king of *Thebes* discovered that he had unknowingly been the murderer of his father, and had lived in incest with his mother, he blinded himself. And his two sons, *Eteocles* and *Polyneikes*, wishing to banish the remembrance of these horrors from the eyes of men, at first kept him in confinement. And he, being wroth with them, prayed that they might divide their inheritance with the sword. And they, in fear lest the prayer should be accomplished, agreed to reign in turn, each for a year, and *Eteocles*, as the elder of the two, took the first turn. But when at the end of the year *Polyneikes* came to ask for the kingdom, *Eteocles* refused to give way, and sent him away empty. So *Polyneikes* went to *Argos* and married the daughter of *Adrastos* the king of that country, and gathered together a great army under six great captains, himself going as the seventh, and led it against *Thebes*. And so they compassed it about, and at each of the seven gates of the city was stationed one of the divisions of the army.

Note.—*The Seven against Thebes* appears to have been produced B.C. 472, the year after *The Persians*.

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Scene. – *Thebes in front of the Acropolis*

Enter Eteocles, and crowd of Theban Citizens

Eteoc. Ye citizens of *Cadmos*, it behoves
That one who standeth at the stern of State
Guiding the helm, with eyes unclosed in sleep,
Should speak the things that meet occasion's need.
For should we prosper, God gets all the praise:
But if (which God forbid!) disaster falls,
Eteocles, much blame on one head falling,
Would find his name the by-word of the State,⁷³
Sung in the slanderous ballads of the town;

⁷³ Probably directed against the tendency of the Athenians, as shown in their treatment of *Miltiades*, and later in that of *Thukydidēs*, to punish their unsuccessful generals, “*pour encourager les autres*.”

Yes, and with groanings, which may Zeus the Averter,
True to his name, from us Cadmeians turn!
But now 'tis meet for all, both him who fails
Of full-grown age, and him advanced in years,
Yet boasting still a stalwart strength of frame,
And each in life's full prime, as it is fit,
The State to succour and the altars here
Of these our country's Gods, that never more
Their votive honours cease, – to help our sons,
And Earth, our dearest mother and kind nurse;
For she, when young ye crept her kindly plain,
Bearing the whole charge of your nourishment,
Reared you as denizens that bear the shield,
That ye should trusty prove in this her need.
And now thus far God turns the scale for us;
For unto us, beleaguered these long days,
War doth in most things with God's help speed well,
But now, as saith the seer, the augur skilled,⁷⁴
Watching with ear and mind, apart from fire,
The birds oracular with mind unerring,
He, lord and master of these prophet-arts,
Says that the great attack of the Achæans
This very night is talked of, and their plots
Devised against the town. But ye, haste all
Unto the walls and gateways of the forts;
Rush ye full-armed, and fill the outer space,
And stand upon the platforms of the towers,
And at the entrance of the gates abiding
Be of good cheer, nor fear ye overmuch
The host of aliens. Well will God work all.
And I have sent my scouts and watchers forth,
And trust their errand is no fruitless one.
I shall not, hearing them, be caught with guile.

[Exeunt Citizens.]

Enter one of the Scouts

Mess. King of Cadmeians, great Eteocles,
I from the army come with tidings clear,
And am myself eye-witness of its acts;
For seven brave warriors, leading armèd bands,
Cutting a bull's throat o'er a black-rimmed shield,
And dipping in the bull's blood with their hands,

⁷⁴ Teiresias, as in Sophocles (*Antig.* v. 1005), sitting, though blind, and listening, as the birds flit by him, and the flames burn steadily or fitfully; a various reading gives “apart from sight.”

Swore before Ares, Enyo,⁷⁵ murderous Fear,
That they would bring destruction on our town,
And trample under foot the tower of Cadmos,
Or dying, with their own blood stain our soil;
And they memorials for their sires at home
Placed with their hands upon Adrastus' car,⁷⁶
Weeping, but no wail uttering with their lips,
For courage iron-hearted breathed out fire
In manliness unconquered, as when lions
Flash battle from their eyeballs. And report
Of these things does not linger on the way.
I left them casting lots, that each might take,
As the lot fell, his station at the gate.
Wherefore do thou our city's chosen ones
Array with speed at entrance of the gates;
For near already is the Argive host,
Marching through clouds of dust, and whitening foam
Spots all the plain with drops from horses' mouths.
And thou, as prudent helmsman of the ship,
Guard thou our fortress ere the blasts of Ares
Swoop on it wildly; for there comes the roar
Of the land-wave of armies. And do thou
Seize for these things the swiftest tide and time;
And I, in all that comes, will keep my eye
As faithful sentry; so through speech full clear,
Thou, knowing all things yonder, shalt be safe.

[Exit.]

Eteoc. O Zeus and Earth, and all ye guardian Gods!
Thou Curse and strong Erinnyes of my sire!
Destroy ye not my city root and branch,
With sore destruction smitten, one whose voice
Is that of Hellas, nor our hearths and homes;⁷⁷
Grant that they never hold in yoke of bondage
Our country free, and town of Cadmos named;
But be ye our defence. I deem I speak
Of what concerns us both; for still 'tis true,
A prosperous city honours well the Gods. *[Exit.]*

⁷⁵ Enyo, the goddess of war, and companion of Ares.

⁷⁶ Amphiaraus the seer had prophesied that Adrastus alone should return home in safety. On his car, therefore, the other chieftains hung the clasps, or locks of hair, or other memorials which in the event of their death were to be taken to their parents.

⁷⁷ The Hellenic feeling, such as the Plataeans appealed to in the Peloponnesian war (Thuc. iii. 58, 59), that it was noble and right for Hellenes to destroy a city of the barbarians, but that they should spare one belonging to a people of their own stock.

Enter Chorus of Theban Maidens in solemn procession

as suppliants

Chor. I in wild terror utter cries of woe;
An army leaves its camp and is let loose:
Hither the vanguard of the horsemen flows,
And the thick cloud of dust,
That suddenly is seen,
Dumb herald, yet full clear,
Constrains me to believe;
And smitten with the horses' hoofs, the plain
Of this my country rings with noise of war;
It floats and echoes round,
Like voice of mountain torrent dashing down
Resistless in its might.
Ah Gods! Ah Goddesses!
Ward off the coming woe.
With battle-shout that rises o'er the walls,
The host whose shields are white⁷⁸
Marches in full array against our city.
Who then, of all the Gods
Or Goddesses, will come to help and save?
Say, shall I fall before the shrines of Gods?
O blessed Ones firm fixed!
'Tis time to clasp your sacred images.
Why linger we in wailing overmuch?
Hear ye, or hear ye not, the din of shields?
When, if not now, shall we
Engage in prayer with peplos and with boughs?⁷⁹
I hear a mighty sound; it is the din
Not of a single spear.
O Ares! ancient guardian of our land!
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou betray thy land?
O God of golden casque,
Look on our city, yea, with favour look,
The city thou did'st love.
And ye, ye Gods who o'er the city rule,
Come all of you, come all.
Behold the band of maidens suppliant,

⁷⁸ The characteristic feature of the Argive soldiers was, that they bore a shield painted white (comp. Sophocles, *Antig.* v. 114). The leaders alone appear to have embellished this with devices and mottoes.

⁷⁹ In solemn supplications, the litanies of the ancient world, especially in those to Pallas, the suppliants carried with them in procession the shawl or *peplos* of the Goddess, and with it enwrapped her statue. To carry boughs of trees in the hands was one of the uniform, probably indispensable, accompaniments of such processions.

In fear of bondage foul;
For now around the town
The wave of warriors bearing slopèd crests,
With blasts of Ares rushing, hoarsely sounds:
But thou, O Zeus! true father of us all,
Ward off, ward off our capture by the foe.

Strophe I

For Argives now surround the town of Cadmos,
And dread of Ares' weapons falls on us;
And, bound to horses' mouths,
The bits and curbs ring music as of death;
And seven chief rulers of the mighty host,
With warriors' arms, at each of seven tall gates,
Spear-armed and harnessed all,
Stand, having cast their lots.

.....

Mesode

And thou, O Zeus-born power in war delighting,
O Pallas! be our city's saviour now;
And Thou who curb'st the steed,
Great King of Ocean's waves,
Poseidon, with thy trident fish-spear armed,⁸⁰
Give respite from our troubles, respite give!
And Thou, O Ares, guard the town that takes
Its name from Cadmos old,⁸¹
Watch o'er it visibly.

Antistrophe I

And thou, O Kypris, of our race the mother,
Ward off these ills, for we are thine by blood:

⁸⁰ The words recall our thoughts to the original use of the trident, which became afterwards a symbol of Poseidon, as employed by the sailors of Hellas to spear or harpoon the larger fish of the Archipelago. Comp. *Pers.* v. 426, where the slaughter of a defeated army is compared to tunny-fishing.

⁸¹ Cadmos, probably "the man from the East," the Phœnikian who had founded Thebes, and sown the dragon's seed, and taught men a Semitic alphabet for the non-Semitic speech of Hellas.

To thee in many a prayer,
With voice that calls upon the Gods we cry,
And unto thee draw near as suppliants:
And Thou, Lykeian king, Lykeian be,⁸²
Foe of our hated foes,
For this our wailing cry;
And Thou, O child of Leto, Artemis,
Make ready now thy bow.

Strophe II

Ah! ah! I hear a din of chariot wheels
Around the city walls;
O Hera great and dread!
The heavy axles of the chariots groan,
O Artemis beloved!
And the air maddens with the clash of spears;
What must our city bear?
What now shall come on us?
When will God give the end?

Antistrophe II

Ah! ah! a voice of stones is falling fast
On battlements attacked;⁸³
O Lord, Apollo loved,
A din of bronze-bound shields is in the gates;
And oh! that Zeus may give
A faultless issue of this war we wage!
And Thou, O blessed queen,
As Guardian Onca known,⁸⁴
Save thy seven-gated seat.

Strophe III

And ye, all-working Gods,
Of either sex divine,

⁸² Worthy of his name as the Wolf-destroyer, mighty to destroy his foes.

⁸³ Possibly “*from* battlements attacked.” In the primitive sieges of Greek warfare stones were used as missiles alike by besieged and besiegers.

⁸⁴ The name of Onca belonged especially to the Theban worship of Pallas, and was said to have been of Phœnikian origin, introduced by Cadmos. There seems, however, to have been a town Onkæ in Bœotia, with which the name was doubtless connected.

Protectors of our towers,
Give not our city, captured by the spear,
To host of alien speech.⁸⁵
Hear ye our maidens; hear,
As is most meet, our prayers with outstretched hands.

Antistrophe III

O all ye loving Powers,
Compass our State to save;
Show how that State ye love;
Think on our public votive offerings,
And as ye think, oh, help:
Be mindful ye, I pray,
Of all our city's rites of sacrifice.

Re-enter Eteocles

Eteoc. (to the Chorus) I ask you, O ye brood intolerable,
Is this course best and safest for our city?
Will it give heart to our beleaguered host,
That ye before the forms of guardian Gods
Should wail and howl, ye loathèd of the wise;⁸⁶
Ne'er be it mine, in ill estate or good,
To dwell together with the race of women;
For when they rule, their daring bars approach,
And when they fear, alike to house and State
Comes greater ill; and now with these your rushings
Hither and thither, ye have troubled sore
Our subjects with a coward want of heart;
And do your best for those our foes without;
And we are harassed by ourselves within.
This comes to one who dwells with womankind.
And if there be that will not own my sway,
Or man or woman in their prime, or those
Who can be classed with neither, they shall take
Their trial for their life, nor shall they 'scape
The fate of stoning. Things outdoors are still
The man's to look to: let not woman counsel.
Stay thou within, and do no mischief more.

⁸⁵ "Alien," on account of the difference of dialect between the speech of Argos and that of Bœotia, though both were Hellenic.

⁸⁶ The vehemence with which Eteocles reproves the wild frenzied wailing of the Chorus may be taken as an element of the higher culture showing itself in Athenian life, which led Solon to restrain such lamentations by special laws (Plutarch, *Solon*, c. 20). Here, too, we note in Æschylos an echo of the teaching of Epimenides.

Hear'st thou, or no? or speak I to the deaf?

Strophe I

Chor. Dear son of Ædipus,
I shuddered as I heard the din, the din
Of many a chariot's noise,
When on the axles creaked the whirling wheels,
And when I heard the sound
Of fire-wrought curbs within the horses' mouths.

Eteoc. What then? Did ever yet the sailor flee
From stern to stem, and find deliverance so,
While his ship laboured in the ocean's wave?⁸⁷

Antistrophe I

Chor. Nay, to the ancient forms
Of mighty Powers I rushed, as trusting Gods;
And when behind the gates
Was heard the crash of fierce and pelting storm,
Then was it, in my fear,
I prayed the Blessed Ones to guard our city.

Eteoc. Pray that our towns hold out 'gainst spear of foes.⁸⁸

Chor. Do not the Gods grant these things?

Eteoc. Nay the Gods,
So say they, leave the captured city's walls.⁸⁹

Strophe II

Chor. Ah! never in my life

⁸⁷ As now the sailor of the Mediterranean turns to the image of his patron saint, so of old he ran in his distress to the figure of his God upon the prow of his ship (often, as in Acts xxviii. II, that of the *Dioscuri*), and called to it for deliverance (comp. Jonah i. 8).

⁸⁸ Eteocles seems to wish for a short, plain prayer for deliverance, instead of the cries and supplications and vain repetitions of the Chorus.

⁸⁹ The thought thus expressed was, that the Gods, yielding to the mightier law of destiny, or in their wrath at the guilt of men, left the city before its capture. The feeling was all but universal. Its two representative instances are found in Virgil, *Æn.* 351 —“Excessere omnes adytis arisque relictis Di quibus imperium hoc steterat;” and the narrative given alike by Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 13), and Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* vi. 5, 3), that the cry “Let us depart hence,” was heard at midnight through the courts of the Temple, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

May all this goodly company of Gods
Depart; nor may I see
This city scene of rushings to and fro,
And hostile army burning it with fire!
Eteoc. Nay, call not on the Gods with counsel base;
Obedience is the mother of success,
Child strong to save. 'Tis thus the saying runs.

Antistrophe II

Chor. True is it; but the Gods
Have yet a mightier power, and oftentimes,
In pressure of sore ill,
It raises one perplexed from direst woe,
When dark clouds gather thickly o'er his eyes.

Eteoc. 'Tis work of men to offer sacrifice
And victims to the Gods, when foes press hard;
Thine to be dumb and keep within the house.

Strophe III

Chor. 'Tis through the Gods we live
In city unsubdued, and that our towers
Ward off the multitude of jealous foes.
What Power will grudge us this?

Eteoc. I grudge not your devotion to the Gods;
But lest you make my citizens faint-hearted
Be tranquil, nor to fear's excess give way.

Antistrophe III

Chor. Hearing but now a din
Strange, wildly mingled, I with shrinking fear
Here to our city's high Acropolis,
Time-hallowed spot, have come.
Eteoc. Nay, if ye hear of wounded men or dying,
Bear them not swiftly off with wailing loud;
For blood of men is Ares' chosen food.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Sc. Blood must be shed in war. Ares would not be Ares without it. It is better to take it as it comes.

Chor. Hark! now I hear the panting of the steeds.

Eteoc. Clear though thou hear, yet hear not overmuch.

Chor. Lo! from its depths the fortress groans, beleaguered.

Eteoc. It is enough that I provide for this.

Chor. I fear: the din increases at the gates.

Eteoc. Be still, say nought of these things in the city.

Chor. O holy Band!⁹¹ desert ye not our towers.

Eteoc. A curse fall on thee! wilt thou not be still?

Chor. Gods of my city, from the slave's lot save me!

Eteoc. 'Tis thou enslav'st thyself and all thy city.

Chor. Oh, turn thy darts, great Zeus, against our foes!

Eteoc. Oh, Zeus, what race of women thou hast given us!

Chor. A sorry race, like men whose city falls.

Eteoc. What? Cling to these statues, yet speak words of ill?

Chor. Fear hurries on my tongue in want of courage.

Eteoc. Could'st thou but grant one small boon at my prayer!

Chor. Speak it out quickly, and I soon shall know.

Eteoc. Be still, poor fool, and frighten not thy friends.

Chor. Still am I, and with others bear our fate.

Eteoc. These words of thine I much prefer to those:
And further, though no longer at the shrines,
Pray thou for victory, that the Gods fight with us.
And when my prayers thou hearest, then do thou
Raise a loud, welcome, holy pæan-shout,
The Hellenes' wonted cry at sacrifice;
So cheer thy friends, and check their fear of foes;
And I unto our country's guardian Gods,

⁹¹ Sc., the company of Gods, Pallas, Hera and the others whom the Chorus had invoked.

Who hold the plain or watch the agora,
The springs of Dirké, and Ismenos' stream; —
If things go well, and this our city's saved, —
I vow that staining with the blood of sheep
The altar-hearths of Gods, or slaying bulls,
We'll fix our trophies, and our foemen's robes
On the spear's point on consecrated walls,
Before the shrines I'll hang.⁹² Pray thou this prayer,
Not weakly wailing, nor with vain wild sobs,
For no whit more thou'lt 'scape thy destined lot:
And I six warriors, with myself as seventh,
Against our foes in full state like their own,
Will station at the seven gates' entrances,
Ere hurrying heralds and swift-rushing words
Come and inflame them in the stress of need. [*Exit*

Strophe I

Chor. My heart is full of care and knows not sleep,
By panic fear o'ercome;
And troubles throng my soul,
And set a-glow my dread
Of the great host encamped around our walls,
As when a trembling dove
Fears, for her callow brood,
The snakes that come, ill mates for her soft nest;
For some upon our towers
March in full strength of mingled multitude;
And what will me befall?
And others on our men on either hand
Hurl rugged blocks of stone.
In every way, ye Zeus-born Gods, defend
The city and the host
That Cadmos claim as sire.

Antistrophe I

What better land will ye receive for this,
If ye to foes resign
This rich and fertile clime,
And that Dirkéan stream,

⁹² Reference to this custom, which has passed from Pagan temples into Christian churches, is found in the *Agamemnon*, v. 562. It was connected, of course, with the general practice of offering as *ex votos* any personal ornaments or clothing as a token of thanksgiving for special mercies.

Goodliest of founts by great Poseidon sent,
Who circleth earth, or those
Who Tethys parent call?⁹³
And therefore, O ye Gods that guard our city,
Sending on those without
Our towers a woe that robs men of their life,
And makes them lose their shield,
Gain glory for these countrymen of mine;
And take your standing-ground,
As saviours of the city, firm and true,
In answer to our cry
Of wailing and of prayer.

Strophe II

For sad it were to hurl to Hades dark
A city of old fame,
The spoil and prey of war,
With foulest shame in dust and ashes laid,
By an Achæan foe at God's decree;
And that our women, old and young alike,
Be dragged away, ah me!
Like horses, by their hair
Their robes torn off from them.
And lo, the city wails, made desolate,
While with confused cry
The wretched prisoners meet doom worse than death.
Ah, at this grievous fate
I shudder ere it comes.

Antistrophe II

And piteous 'tis for those whose youth is fresh
Before the rites that cull
Their fair and first-ripe fruit,
To take a hateful journey from their homes.
Nay, but I say the dead far better fare
Than these, for when a city is subdued
It bears full many an ill.
This man takes prisoner that,
Or slays, or burns with fire;
And all the city is defiled with smoke,

⁹³ Rivers and streams as the children of Tethys and Okeanos.

And Ares fans the flame
In wildest rage, and laying many low,
Tramples with foot unclean
On all men sacred hold.

Strophe III

And hollow din is heard throughout the town,
Hemmed in by net of towers;
And man by man is slaughtered with the spear,
And cries of bleeding babes,
Of children at the breast,
Are heard in piteous wail,
And rapine, sister of the plunderer's rush,
Spoiler with spoiler meets,
And empty-handed empty-handed calls,
Wishing for share of gain,
Both eager for a portion no whit less,
For more than equal lot
With what they deem the others' hands have found.

Antistrophe III

And all earth's fruits cast wildly on the ground,
Meeting the cheerless eye
Of frugal housewives, give them pain of heart;
And many a gift of earth
In formless heaps is whirled
In waves of nothingness;
And the young maidens know a sorrow new;
For now the foe prevails,
And gains rich prize of wretched captive's bed;
And now their only hope
Is that the night of death will come at last,
Their truest, best ally,
To rescue them from sorrow fraught with tears.

Enter Eteocles, followed by his Chief Captains,

and by the Scout

Semi-Chor. A. The army scout, so deem I, brings to us,
Dear friends, some tidings new, with quickest speed
Plying the nimble axles of his feet.

Semi-Chor. B. Yea, the king's self, the son of Ædipus,
Is nigh to hear the scout's exact report;
And haste denies him too an even step.

Mess. I knowing well, will our foes' state report,
How each his lot hath stationed at the gates.
At those of Prætos, Tydeus thunders loud,
And him the prophet suffers not to cross
Ismenos' fords, the victims boding ill.⁹⁴
And Tydeus, raging eager for the fight,
Shouts like a serpent in its noontide scream,
And on the prophet, Æcleus' son, heaps shame,
That he, in coward fear, doth crouch and fawn
Before the doom and peril of the fight.
And with such speech he shakes his triple crest,
O'ershadowing all his helm, and 'neath his shield
Bells wrought in bronze ring out their chimes of fear;
And on his shield he bears this proud device, —
A firmament enchased, all bright with stars,⁹⁵
And in the midst the full moon's glittering orb,
Sovran of stars and eye of Night, shines forth.
And thus exulting in o'er boastful arms,
By the stream's bank he shouts in lust of war,
[E'en as a war-horse panting in his strength
Against the curb that galls him, who at sound
Of trumpet's clang chafes hotly.] Whom wilt thou
Set against him? Who is there strong enough
When the bolts yield, to guard the Prætan gates?

Eteoc. No fear have I of any man's array;
Devices have no power to pierce or wound,
And crest and bells bite not without a spear;
And for this picture of the heavens at night,
Of which thou tellest, glittering on his shield,
Perchance his madness may a prophet prove;
For if night fall upon his dying eyes,
Then for the man who bears that boastful sign
It may right well be all too truly named,
And his own pride shall prophet be of ill.

⁹⁴ Here, as in v. 571, Tydeus appears as the real leader of the expedition, who had persuaded Adrastos and the other chiefs to join in it, and Amphiaraios, the prophet, the son of Æcleus, as having all along foreseen its disastrous issue. The account of the expedition in the *Ædipus at Colonos* (1300-1330) may be compared with this.

⁹⁵ The legend of the Medusa's head on the shield of Athena shows the practice of thus decorating shields to have been of remote date. In Homer it does not appear as common, and the account given of the shield of Achilles lays stress upon the work of the artist (Hephæstos) who wrought the shield in relief, not, as here, upon painted insignia. They were obviously common in the time of Æschylos.

And against Tydeus, to defend the gates,
I'll set this valiant son of Astacos;
Noble is he, and honouring well the throne
Of Reverence, and hating vaunting speech,
Slow to all baseness, unattuned to ill:
And of the dragon-race that Ares spared⁹⁶
He as a scion grows, a native true,
E'en Melanippos; Ares soon will test
His valour in the hazard of the die:
And kindred Justice sends him forth to war,
For her that bore him foeman's spear to check.

Strophe I

Chor. May the Gods grant my champion good success!
For justly he goes forth
For this our State to fight;
But yet I quake with fear
To see the deaths of those who die for friends.

Mess. Yea, may the Gods give good success to him!
The Electran gates have fallen to Capaneus,
A second giant, taller far than he
Just named, with boast above a mortal's bounds;
And dread his threats against our towers (O Fortune,
Turn them aside!) – for whether God doth will,
Or willeth not, he says that he will sack⁹⁷
The city, nor shall e'en the wrath of Zeus,
On the plain swooping, turn him from his will;
And the dread lightnings and hot thunderbolts
He likens to the heat of noon-day sun.
And his device, the naked form of one
Who bears a torch; and bright the blaze shines forth
And in gold characters he speaks the words,
“The city I will burn.” Against this man
Send forth ... but who will meet him in the fight?
Who, without fear, await this warrior proud?

Eteoc. Herein, too, profit upon profit comes;
And 'gainst the vain and boastful thoughts of men,
Their tongue itself is found accuser true.
Threatening, equipped for work is Capaneus,

⁹⁶ The older families of Thebes boasted that they sprang from the survivors of the Sparti, who, sprung from the Dragon's teeth, waged deadly war against each other, till all but five were slain. The later settlers, who were said to have come with Cadmos, stood to these as the “greater” to the “lesser *gentes*” at Rome.

⁹⁷ So in the *Antigone* of Sophocles (v. 134), Capaneus appears as the special representative of boastful, reckless impiety.

Scorning the Gods: and giving speech full play,
And in wild joy, though mortal, vents at Zeus,
High in the heavens, loud-spoken foaming words.
And well I trust on him shall rightly come
Fire-bearing thunder, nothing likened then
To heat of noon-day sun. And so 'gainst him,
Though very bold of speech, a man is set
Of fiery temper, Polyphontes strong,
A trusty bulwark, by the loving grace
Of guardian Artemis⁹⁸ and other Gods.
Describe another, placed at other gates.

Antistrophe I

Chor. A curse on him who 'gainst our city boasts!
May thunder smite him down
Before he force his way
Into my home, and drive
Me from my maiden bower with haughty spear?

Mess. And now I'll tell of him who by the gates
Stands next; for to Eteocles, as third,
To march his cohort to Neïstian gates,
Leaped the third lot from upturned brazen helm:
And he his mares, in head-gear snorting, whirls,
Full eager at the gates to fall and die;
Their whistling nozzles of barbaric mode,
Are filled with loud blast of the panting nostrils.⁹⁹
In no poor fashion is his shield devised;
A full-armed warrior climbs a ladder's rungs,
And mounts his foeman's towers as bent to sack;
And he too cries, in words of written speech,
That "Not e'en Ares from the towers shall drive him."
Send thou against him some defender true,
To ward the yoke of bondage from our State.

Eteoc. Such would I send now; by good luck indeed
He has been sent, his vaunting in his deeds,
Megareus, Creon's son, who claims descent
From those as Sparti known, and not by noise
Of neighings loud of warlike steeds dismayed,
Will he the gates abandon, but in death
Will pay our land his nurture's debt in full,¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Artemis, as one of the special Deities to whom Thebes was consecrated.

⁹⁹ Apparently an Asiatic invention, to increase the terror of an attack of war-chariots.

¹⁰⁰ The phrase and thought were almost proverbial in Athens. Men, as citizens, were thought of as fed at a common table, bound

Or taking two men, and a town to boot,
(That on the shield,) will deck his father's house
With those his trophies. Of another tell
The bragging tale, nor grudge thy words to me.

Strophe II

Chor. Him I wish good success,
O guardian of my home, and for his foes
All ill success I pray;
And since against our land their haughty words
With maddened soul they speak,
May Zeus, the sovran judge,
With fiery, hot displeasure look on them!

Mess. Another stands as fourth at gates hard by,
Onca-Athenà's, with a shout of war,
Hippomedon's great form and massive limbs;
And as he whirled his orb, his vast shield's disk,
I shuddered; yea, no idle words I speak.
No cheap and common draughtsman sure was he
Who wrought this cunning ensign on his shield:
Typhon emitting from his lips hot blast
Of darkling smoke, the flickering twin of fire:
And round the belly of the hollow shield
A rim was made with wreaths of twisted snakes.
And he too shouts his war-cry, and in frenzy,
As man possessed by Ares, hastes to battle,
Like Thyiad, darting terror from his eyes.¹⁰¹
'Gainst such a hero's might we well may guard;
Already at the gates men brag of rout.

Eteoc. First, the great Onca-Pallas, dwelling nigh
Our city's gates, and hating man's bold pride,
Shall ward him from her nestlings like a snake
Of venom dread; and next Hyperbios,
The stalwart son of Ænops, has been chosen,
A hero 'gainst this hero, willing found
To try his destiny at Fortune's hest.
No fault has he in form, or heart, or arms;
And Hermes with good reason pairs them off;
For man with man will fight as enemy,
And on their shields they'll bring opposing Gods;

to contribute their gifts to the common stock. When they offered up their lives in battle, they were giving, as Pericles says (Thucyd. ii. 43), their noblest "contribution," paying in full their subscription to the society of which they were members.

¹⁰¹ Thyiad, another name for the Mænads, the frenzied attendants on Dionysos.

For this man beareth Typhon, breathing fire,
And on Hyperbios' shield sits father Zeus,
Full firm, with burning thunderbolt in hand;
And never yet has man seen Zeus, I trow,
O'ercome. Such then the favour of the Gods,
We with the winners, they with losers are:¹⁰²
Good reason then the rivals so should fare,
If Zeus than Typhon stronger be in fight,
And to Hyperbios Zeus will saviour prove,
As that device upon his shield presents him.

Antistrophe II

Chor. Now do I trust that he
Who bears upon his shield the hated form
Of Power whom Earth doth shroud,
Antagonist to Zeus, unloved by men
And by the ageless Gods,
Before those gates of ours
To his own hurt may dash his haughty head.

Mess. So may it be! And now the fifth I tell,
Who the fifth gates, the Northern, occupies,
Hard by Amphion's tomb, the son of Zeus;
And by his spear he swears, (which he is bold
To honour more than God or his own eyes,)
That he will sack the fort of the Cadmeians
With that spear's might. So speaks the offspring fair
Of mother mountain-bred, a stripling hero;
And the soft down is creeping o'er his cheeks,
Youth's growth, and hair that floweth full and thick;
And he with soul, not maiden's like his name,¹⁰³
But stern, with flashing eye, is standing there.
Nor stands he at the gate without a vaunt;
For on his brass-wrought buckler, strong defence,
Full-orbed, his body guarding, he the shame
Of this our city bears, the ravenous Sphinx,
With rivets fixed, all burnished and embossed;¹⁰⁴
And under her she holdeth a Cadmeian,
That so on him most arrows might be shot.
No chance that he will fight a peddling fight,

¹⁰² *Sc.*, in the legends of Typhon, not he, but Zeus, had proved the conqueror. The warrior, therefore, who chose Typhon for his badge was identifying himself with the losing, not the winning side.

¹⁰³ The name, as we are told in v. 542, is Parthenopæos, the maiden-faced.

¹⁰⁴ The Sphinx, besides its general character as an emblem of terror, had, of course, a special meaning as directed to the Thebans. The warrior who bore it threatened to renew the old days when the monster whom Ædipus had overcome had laid waste their city.

Nor shame the long, long journey he hath come,
Parthenopæos, in Arcadia born:
This man did Argos welcome as a guest,
And now he pays her for her goodly rearing,
And threatens these our towers with ... God avert it!

Eteoc. Should the Gods give them what they plan 'gainst us,
Then they, with those their godless boastings high,
Would perish shamefully and utterly.
And for this man of Arcady thou tell'st of,
We have a man who boasts not, but his hand
Sees the right thing to do; – Actôr, of him
I named but now the brother, – who no tongue
Divorced from deeds will ever let within
Our gates, to spread and multiply our ills,
Nor him who bears upon his foeman's shield
The image of the hateful venomed beast;
But she without shall blame him as he tries
To take her in, when she beneath our walls
Gets sorely bruised and battered.¹⁰⁵ And herein,
If the Gods will, I prophet true shall prove.

Strophe III

Chor. Thy words thrill through my breast;
My hair stands all on end,
To hear the boastings great
Of those who speak great things
Unholy. May the Gods
Destroy them in our land!

Mess. A sixth I tell of, one of noblest mood,
Amphiaraos, seer and warrior famed;
He, stationed at the Homolôian gates,
Reproves the mighty Tydeus with sharp words
As 'murderer,' and 'troubler of the State,'¹⁰⁶
'To Argos teacher of all direst ills,
Erinnys' sumpnour,'¹⁰⁷ 'murder's minister,'
Whose counsels led Adrastus to these ills.
And at thy brother Polyneikes glancing
With eyes uplifted for his father's fate,

¹⁰⁵ *Sc.*, the Sphinx on his shield will not be allowed to enter the city. It will only serve as a mark, attracting men to attack both it and the warrior who bears it.

¹⁰⁶ The quarrel between Tydeus and the seer Amphiaraos had been already touched upon.

¹⁰⁷ I have used the old English word to express a term of like technical use in Athenian law processes. As the "sumpnour" called witnesses or parties to a suit into court, so Tydeus had summoned the Erinnys to do her work of destruction.

And ending, twice he syllabled his name,¹⁰⁸
And called him, and thus speaketh with his lips: —
“A goodly deed, and pleasant to the Gods,
Noble for after age to hear and tell,
Thy father's city and thy country's Gods
To waste through might of mercenary host!
And how shall Justice stay thy mother's tears?¹⁰⁹
And how, when conquered, shall thy fatherland,
Laid waste, become a true ally to thee?
As for myself, I shall that land make rich,¹¹⁰
A prophet buried in a foeman's soil:
To arms! I look for no inglorious death.”
So spake the prophet, bearing full-orbed shield
Wrought all of bronze, no ensign on that orb.
He wishes to be just, and not to seem,¹¹¹
Reaping full harvest from his soul's deep furrows,
Whence ever new and noble counsels spring.
I bid thee send defenders wise and brave
Against him. Dread is he who fears the Gods.

Eteoc. Fie on the chance that brings the righteous man
Close-mated with the ungodly! In all deeds
Nought is there worse than evil fellowship,
A crop men should not reap. Death still is found
The harvest of the field of frenzied pride;
For either hath the godly man embarked
With sailors hot in insolence and guile,¹¹²
And perished with the race the Gods did loathe;
Or just himself, with citizens who wrong
The stranger and are heedless of the Gods,
Falling most justly in the self-same snare,
By God's scourge smitten, shares the common doom.
And thus this seer I speak of, Æcleus' son,
Righteous, and wise, and good, and reverent,
A mighty prophet, mingling with the godless
And men full bold of speech in reason's spite,
Who take long march to reach a far-off city,¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Sc., so pronounced his name as to emphasise the significance of its two component parts, as indicating that he who bore it was a man of much contention.

¹⁰⁹ The words are obscure, but seem to refer to the badge of Polyneikes, the figure of Justice described in v. 643 as on his shield. How shall that Justice, the seer asks, console Jocasta for her son's death? Another rendering gives, “And how shall Justice quench a mother's life?” the “mother” being the country against which Polyneikes wars.

¹¹⁰ The words had a twofold fulfilment (1) in the burial of Amphiaraios, in the Theban soil; and (2) in the honour which accrued to Thebes after his death, through the fame of the oracle at his shrine.

¹¹¹ The passage cannot be passed over without noticing the old tradition (Plutarch, *Aristeid.* c. 3), that when the actor uttered these words, he and the whole audience looked to Aristeides, surnamed the Just, as recognising that the words were true of him as they were of no one else. “Best,” instead of “just,” is, however, a very old various reading.

¹¹² If the former reference to Aristeides be admitted, we can scarcely avoid seeing in this passage an allusion to Themistocles, as one with whose reckless and democratic policy it was dangerous for the more conservative leader to associate himself.

¹¹³ The far-off city, not of Thebes, but of Hades. In the legend of Thebes, the earth opened and swallowed up Amphiaraios, as in 583.

If Zeus so will, shall be hurled down with them.
And he, I trow, shall not draw nigh the gates,
Not through faint-heart or any vice of mood,
But well he knows this war shall bring his death,
If any fruit is found in Loxias' words;
And He or holds his speech or speaks in season.
Yet against him the hero Lasthenes,
A foe of strangers, at the gates we'll set;
Old in his mind, his body in its prime,
His eye swift-footed, and his hand not slow
To grasp the spear from 'neath the shield laid bare:¹¹⁴
Yet 'tis by God's gift men must win success.

Antistrophe III

Chor. Hear, O ye Gods! our prayers,
Our just entreaties grant,
That so our State be blest.
Turn ye the toils of war
Upon the invading host.
Outside the walls may Zeus
With thunder smite them low!

Mess. The seventh chief then who at the seventh gate stands,
Thine own, own brother, I will speak of now,
What curses on our State he pours, and prays
That he the towers ascending, and proclaimed
By herald's voice to all the territory,
And shouting out the captor's pæan-cry,
May so fight with thee, slay, and with thee die;
Or driving thee alive, who did'st him wrong,
May on thee a vengeance wreak like in kind.
So clamours he, and bids his father's Gods,
His country's guardians, look upon his prayers,
[And grant them all. So Polyneikes prays.]
And he a new and well-wrought shield doth bear,
And twofold sign upon it riveted;
For there a woman with a stately tread
Leads one who seems a warrior wrought in gold:
Justice she calls herself, and thus she speaks:
“I will bring back this man, and he shall have
The city and his father's dwelling-place.”
Such are the signs and mottoes of those men;
And thou, know well whom thou dost mean to send:
So thou shalt never blame my heraldings;

¹¹⁴ The short spear was usually carried under the shelter of the shield; when brought into action it was, of course, laid bare.

And thou thyself know how to steer the State.

Eteoc. O frenzy-stricken, hated sore of Gods!
O woe-fraught race (my race!) of Ædipus!
Ah me! my father's curse is now fulfilled;
But neither is it meet to weep or wail,
Lest cry more grievous on the issue come.
Of Polyneikes, name and omen true,
We soon shall know what way his badge shall end,
Whether his gold-wrought letters shall restore him,
His shield's great swelling words with frenzied soul.
An if great Justice, Zeus's virgin child,
Ruled o'er his words and acts, this might have been;
But neither when he left his mother's womb,
Nor in his youth, nor yet in ripening age,
Nor when his beard was gathered on his chin,
Did Justice count him meet for fellowship;
Nor do I think that she befriends him now
In this great outrage on his father's land.
Yea, justly Justice would as falsely named
Be known, if she with one all-daring joined.
In this I trust, and I myself will face him:
Who else could claim a greater right than I?
Brother with brother fighting, king with king,
And foe with foe, I'll stand. Come, quickly fetch
My greaves that guard against the spear and stones.

Chor. Nay, dearest friend, thou son of Ædipus,
Be ye not like to him with that ill name.
It is enough Cadmeian men should fight
Against the Argives. That blood may be cleansed;
But death so murderous of two brothers born,
This is pollution that will ne'er wax old.

Eteoc. If a man must bear evil, let him still
Be without shame – sole profit that in death.
[No glory comes of base and evil deeds].

Chor. What dost thou crave, my son? Let no ill fate,
Frenzied and hot for war,
Carry thee headlong on;
Check the first onset of an evil lust.

Eteoc. Since God so hotly urges on the matter,
Let all of Laios' race whom Phœbos hates,
Drift with the breeze upon Cokytos' wave.

Chor. An over-fierce and passionate desire
Stirs thee and pricks thee on

To work an evil deed
Of guilt of blood thy hand should never shed.

Eteoc. Nay, my dear father's curse, in full-grown hate,
Dwells on dry eyes that cannot shed a tear,
And speaks of gain before the after-doom.

Chor. But be not thou urged on. The coward's name
Shall not be thine, for thou
Hast ordered well thy life.
Dark-robed Erinnys enters not the house,
When at men's hands the Gods
Accept their sacrifice.

Eteoc. As for the Gods, they scorned us long ago,
And smile but on the offering of our deaths;
What boots it then on death's doom still to fawn?

Chor. Nay do it now, while yet 'tis in thy power;¹¹⁵
Perchance may fortune shift
With tardy change of mood,
And come with spirit less implacable:
At present fierce and hot
She waxeth in her rage.

Eteoc. Yea, fierce and hot the Curse of Ædipus;
And all too true the visions of the night,
My father's treasured store distributing.

Chor. Yield to us women, though thou lov'st us not.

Eteoc. Speak then what may be done, and be not long.

Chor. Tread not the path that to the seventh gate leads.

Eteoc. Thou shall not blunt my sharpened edge with words.

Chor. And yet God loves the victory that submits.¹¹⁶

Eteoc. That word a warrior must not tolerate.

Chor. Dost thou then haste thy brother's blood to shed?

Eteoc. If the Gods grant it, he shall not 'scape harm.

¹¹⁵ Perhaps "since death is at nigh hand."

¹¹⁶ The Chorus means that if Eteocles would allow himself to be overcome in this contest of his wishes with their prayers the Gods would honour that defeat as if it were indeed a victory. He makes answer that the very thought of being overcome implied in the word "defeat" in anything is one which the true warrior cannot bear.

[Exeunt Eteocles, Scout, and Captains

Strophe I

Chor. I fear her might who doth this whole house wreck,
The Goddess unlike Gods,
The prophetess of evil all too true,
The Erinnys of thy father's imprecations,
Lest she fulfil the curse,
O'er-wrathful, frenzy-fraught,
The curse of Ædipus,
Laying his children low.
This Strife doth urge them on.

Antistrophe I

And now a stranger doth divide the lots,
The Chalyb,¹¹⁷ from the Skythians emigrant,
The stern distributor of heaped-up wealth,
The iron that hath assigned them just so much
Of land as theirs, no more,
As may suffice for them
As grave when they shall fall,
Without or part or lot
In the broad-spreading plains.

Strophe II

And when the hands of each
The other's blood have shed,
And the earth's dust shall drink
The black and clotted gore,
Who then can purify?
Who cleanse thee from the guilt?
Ah me! O sorrows new,
That mingle with the old woes of our house!

¹¹⁷ The "Chalyb stranger" is the sword, thought of as taking its name from the Skythian tribe of the Chalybes, between Colchis and Armenia, and passing through the Thrakians into Greece.

Antistrophe II

I tell the ancient tale
Of sin that brought swift doom;
Till the third age it waits,
Since Laios, heeding not
Apollo's oracle,
(Though spoken thrice to him
In Pythia's central shrine,
That dying childless, he should save the State.

Strophe III

But he by those he loved full rashly swayed,
Doom for himself begat,
His murderer Ædipus,
Who dared to sow in field
Unholy, whence he sprang,
A root of blood-flecked woe.
Madness together brought
Bridegroom and bride accursed.

Antistrophe III

And now the sea of evil pours its flood:
This falling, others rise,
As with a triple crest,
Which round the State's stern roars:
And but a bulwark slight,
A tower's poor breadth, defends:
And lest the city fall
With its two kings I fear.

Strophe IV

And that atonement of the ancient curse
Receives fulfilment now;¹¹⁸
And when they come, the evils pass not by.

¹¹⁸ The two brothers, *i. e.*, are set at one again, but it is not in the bonds of friendship, but in those of death.

E'en so the wealth of sea-adventurers,
When heaped up in excess,
Leads but to cargo from the stern thrown out.¹¹⁹

Antistrophe IV

For whom of mortals did the Gods so praise,
And fellow-worshippers,
And race of those who feed their flocks and herds¹²⁰
As much as then they honoured Œdipus,
Who from our country's bounds
Had driven the monster, murderess of men?

Strophe V

And when too late he knew,
Ah, miserable man! his wedlock dire,
Vexed sore with that dread shame,
With heart to madness driven,
He wrought a twofold ill,
And with the hand that smote his father's life
Blinded the eyes that might his sons have seen.

Antistrophe V

And with a mind provoked
By nurture scant, he at his sons did hurl¹²¹
His curses dire and dark,
(Ah, bitter curses those!)
That they with spear in hand
Should one day share their father's wealth; and I
Fear now lest swift Erinnys should fulfil them.

¹¹⁹ The image meets us again in *Agam.* 980. Here the thought is, that a man too prosperous is like a ship too heavily freighted. He must part with a portion of his possession in order to save the rest. Not to part with them leads, when the storm rages, to an enforced abandonment and utter loss.

¹²⁰ Another reading gives —“And race of those who crowd the Agora.”

¹²¹ This seems to have been one form of the legends as to the cause of the curse which Œdipus had launched upon his sons, An alternative rendering is —And with a mind enragedAt thought of what they were whom he had reared,He at his sons did hurlHis curses dire and dark.

Enter Messenger

Mess. Be of good cheer, ye maidens, mother-reared;
Our city has escaped the yoke of bondage,
The boasts of mighty men are fallen low,
And this our city in calm waters floats,
And, though by waves lashed, springs not any leak.
Our fortress still holds out, and we did guard
The gates with champions who redeemed their pledge.
In the six gateways almost all goes well;
But the seventh gate did King Apollo choose,¹²²
Seventh mighty chief, avenging Laios' want
Of counsel on the sons of Ædipus.

Chor. What new disaster happens to our city?¹²³

Mess. The city's saved, but both the royal brothers...

Chor. Who? and what of them? I'm distraught with fear.

Mess. Be calm, and hear: the sons of Ædipus...

Chor. Oh wretched me! a prophet I of ill!

Mess. Slain by each other, earth has drunk their blood.

Chor. Came they to that? 'Tis dire; yet tell it me.

Mess. Too true, by brother's hand our chiefs are slain.

Chor. What, did the brother's hands the brother lay?

Mess. No doubt is there that they are laid in dust.

Chor. Thus was there then a common fate for both?

Mess. *Yea, it lays low the whole ill-fated race.

Chor. These things give cause for gladness and for tears,
Seeing that our city prospers, and our lords,
The generals twain, with well-wrought Skythian steel,
Have shared between them all their store of goods,
And now shall have their portion in a grave,
Borne on, as spake their father's grievous curse.¹²⁴

¹²² Sc., when Eteocles fell, Apollo took his place at the seventh gate, and turned the tide of war in favour of the Thebans.

¹²³ I follow in this dialogue the arrangement which Paley adopts from Hermann.

¹²⁴ There seems an intentional ambiguity. They are "borne on," but it is as the corpses of the dead are borne to the sepulchre.

Mess. [The city's saved, but of the brother-kings
The earth has drunk the blood, each slain by each.]

Chor. Great Zeus! and ye, O Gods!
Guardians of this our town,
Who save in very deed
The towers of Cadmos old,
Shall I rejoice and shout
Over the happy chance
That frees our State from harm;
Or weep that ill-starred pair,
The war-chiefs, childless and most miserable,
Who, true to that ill name
Of Polyneikes, died in impious mood,
Contending overmuch?

Strophe

Oh dark, and all too true
That curse of Ædipus and all his race,¹²⁵
An evil chill is falling on my heart,
And, like a Thyiad wild,
Over his grave I sing a dirge of grief,
Hearing the dead have died by evil fate,
Each in foul bloodshed steeped;
Ah me! Ill-omened is the spear's accord.¹²⁶

Antistrophe

It hath wrought out its end,
And hath not failed, that prayer the father poured;
And Laios' reckless counsels work till now:
I fear me for the State;
The oracles have not yet lost their edge;
O men of many sorrows, ye have wrought
This deed incredible;
Not now in word come woes most lamentable.

¹²⁵ Not here the curse uttered by Ædipus, but that which rested on him and all his kin. There is possibly an allusion to the curse which Pelops is said to have uttered against Laios when he stole his son Chrysispos. Comp. v. 837.

¹²⁶ As in v. 763 we read of the brothers as made one in death, so now of the concord which is wrought out by conflict, the concord, *i. e.*, of the grave.

[As the Chorus are speaking, the bodies of Eteocles and Polyneikes are brought in solemn procession by Theban Citizens]

Epode

Yea, it is all too clear,
The herald's tale of woe comes full in sight;
Twofold our cares, twin evils born of pride,
Murderous, with double doom,
Wrought unto full completeness all these ills.
What shall I say? What else
Are they than woes that make this house their home?
But oh! my friends, ply, ply with swift, strong gale,
That even stroke of hands upon your head,¹²⁷
In funeral order, such as evermore
O'er Acheron sends on
That bark of State, dark-rigged, accursed its voyage,
Which nor Apollo visits nor the sun,¹²⁸
On to the shore unseen,
The resting-place of all.

[Ismene and Antigone are seen approaching in mourning garments, followed by a procession of women wailing and lamenting]

For see, they come to bitter deed called forth,
Ismene and the maid Antigone,
To wail their brothers' fall;
With little doubt I deem,
That they will pour from fond, deep-bosomed breasts
A worthy strain of grief:
But it is meet that we,
Before we hear their cry,
Should utter the harsh hymn Erinnys loves,
And sing to Hades dark
The Pæan of distress.
O ye, most evil-fated in your kin,
Of all who guard their robes with maiden's band,
I weep and wail, and feigning know I none,

¹²⁷ The Chorus are called on to change their character, and to pass from the attitude of suppliants, with outstretched arms, to that of mourners at a funeral, beating on their breasts. But, perhaps, the call is addressed to the mourners who are seen approaching with Ismene and Antigone.

¹²⁸ The thought is drawn from the *theoris* or pilgrim-ship, which went with snow-white sails, and accompanied by joyful pæans, on a solemn mission from Athens to Delos. In contrast with this type of joy, Æschylos draws the picture of the boat of Charon, which passes over the gloomy pool accompanied by the sighs and gestures of bitter lamentation. So, in the old Attic legend, the ship that annually carried seven youths and maidens to the Minotaur of Crete was conspicuous for its black sails.

That I should fail to speak
My sorrow from my heart.

Strophe I

Semi-Chor. A. Alas! alas!
Men of stern mood, who would not list to friends,
Unwearied in all ills,
Seizing your father's house, O wretched ones
With the spear's murderous point.

Semi-Chor. B. Yea, wretched they who found a wretched doom,
With havoc of the house.

Antistrophe I

Semi-Chor. A. Alas! alas!
Ye who laid low the ancient walls of home,
On sovereignty, ill won,
Your eyes have looked, and ye at last are brought
To concord by the sword.

Semi-Chor. B. Yea, of a truth, the curse of Ædipus
Erinnys dread fulfils.

Strophe II

Semi-Chor. A. Yea, smitten through the heart,
Smitten through sides where flowed the blood of brothers.
Ah me! ye doomed of God!
Ah me! the curses dire
Of deaths ye met with each at other's hands!

Semi-Chor. B. Thou tell'st of men death-smitten through and through,
Both in their homes and lives,
With wrath beyond all speech,
And doom of discord fell,
That sprang from out the curse their father spake.

Antistrophe II

Semi-Chor. A. Yea, through the city runs
A wailing cry. The high towers wail aloud;
Wails all the plain that loves her heroes well;
And to their children's sons
The wealth will go for which
The strife of those ill-starred ones brought forth death.

Semi-Chor. B. Quick to resent, they shared their fortune so,
That each like portion won;
Nor can their friends regard
Their umpire without blame;
Nor is our voice in thanks to Ares raised.

Strophe III

Semi-Chor. A. By the sword smitten low,
Thus are they now;
By the sword smitten low,
There wait them ... Nay,
Doth one perchance ask what?
Shares in their old ancestral sepulchres.

Semi-Chor. B. *The sorrow of the house is borne to them
By my heart-rending wail.
Mine own the cries I pour;
Mine own the woes I weep,
Bitter and joyless, shedding truest tears
From heart that faileth, even as they fall,
For these two kingly chiefs.

Antistrophe III

Semi-Chor. A. Yes; one may say of them,
That wretched pair,
That they much ill have wrought
To their own host;
Yea, and to alien ranks
Of many nations fallen in the fray.

Semi-Chor. B. Ah! miserable she who bare those twain,

'Bove all of women born
Who boast a mother's name!
Taking her son, her own,
As spouse, she bare these children, and they both,
By mutual slaughter and by brothers' hands,
Have found their end in death.

Strophe IV

Semi-Chor. A. Yes; of the same womb born, and doomèd both,
Not as friends part, they fell,
In strife to madness pushed
In this their quarrel's end.

Semi-Chor. B. The quarrel now is hushed,
And in the ensanguined earth their lives are blent;
Full near in blood are they.
Stern umpire of their strifes
Has been the stranger from beyond the sea,¹²⁹
Fresh from the furnace, keen and sharpened steel.
Stern, too, is Ares found,
Distributing their goods,
Making their father's curses all too true.

Antistrophe IV

Semi-Chor. A. At last they have their share, ah, wretched ones!
Of burdens sent from God.
And now beneath them lies
A boundless wealth of – earth.

Semi-Chor. B. O ye who your own race
Have made to burgeon out with many woes!
Over the end at last
The brood of Curses raise
Their shrill, sharp cry of lamentation loud,
The race being put to flight of utmost rout,
And Atè's trophy stands,
Where in the gates they fell;
And Fate, now both are conquered, rests at last.

¹²⁹ The “Chalyb,” or iron sword, which the Hellenes had imported from the Skythians. Comp. vv. 70. 86.

Enter Antigone and Ismene, followed by mourning

maidens¹³⁰

Ant. Thou wast smitten, and thou smotest.

Ism. Thou did'st slaughter, and wast slaughtered.

Ant. Thou with spear to death did'st smite him.

Ism. Thou with spear to death wast smitten.

Ant. Oh, the woe of all your labours!

Ism. Oh, the woe of all ye suffered!

Ant. Pour the cry of lamentation.

Ism. Pour the tears of bitter weeping.

Ant. There in death thou liest prostrate.

Ism. Having wrought a great destruction.

Strophe

Ant. Ah! my mind is crazed with wailing.

Ism. Yea, my heart within me groaneth.

Ant. Thou for whom the city weepeth!

Ism. Thou too, doomed to all ill-fortune!

Ant. By a loved hand thou hast perished.

Ism. And a loved form thou hast slaughtered.

¹³⁰ The lyrical, operative character of Greek tragedies has to be borne in mind as we read passages like that which follows. They were not meant to be *read*. Uttered in a passionate recitative, accompanied by expressive action, they probably formed a very effective element in the actual representation of the tragedy. We may look on it as the only extant specimen of the kind of wailing which was characteristic of Eastern burials, and which was slowly passing away in Greece under the influence of a higher culture. The early fondness of Æschylos for a *finale* of this nature is seen also in *The Persians*, and in a more solemn and subdued form, in the *Eumenides*. The feeling that there was something barbaric in these untoward displays of grief, showed itself alike in the legislation of Solon, and the eloquence of Pericles.

Ant. Double woes are ours to tell of.

Ism. Double woes too ours to look on.

Ant. *Twofold sorrows from near kindred.

Ism. *Sisters we by brothers standing.

Ant. Terrible are they to tell of.

Ism. Terrible are they to look on.

Chor. Ah me, thou Destiny,
Giver of evil gifts, and working woe,
And thou dread spectral form of Ædipus,
And swarth Erinnyes too,
A mighty one art thou.

Antistrophe

Ant. Ah me! ah me! woes dread to look on...

Ism. Ye showed to me, returned from exile.

Ant. Not, when he had slain, returned he.

Ism. Nay, he, saved from exile, perished.

Ant. Yea, I trow too well, he perished.

Ism. And his brother, too, he murdered.

Ant. Woeful, piteous, are those brothers!

Ism. Woeful, piteous, all they suffered!

Ant. Woes of kindred wrath enkindling!

Ism. Saturate with threefold horrors!

Ant. Terrible are they to tell of.

Ism. Terrible are they to look on.

Chor. Ah me, thou Destiny,
Giver of evil gifts, and stern of soul,

And thou dread spectral form of Ædipus,
And swarth Erinnys too,
A mighty one art thou.

Epode

Ant. Thou, then, by full trial knowest...

Ism. Thou, too, no whit later learning...

Ant. When thou cam'st back to this city¹³¹...

Ism. Rival to our chief in warfare.

Ant. Woe, alas! for all our troubles!

Ism. Woe, alas! for all our evils!

Ant. Evils fallen on our houses!

Ism. Evils fallen on our country!

Ant. And on me before all others...

Ism. And to me the future waiting...

Ant. Woe for those two brothers luckless!

Ism. King Eteocles, our leader!

Ant. Oh, before all others wretched!

Ism....

Ant. Ah, by Atè frenzy-stricken!

Ism. Ah, where now shall they be buried?

Ant. There where grave is highest honour.

Ism. Ah, the woe my father wedded!

¹³¹ Here, and perhaps throughout, we must think of Antigone as addressing and looking on the corpse of Polyneikes, Ismene on that of Eteocles.

Enter a Herald

Her. 'Tis mine the judgment and decrees to publish
Of this Cadmeian city's counsellors:
It is decreed Eteocles to honour,
For his good-will towards this land of ours,
With seemly burial, such as friend may claim;
For warding off our foes he courted death;
Pure as regards his country's holy things,
Blameless he died where death the young beseems;
This then I'm ordered to proclaim of him.
But for his brother's, Polyneikes' corpse,
To cast it out unburied, prey for dogs,
As working havoc on Cadmeian land,
Unless some God had hindered by the spear
Of this our prince;¹³² and he, though, dead, shall gain
The curse of all his father's Gods, whom he

[Pointing to Polyneikes]

With alien host dishonouring, sought to take
Our city. Him by ravenous birds interred
Ingloriously, they sentence to receive
His full deserts; and none may take in hand
To heap up there a tomb, nor honour him
With shrill-voiced wailings; but he still must lie,
Without the meed of burial by his friends.
So do the high Cadmeian powers decree.

Ant. And I those rulers of Cadmeians tell,¹³³
That if no other care to bury him,
I will inter him, facing all the risk,
Burying my brother: nor am I ashamed
To thwart the State in rank disloyalty;
Strange power there is in ties of blood, that we,
Born of woe-laden mother, sire ill-starred,
Are bound by: therefore of thy full free-will,
Share thou, my soul, in woes he did not will,
Thou living, he being dead, with sister's heart.
And this I say, no wolves with ravening maw,
Shall tear his flesh – No! no! let none think that!
For tomb and burial I will scheme for him,

¹³² Perhaps “Unless some God had stood against the spear This chief did wield.”

¹³³ The speech of the Antigone becomes the starting-point, in the hands of Sophocles, of the noblest of his tragedies. The denial of burial, it will be remembered, was looked on as not merely an indignity and outrage against the feelings of the living, but as depriving the souls of the dead of all rest and peace. As such it was the punishment of parricides and traitors.

Though I be but weak woman, bringing earth
Within my byssine raiment's fold, and so
Myself will bury him; let no man think
(I say't again) aught else. Take heart, my soul!
There shall not fail the means effectual.

Her. I bid thee not defy the State in this.

Ant. I bid thee not proclaim vain words to me.

Her. Stern is the people now, with victory flushed.

Ant. Stern let them be, he shall not tombless lie.

Her. And wilt thou honour whom the State doth loathe?

Ant. Yea, from the Gods he gets an honour due.¹³⁴

Her. It was not so till he this land attacked.

Ant. He, suffering evil, evil would repay.

Her. Not against one his arms were turned, but all.

Ant. Strife is the last of Gods to end disputes:
Him I will bury; talk no more of it.

Her. Choose for thyself then, I forbid the deed.

Chor. Alas! alas! alas!
Ye haughty boasters, race-destroying,
Now Fates and now Erinnyes, smiting
The sons of Œdipus, ye slew them,
With a root-and-branch destruction.
What shall I then do, what suffer?
What shall I devise in counsel?
How should I dare nor to weep thee,
Nor escort thee to the burial?
But I tremble and I shrink from
All the terrors which they threatened,
They who are my fellow-townsmen.
Many mourners thou (*looking to the bier of Eteocles*) shalt meet with;
But he, lost one, unlamented,
With his sister's wailing only

¹³⁴ The words are obscure enough, the point lying, it may be, in their ambiguity. Antigone here, as in the tragedy of Sophocles, pleads that the Gods have pardoned; they still command and love the reverence for the dead, which she is about to show. The herald catches up her words and takes them in another sense, as though all the honour he had met with from the Gods had been defeat, and death, and shame, as the reward of his sacrilege. Another rendering, however, gives —“Yes, so the Gods have done with honouring him.”

Passeth. Who with this complieth?

Semi-Chor. A. Let the city doom or not doom
Those who weep for Polyneikes;
We will go, and we will bury,
Maidens we in sad procession;
For the woe to all is common,
And our State with voice uncertain,
Of the claims of Right and Justice;
Hither, thither, shifts its praises.

Semi-Chor. B. We will thus, our chief attending,
Speak, as speaks the State, our praises:
Of the claims of Right and Justice;¹³⁵
For next those the Blessed Rulers,
And the strength of Zeus, he chiefly
Saved the city of Cadmeians
From the doom of fell destruction,
From the doom of whelming utter,
In the flood of alien warriors.

*[Exeunt Antigone and Semi-Chorus A., following
the corpse of Polyneikes; Ismene
and Semi-Chorus B. that of Eteocles.]*

¹³⁵ The words are probably a protest against the changeableness of the Athenian *demos*, as seen especially in their treatment of Aristeides.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Prometheus
Hermes
Okeanos
Strength
Hephæstos
Force
Chorus of Ocean Nymphs

ARGUMENT. – In the old time, when Cronos was sovereign of the Gods, Zeus, whom he had begotten, rose up against him, and the Gods were divided in their counsels, some, the Titans chiefly, siding with the father, and some with the son. And Prometheus, the son of Earth or Themis, though one of the Titans, supported Zeus, as did also Okeanos, and by his counsels Zeus obtained the victory, and Cronos was chained in Tartaros, and the Titans buried under mountains, or kept in bonds in Hades. And then Prometheus, seeing the miseries of the race of men, of whom Zeus took little heed, stole the fire which till then had belonged to none but Hephæstos and was used only for the Gods, and gave it to mankind, and taught them many arts whereby their wretchedness was lessened. But Zeus being wroth with Prometheus for this deed, sent Hephæstos, with his two helpers, Strength and Force, to fetter him to a rock on Caucasos.

And in yet another story was the cruelty of the Gods made known. For Zeus loved Io, the daughter of Inachos, king of Argos, and she was haunted by visions of the night, telling her of his passion, and she told her father thereof. And Inachos, sending to the God at Delphi, was told to drive Io forth from her home. And Zeus gave her the horns of a cow, and Hera, who hated her because she was dear to Zeus, sent with her a gadfly that stung her, and gave her no rest, and drove her over many lands.

Note.— The play is believed to have been the second of a Trilogy, of which the first was *Prometheus the Fire-giver*, and the third *Prometheus Unbound*.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

Scene. – Skythia, on the heights of Caucasos. The Euxine

seen in the distance

Enter Hephæstos, Strength, and Force, leading

Prometheus in chains¹³⁶

Strength. Lo! to a plain, earth's boundary remote,
We now are come, – the tract as Skythian known,
A desert inaccessible: and now,
Hephæstos, it is thine to do the hests
The Father gave thee, to these lofty crags
To bind this crafty trickster fast in chains
Of adamantine bonds that none can break;
For he thy choice flower stealing, the bright glory
Of fire that all arts spring from, hath bestowed it
On mortal men. And so for fault like this
He now must pay the Gods due penalty,
That he may learn to bear the sovereign rule
Of Zeus, and cease from his philanthropy.

Heph. O Strength, and thou, O Force, the hest of Zeus,
As far as touches you, attains its end,
And nothing hinders. Yet my courage fails
To bind a God of mine own kin by force
To this bare rock where tempests wildly sweep;
And yet I needs must muster courage for it:
'Tis no slight thing the Father's words to scorn.
O thou of Themis [*to Prometheus*] wise in counsel son,
Full deep of purpose, lo! against my will,¹³⁷

¹³⁶ The scene seems at first an exception to the early conventional rule, which forbade the introduction of a third actor on the Greek stage. But it has been noticed that (1) Force does not speak, and (2) Prometheus does not speak till Strength and Force have retired, and that it is therefore probable that the whole work of nailing is done on a lay figure or effigy of some kind, and that one of the two who had before taken part in the dialogue then speaks behind it in the character of Prometheus. So the same actor must have appeared in succession as Okeanos, Io, and Hermes.

¹³⁷ Prometheus (*Forethought*) is the son of Themis (*Right*) the second occupant of the Pythian Oracle (*Eumen.* v. 2). His sympathy with man leads him to impart the gift which raised them out of savage animal life, and for this Zeus, who appears throughout the play as a hard taskmaster, sentences him to fetters. Hephæstos, from whom this fire had been stolen, has a touch of pity for him. Strength, who comes as the servant, not of Hephæstos, but of Zeus himself, acts, as such, with merciless cruelty.

I fetter thee against thy will with bonds
Of bronze that none can loose, to this lone height,
Where thou shalt know nor voice nor face of man,
But scorching in the hot blaze of the sun,
Shalt lose thy skin's fair beauty. Thou shalt long
For starry-mantled night to hide day's sheen,
For sun to melt the rime of early dawn;
And evermore the weight of present ill
Shall wear thee down. Unborn as yet is he
Who shall release thee: this the fate thou gain'st
As due reward for thy philanthropy.
For thou, a God not fearing wrath of Gods,
In thy transgression gav'st their power to men;
And therefore on this rock of little ease
Thou still shalt keep thy watch, nor lying down,
Nor knowing sleep, nor ever bending knee;
And many groans and wailings profitless
Thy lips shall utter; for the mind of Zeus
Remains inexorable. Who holds a power
But newly gained¹³⁸ is ever stern of mood.

Strength. Let be! Why linger in this idle pity?
Why dost not hate a God to Gods a foe,
Who gave thy choicest prize to mortal men?

Heph. Strange is the power of kin and intercourse.¹³⁹

Strength. I own it; yet to slight the Father's words,
How may that be? Is not that fear the worse?

Heph. Still art thou ruthless, full of savagery.

Strength. There is no help in weeping over him:
Spend not thy toil on things that profit not.

Heph. O handicraft to me intolerable!

Strength. Why loath'st thou it? Of these thy present griefs
That craft of thine is not one whit the cause.

Heph. And yet I would some other had that skill.

Strength. *All things bring toil except for Gods to reign;¹⁴⁰
For none but Zeus can boast of freedom true.

¹³⁸ The generalised statement refers to Zeus, as having but recently expelled Cronos from his throne in Heaven.

¹³⁹ Hephæstos, as the great fire-worker, had taught Prometheus to use the fire which he afterwards bestowed on men.

¹⁴⁰ Perhaps, "All might is ours except o'er Gods to rule."

Heph. Too well I see the proof, and gainsay not.

Strength. Wilt thou not speed to fix the chains on him,
Lest He, the Father, see thee loitering here?

Heph. Well, here the handcuffs thou may'st see prepared.

Strength. In thine hands take him. Then with all thy might
Strike with thine hammer; nail him to the rocks.

Heph. The work goes on, I ween, and not in vain.

Strength. Strike harder, rivet, give no whit of ease:
A wondrous knack has he to find resource,
Even where all might seem to baffle him.

Heph. Lo! this his arm is fixed inextricably.

Strength. Now rivet thou this other fast, that he
May learn, though sharp, that he than Zeus is duller.

Heph. No one but he could justly blame my work.

Strength. Now drive the stern jaw of the adamant wedge
Right through his chest with all the strength thou hast.

Heph. Ah me! Prometheus, for thy woes I groan.

Strength. Again, thou'rt loth, and for the foes of Zeus
Thou groanest: take good heed to it lest thou
Ere long with cause thyself commiserate.

Heph. Thou see'st a sight unsightly to our eyes.

Strength. I see this man obtaining his deserts:
Nay, cast thy breast-chains round about his ribs.

Heph. I must needs do it. Spare thine o'er much bidding;
Go thou below and rivet both his legs.¹⁴¹

Strength. Nay, I will bid thee, urge thee to thy work.

Heph. There, it is done, and that with no long toil.

Strength. Now with thy full power fix the galling fetters:
Thou hast a stern o'erlooker of thy work.

¹⁴¹ The words indicate that the effigy of Prometheus, now nailed to the rock, was, as being that of a Titan, of colossal size.

Heph. Thy tongue but utters words that match thy form.¹⁴²

Strength. Choose thou the melting mood; but chide not me
For my self-will and wrath and ruthlessness.

Heph. Now let us go, his limbs are bound in chains.

Strength. Here then wax proud, and stealing what belongs
To the Gods, to mortals give it. What can they
Avail to rescue thee from these thy woes?
Falsely the Gods have given thee thy name,
Prometheus, Forethought; forethought thou dost need
To free thyself from this rare handiwork.

*[Exeunt Hephæstos, Strength, and Force,
leaving Prometheus on the rock*

Prom. ¹⁴³ Thou firmament of God, and swift-winged winds,
Ye springs of rivers, and of ocean waves
That smile innumerable! Mother of us all,
O Earth, and Sun's all-seeing eye, behold,
I pray, what I a God from Gods endure.
Behold in what foul case
I for ten thousand years
Shall struggle in my woe,
In these unseemly chains.
Such doom the new-made Monarch of the Blest
Hath now devised for me.
Woe, woe! The present and the oncoming pang
I wail, as I search out
The place and hour when end of all these ills
Shall dawn on me at last.
What say I? All too clearly I foresee
The things that come, and nought of pain shall be
By me unlooked-for; but I needs must bear
My destiny as best I may, knowing well
The might resistless of Necessity.
And neither may I speak of this my fate,
Nor hold my peace. For I, poor I, through giving
Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made
In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² The touch is characteristic as showing that here, as in the *Eumenides*, Æschylos relied on the horribleness of the masks, as part of the machinery of his plays.

¹⁴³ The silence of Prometheus up to this point was partly, as has been said, consequent on the conventional laws of the Greek drama, but it is also a touch of supreme insight into the heroic temper. In the presence of his torturers, the Titan will not utter even a groan. When they are gone, he appeals to the sympathy of Nature.

¹⁴⁴ The legend is from Hesiod (*Theogon.*, v. 567). The fennel, or *narthex*, seems to have been a large umbelliferous plant, with a large stem filled with a sort of pith, which was used when dry as tinder. Stalks were carried as wands (the *thyrsi*) by the men and women who joined in Bacchanalian processions. In modern botany, the name is given to the plant which produces Asafoetida, and the stem of which, from its resinous character, would burn freely, and so connect itself with the Promethean myth. On the other hand, the

I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,
Which is to men a teacher of all arts,
Their chief resource. And now this penalty
Of that offence I pay, fast riveted
In chains beneath the open firmament.
Ha! ha! What now?
What sound, what odour floats invisibly?¹⁴⁵
Is it of God or man, or blending both?
And has one come to the remotest rock
To look upon my woes? Or what wills he?
Behold me bound, a God to evil doomed,
The foe of Zeus, and held
In hatred by all Gods
Who tread the courts of Zeus:
And this for my great love,
Too great, for mortal men.
Ah me! what rustling sounds
Hear I of birds not far?
With the light whirr of wings
The air re-echoeth:
All that draws nigh to me is cause of fear.¹⁴⁶

Enter Chorus of Ocean Nymphs, with wings,

floating in the air ¹⁴⁷

Chor. Nay, fear thou nought: in love
All our array of wings
In eager race hath come
To this high peak, full hardly gaining o'er
Our Father's mind and will;
And the swift-rushing breezes bore me on:
For lo! the echoing sound of blows on iron
Pierced to our cave's recess, and put to flight
My shamefast modesty,
And I in unshod haste, on winged car,
To thee rushed hitherward.

Prom. Ah me! ah me!

Narthex Asafetida is found at present only in Persia, Afghanistan, and the Punjaub.

¹⁴⁵ The ocean nymphs, like other divine ones, would be anointed with ambrosial unguents, and the odour would be wafted before them by the rustling of their wings. This too we may think of as part of the "stage effects" of the play.

¹⁴⁶ The words are not those of a vague terror only. The sufferer knows that his tormentor is to come to him before long on wings, and therefore the sound as of the flight of birds is full of terrors.

¹⁴⁷ By the same stage mechanism the Chorus remains in the air till verse 280, when, at the request of Prometheus, they alight.

Offspring of Tethys blest with many a child,
Daughters of Old Okeanos that rolls
Round all the earth with never-sleeping stream,
Behold ye me, and see
With what chains fettered fast,
I on the topmost crags of this ravine
Shall keep my sentry-post unenviable.

Chor. I see it, O Prometheus, and a mist
Of fear and full of tears comes o'er mine eyes,
Thy frame beholding thus,
Writhing on these high rocks
In adamantine ills.
New pilots now o'er high Olympos rule,
And with new-fashioned laws
Zeus reigns, down-trampling right,
And all the ancient powers He sweeps away.

Prom. Ah! would that 'neath the Earth, 'neath Hades too,
Home of the dead, far down to Tartaros
Unfathomable He in fetters fast
In wrath had hurled me down:
So neither had a God
Nor any other mocked at these my woes;
But now, the wretched plaything of the winds,
I suffer ills at which my foes rejoice.

Chor. Nay, which of all the Gods
Is so hard-hearted as to joy in this?
Who, Zeus excepted, doth not pity thee
In these thine ills? But He,
Ruthless, with soul unbent,
Subdues the heavenly host, nor will He cease¹⁴⁸
Until his heart be satiate with power,
Or some one seize with subtle stratagem
The sovran might that so resistless seemed.

Prom. Nay, of a truth, though put to evil shame,
In massive fetters bound,
The Ruler of the Gods
Shall yet have need of me, yes, e'en of me,
To tell the counsel new
That seeks to strip from him
His sceptre and his might of sovereignty.
In vain will He with words

¹⁴⁸ Here, as throughout the play, the poet puts into the mouth of his *dramatis personæ* words which must have seemed to the devouter Athenians sacrilegious enough to call for an indictment before the Areiopagos. But the final play of the Trilogy came, we may believe, as the *Eumenides* did in its turn, as a reconciliation of the conflicting thoughts that rise in men's minds out of the seeming anomalies of the world.

Or suasion's honeyed charms
Soothe me, nor will I tell
Through fear of his stern threats,
Ere He shall set me free
From these my bonds, and make,
Of his own choice, amends
For all these outrages.

Chor. Full rash art thou, and yield'st
In not a jot to bitterest form of woe;
Thou art o'er-free and reckless in thy speech:
But piercing fear hath stirred
My inmost soul to strife;
For I fear greatly touching thy distress,
As to what haven of these woes of thine
Thou now must steer: the son of Cronos hath
A stubborn mood and heart inexorable.

Prom. I know that Zeus is hard,
And keeps the Right supremely to himself;
But then, I trow, He'll be
Full pliant in his will,
When He is thus crushed down.
Then, calming down his mood
Of hard and bitter wrath,
He'll hasten unto me,
As I to him shall haste,
For friendship and for peace.

Chor. Hide it not from us, tell us all the tale:
For what offence Zeus, having seized thee thus,
So wantonly and bitterly insults thee:
If the tale hurt thee not, inform thou us.

Prom. Painful are these things to me e'en to speak:
Painful is silence; everywhere is woe.
For when the high Gods fell on mood of wrath,
And hot debate of mutual strife was stirred,
Some wishing to hurl Cronos from his throne,
That Zeus, forsooth, might reign; while others strove,
Eager that Zeus might never rule the Gods:
Then I, full strongly seeking to persuade
The Titans, yea, the sons of Heaven and Earth,
Failed of my purpose. Scorning subtle arts,
With counsels violent, they thought that they
By force would gain full easy mastery.
But then not once or twice my mother Themis

And Earth, one form though bearing many names,¹⁴⁹
Had prophesied the future, how 'twould run,
That not by strength nor yet by violence,
But guile, should those who prospered gain the day.
And when in my words I this counsel gave,
They deigned not e'en to glance at it at all.
And then of all that offered, it seemed best
To join my mother, and of mine own will,
Not against his will, take my side with Zeus,
And by my counsels, mine, the dark deep pit
Of Tartaros the ancient Cronos holds,
Himself and his allies. Thus profiting
By me, the mighty ruler of the Gods
Repays me with these evil penalties:
For somehow this disease in sovereignty
Inheres, of never trusting to one's friends.¹⁵⁰
And since ye ask me under what pretence
He thus maltreats me, I will show it you:
For soon as He upon his father's throne
Had sat secure, forthwith to divers Gods
He divers gifts distributed, and his realm
Began to order. But of mortal men
He took no heed, but purposed utterly
To crush their race and plant another new;
And, I excepted, none dared cross his will;
But I did dare, and mortal men I freed
From passing on to Hades thunder-stricken;
And therefore am I bound beneath these woes,
Dreadful to suffer, pitiable to see:
And I, who in my pity thought of men
More than myself, have not been worthy deemed
To gain like favour, but all ruthlessly
I thus am chained, foul shame this sight to Zeus.

Chor. Iron-hearted must he be and made of rock
Who is not moved, Prometheus, by thy woes:
Fain could I wish I ne'er had seen such things,
And, seeing them, am wounded to the heart.

Prom. Yea, I am piteous for my friends to see.

Chor. Did'st thou not go to farther lengths than this?

¹⁴⁹ The words leave it uncertain whether Themis is identified with Earth, or, as in the *Eumenides* (v. 2) distinguished from her. The Titans as a class, then, children of Okeanos and Chthôn (another name for *Land* or *Earth*), are the kindred rather than the brothers of Prometheus.

¹⁵⁰ The generalising words here, as in v. 35, appeal to the Athenian hatred of all that was represented by the words *tyrant* and *tyranny*.

Prom. I made men cease from contemplating death.¹⁵¹

Chor. What medicine did'st thou find for that disease?

Prom. Blind hopes I gave to live and dwell with them.

Chor. Great service that thou did'st for mortal men!

Prom. And more than that, I gave them fire, yes I.

Chor. Do short-lived men the flaming fire possess?

Prom. Yea, and full many an art they'll learn from it.

Chor. And is it then on charges such as these
That Zeus maltreats thee, and no respite gives
Of many woes? And has thy pain no end?

Prom. End there is none, except as pleases Him.

Chor. How shall it please? What hope hast thou? See'st not
That thou hast sinned? Yet to say how thou sinned'st
Gives me no pleasure, and is pain to thee.
Well! let us leave these things, and, if we may,
Seek out some means to 'scape from this thy woe.

Prom. 'Tis a light thing for one who has his foot
Beyond the reach of evil to exhort
And counsel him who suffers. This to me
Was all well known. Yea, willing, willingly
I sinned, nor will deny it. Helping men,
I for myself found trouble: yet I thought not
That I with such dread penalties as these
Should wither here on these high-towering crags,
Lighting on this lone hill and neighbourless.
Wherefore wail not for these my present woes,
But, drawing nigh, my coming fortunes hear,
That ye may learn the whole tale to the end.
Nay, hearken, hearken; show your sympathy
With him who suffers now. 'Tis thus that woe,
Wandering, now falls on this one, now on that.

Chor. Not to unwilling hearers hast thou uttered,
Prometheus, thy request,
And now with nimble foot abounding

¹⁵¹ The state described is that of men who “through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” That state, the parent of all superstition, fostered the slavish awe in which Zeus delighted. Prometheus, representing the active intellect of man, bestows new powers, new interests, new hopes, which at last divert them from that fear.

My swiftly rushing car,
And the pure æther, path of birds of heaven,
I will draw near this rough and rocky land,
For much do I desire
To hear this tale, full measure, of thy woes.

Enter Okeanos, on a car drawn by a winged gryphon

Okean. Lo, I come to thee, Prometheus,
Reaching goal of distant journey,¹⁵²
Guiding this my winged courser
By my will, without a bridle;
And thy sorrows move my pity.
Force, in part, I deem, of kindred
Leads me on, nor know I any,
Whom, apart from kin, I honour
More than thee, in fuller measure.
This thou shall own true and earnest:
I deal not in glozing speeches.
Come then, tell me how to help thee;
Ne'er shalt thou say that one more friendly
Is found than unto thee is Okean.

Prom. Let be. What boots it? Thou then too art come
To gaze upon my sufferings. How did'st dare
Leaving the stream that bears thy name, and caves
Hewn in the living rock, this land to visit,
Mother of iron? What then, art thou come
To gaze upon my fall and offer pity?
Behold this sight: see here the friend of Zeus,
Who helped to seat him in his sovereignty,
With what foul outrage I am crushed by him!

Okean. I see, Prometheus, and I wish to give thee
My best advice, all subtle though thou be.
Know thou thyself,¹⁵³ and fit thy soul to moods
To thee full new. New king the Gods have now;
But if thou utter words thus rough and sharp,
Perchance, though sitting far away on high,
Zeus yet may hear thee, and his present wrath
Seem to thee but as child's play of distress.
Nay, thou poor sufferer, quit the rage thou hast,
And seek a remedy for these thine ills.

¹⁵² The home of Okeanos was in the far west, at the boundary of the great stream surrounding the whole world, from which he took his name.

¹⁵³ One of the sayings of the Seven Sages, already recognised and quoted as a familiar proverb.

A tale thrice-told, perchance I seem to speak:
Lo! this, Prometheus, is the punishment
Of thine o'er lofty speech, nor art thou yet
Humbled, nor yieldest to thy miseries,
And fain would'st add fresh evils unto these.
But thou, if thou wilt take me as thy teacher,
Wilt not kick out against the pricks;¹⁵⁴ seeing well
A monarch reigns who gives account to none.
And now I go, and will an effort make,
If I, perchance, may free thee from thy woes;
Be still then, hush thy petulance of speech,
Or knowest thou not, o'er-clever as thou art,
That idle tongues must still their forfeit pay?

Prom. I envy thee, seeing thou art free from blame
Though thou shared'st all, and in my cause wast bold;¹⁵⁵
Nay, let me be, nor trouble thou thyself;
Thou wilt not, canst not soothe Him; very hard
Is He of soothing. Look to it thyself,
Lest thou some mischief meet with in the way.

Okean. It is thy wont thy neighbours' minds to school
Far better than thine own. From deeds, not words,
I draw my proof. But do not draw me back
When I am hasting on, for lo, I deem,
I deem that Zeus will grant this boon to me,
That I should free thee from these woes of thine.

Prom. I thank thee much, yea, ne'er will cease to thank;
For thou no whit of zeal dost lack; yet take,
I pray, no trouble for me; all in vain
Thy trouble, nothing helping, e'en if thou
Should'st care to take the trouble. Nay, be still;
Keep out of harm's way; sufferer though I be,
I would not therefore wish to give my woes
A wider range o'er others. No, not so:
For lo! my mind is wearied with the grief
Of that my kinsman Atlas,¹⁵⁶ who doth stand
In the far West, supporting on his shoulders
The pillars of the earth and heaven, a burden

¹⁵⁴ See note on *Agam.* 1602.

¹⁵⁵ In the mythos, Okeanos had given his daughter Hesione in marriage to Prometheus after the theft of fire, and thus had identified himself with his transgression.

¹⁵⁶ In the *Theogony* of Hesiod (v. 509), Prometheus and Atlas appear as the sons of two sisters. As other Titans were thought of as buried under volcanoes, so this one was identified with the mountain which had been seen by travellers to Western Africa, or in the seas beyond it, rising like a column to support the vault of heaven. In Herodotos (iv. 174) and all later writers, the name is given to the chain of mountains in Lybia, as being the "pillar of the firmament;" but Humboldt and others identify it with the lonely peak of Teneriffe, as seen by Phœnikian or Hellenic voyagers. Teneriffe, too, like most of the other Titan mountains, was at one time volcanic. Homer (*Odys.* i. 53) represents him as holding the pillars which separate heaven from earth; Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 517) as himself standing near the Hesperides (this too points to Teneriffe), sustaining the heavens with his head and shoulders.

His arms can ill but hold: I pity too
The giant dweller of Kilikian caves,
Dread portent, with his hundred hands, subdued
By force, the mighty Typhon,¹⁵⁷ who arose
'Gainst all the Gods, with sharp and dreadful jaws
Hissing out slaughter, and from out his eyes
There flashed the terrible brightness as of one
Who would lay low the sovereignty of Zeus.
But the unsleeping dart of Zeus came on him,
Down-swooping thunderbolt that breathes out flame,
Which from his lofty boastings startled him,
For he i' the heart was struck, to ashes burnt,
His strength all thunder-shattered; and he lies
A helpless, powerless carcase, near the strait
Of the great sea, fast pressed beneath the roots
Of ancient Ætna, where on highest peak
Hephæstos sits and smites his iron red-hot,
From whence hereafter streams of fire shall burst,¹⁵⁸
Devouring with fierce jaws the golden plains
Of fruitful, fair Sikelia. Such the wrath
That Typhon shall belch forth with bursts of storm,
Hot, breathing fire, and unapproachable,
Though burnt and charred by thunderbolts of Zeus.
Not inexperienced art thou, nor dost need
My teaching: save thyself, as thou know'st how;
And I will drink my fortune to the dregs,
Till from his wrath the mind of Zeus shall rest.¹⁵⁹

Okean. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, even this,
Of wrath's disease wise words the healers are?

Prom. Yea, could one soothe the troubled heart in time,
Nor seek by force to tame the soul's proud flesh.

Okean. But in due forethought with bold daring blent,
What mischief see'st thou lurking? Tell me this.

Prom. Toil bootless, and simplicity full fond.

Okean. Let me, I pray, that sickness suffer, since
'Tis best being wise to have not wisdom's show.

Prom. Nay, but this error shall be deemed as mine.

¹⁵⁷ The volcanic character of the whole of Asia Minor, and the liability to earthquakes which has marked nearly every period of its history, led men to connect it also with the traditions of the Titans, some accordingly placing the home of Typhon in Phrygia, some near Sardis, some, as here, in Kilikia. Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 820) describes Typhon (or Typhoeus) as a serpent-monster hissing out fire; Pindar (*Pyth.* i. 30, viii. 21) as lying with his head and breast crushed beneath the weight of Ætna, and his feet extending to Cumæ.

¹⁵⁸ The words point probably to an eruption, then fresh in men's memories, which had happened B.C. 476.

¹⁵⁹ By some editors this speech from "No, not so," to "thou know'st how," is assigned to Okeanos.

Okean. Thy word then clearly sends me home at once.

Prom. Yea, lest thy pity for me make a foe...

Okean. What! of that new king on his mighty throne?

Prom. Look to it, lest his heart be vexed with thee.

Okean. Thy fate, Prometheus, teaches me that lesson.

Prom. Away, withdraw! keep thou the mind thou hast.

Okean. Thou urgest me who am in act to haste;
For this my bird four-footed flaps with wings
The clear path of the æther; and full fain
Would he bend knee in his own stall at home. [*Exit.*]

Strophe I

Chor. I grieve, Prometheus, for thy dreary fate,
Shedding from tender eyes
The dew of plenteous tears;
With streams, as when the watery south wind blows,
My cheek is wet;
For lo! these things are all unenviable,
And Zeus, by his own laws his sway maintaining,
Shows to the elder Gods
A mood of haughtiness.

Antistrophe I

And all the country echoeth with the moan,
And poureth many a tear
For that magnific power
Of ancient days far-seen that thou did'st share
With those of one blood sprung;
And all the mortal men who hold the plain
Of holy Asia as their land of sojourn,
They grieve in sympathy
For thy woes lamentable.

Strophe II

And they, the maiden band who find their home
On distant Colchian coasts,
Fearless of fight,¹⁶⁰
Or Skythian horde in earth's remotest clime,
By far Mæotic lake;¹⁶¹

Antistrophe II

And warlike glory of Arabia's tribes,¹⁶²
Who nigh to Caucasos
In rock-fort dwell,
An army fearful, with sharp-pointed spear
Raging in war's array.

Strophe III

One other Titan only have I seen,
One other of the Gods,
Thus bound in woes of adamantine strength —
Atlas, who ever groans
Beneath the burden of a crushing might,
The out-spread vault of heaven.

Antistrophe III

And lo! the ocean billows murmur loud
In one accord with him;¹⁶³
The sea-depths groan, and Hades' swarthy pit
Re-echoeth the sound,
And fountains of clear rivers, as they flow,

¹⁶⁰ These are, of course, the Amazons, who were believed to have come through Thrakè from the Tauric Chersonesos, and had left traces of their name and habits in the Attic traditions of Theseus.

¹⁶¹ Beyond the plains of Skythia, and the lake Mæotis (the sea of Azov) there would be the great river Okeanos, which was believed to flow round the earth.

¹⁶² Sarmatia has been conjectured instead of Arabia. No Greek author sanctions the extension of the latter name to so remote a region as that north of the Caspian.

¹⁶³ The Greek leaves the object of the sympathy undefined, but it seems better to refer it to that which Atlas receives from the waste of waters around, and the dark world beneath, than to the pity shown to Prometheus. This has already been dwelt on in line 421.

Bewail his bitter griefs.

Prom. Think not it is through pride or stiff self-will
That I am silent. But my heart is worn,
Self-contemplating, as I see myself
Thus outraged. Yet what other hand than mine
Gave these young Gods in fulness all their gifts?
But these I speak not of; for I should tell
To you that know them. But those woes of men,¹⁶⁴
List ye to them, – how they, before as babes,
By me were roused to reason, taught to think;
And this I say, not finding fault with men,
But showing my good-will in all I gave.
For first, though seeing, all in vain they saw,
And hearing, heard not rightly. But, like forms
Of phantom-dreams, throughout their life's whole length
They muddled all at random; did not know
Houses of brick that catch the sunlight's warmth,
Nor yet the work of carpentry. They dwelt
In hollowed holes, like swarms of tiny ants,
In sunless depths of caverns; and they had
No certain signs of winter, nor of spring
Flower-laden, nor of summer with her fruits;
But without counsel fared their whole life long,
Until I showed the risings of the stars,
And settings hard to recognise.¹⁶⁵ And I
Found Number for them, chief device of all,
Groupings of letters, Memory's handmaid that,
And mother of the Muses.¹⁶⁶ And I first
Bound in the yoke wild steeds, submissive made
Or to the collar or men's limbs, that so
They might in man's place bear his greatest toils;
And horses trained to love the rein I yoked
To chariots, glory of wealth's pride of state;¹⁶⁷
Nor was it any one but I that found
Sea-crossing, canvas-wingèd cars of ships:
Such rare designs inventing (wretched me!)
For mortal men, I yet have no device
By which to free myself from this my woe.¹⁶⁸

Chor. Foul shame thou sufferest: of thy sense bereaved,
Thou errest greatly: and, like leech unskilled,

¹⁶⁴ The passage that follows has for modern palæontologists the interest of coinciding with their views as to the progress of human society, and the condition of mankind during what has been called the “Stone” period. Comp. Lucretius, v. 955-984.

¹⁶⁵ Comp. Mr. Blakesley's note on Herod. ii. 4, as showing that here there was the greater risk of faulty observation.

¹⁶⁶ Another reading gives perhaps a better sense —“Memory, handmaid true And mother of the Muses.”

¹⁶⁷ In Greece, as throughout the East, the ox was used for all agricultural labours, the horse by the noble and the rich, either in war chariots, or stately processions, or in chariot races in the great games.

¹⁶⁸ Compare with this the account of the inventions of Palamedes in Sophocles, *Fragm.* 379.

Thou lovest heart when smitten with disease,
And know'st not how to find the remedies
Wherewith to heal thine own soul's sicknesses.

Prom. Hearing what yet remains thou'lt wonder more,
What arts and what resources I devised:
And this the chief: if any one fell ill,
There was no help for him, nor healing food,
Nor unguent, nor yet potion; but for want
Of drugs they wasted, till I showed to them
The blendings of all mild medicaments,¹⁶⁹
Wherewith they ward the attacks of sickness sore.
I gave them many modes of prophecy;¹⁷⁰
And I first taught them what dreams needs must prove
True visions, and made known the ominous sounds
Full hard to know; and tokens by the way,
And flights of taloned birds I clearly marked, —
Those on the right propitious to mankind,
And those sinister, — and what form of life
They each maintain, and what their enmities
Each with the other, and their loves and friendships;
And of the inward parts the plumpness smooth.
And with what colour they the Gods would please,
And the streaked comeliness of gall and liver:
And with burnt limbs enwrapped in fat, and chine,
I led men on to art full difficult:
And I gave eyes to omens drawn from fire,
Till then dim-visions. So far then for this.
And 'neath the earth the hidden boons for men,
Bronze, iron, silver, gold, who else could say
That he, ere I did, found them? None, I know,
Unless he fain would babble idle words.
In one short word, then, learn the truth condensed, —
All arts of mortals from Prometheus spring.

Chor. Nay, be not thou to men so over-kind,
While thou thyself art in sore evil case;
For I am sanguine that thou too, released
From bonds, shall be as strong as Zeus himself.

Prom. It is not thus that Fate's decree is fixed;
But I, long crushed with twice ten thousand woes

¹⁶⁹ Here we can recognise the knowledge of one who had studied in the schools of Pythagoras, or had at any rate picked up their terminology. A more immediate connexion may perhaps be traced with the influence of Epimenides, who was said to have spent many years in searching out the healing virtues of plants, and to have written books about them.

¹⁷⁰ The lines that follow form almost a manual of the art of divination as then practised. The “ominous sounds” include chance words, strange cries, any unexpected utterance that connected itself with men's fears for the future. The flights of birds were watched by the diviner as he faced the north, and so the region on the right hand was that of the sunrise, light, blessedness; on the left there were darkness and gloom and death.

And bitter pains, shall then escape my bonds;
Art is far weaker than Necessity.

Chor. Who guides the helm, then, of Necessity?

Prom. Fates triple-formed, Errinyes unforgetting.

Chor. Is Zeus, then, weaker in his might than these?

Prom. Not even He can 'scape the thing decreed.

Chor. What is decreed for Zeus but still to reign?

Prom. Thou may'st no further learn, ask thou no more.

Chor. 'Tis doubtless some dread secret which thou hidest.

Prom. Of other theme make mention, for the time
Is not yet come to utter this, but still
It must be hidden to the uttermost;
For by thus keeping it it is that I
Escape my bondage foul, and these my pains.

Strophe I

Chor. Ah! ne'er may Zeus the Lord,
Whose sovran sway rules all,
His strength in conflict set
Against my feeble will!
Nor may I fail to serve
The Gods with holy feast
Of whole burnt-offerings,
Where the stream ever flows
That bears my father's name,
The great Okeanos!
Nor may I sin in speech!
May this grace more and more
Sink deep into my soul
And never fade away!

Antistrophe I

Sweet is it in strong hope
To spend long years of life,
With bright and cheering joy

Our heart's thoughts nourishing.
I shudder, seeing thee
Thus vexed and harassed sore.
By twice ten thousand woes;
For thou in pride of heart,
Having no fear of Zeus,
In thine own obstinacy,
Dost show for mortal men,
Prometheus, love o'ermuch.

Strophe II

See how that boon, dear friends,
For thee is bootless found.
Say, where is any help?
What aid from mortals comes?
Hast thou not seen this brief and powerless life,
Fleeting as dreams, with which man's purblind race
Is fast in fetters bound?
Never shall counsels vain
Of mortal men break through
The harmony of Zeus.

Antistrophe II

This lesson have I learnt
Beholding thy sad fate,
Prometheus! Other strains
Come back upon my mind,
When I sang wedding hymns around thy bath,
And at thy bridal bed, when thou did'st take
In wedlock's holy bands
One of the same sire born,
Our own Hesione,
Persuading her with gifts
As wife to share thy couch.

Enter Io in form like a fair woman with a heifer's

horns,¹⁷¹ followed by the Spectre of Argos

Io. What land is this? What people? Whom shall I
Say that I see thus vexed
With bit and curb of rock?
For what offence dost thou
Bear fatal punishment?
Tell me to what far land
I've wandered here in woe.
Ah me! ah me!
Again the gadfly stings me miserable.
Spectre of Argos, thou, the earth-born one —
Ah, keep him off, O Earth!
I fear to look upon that herdsman dread,
Him with ten thousand eyes:
Ah lo! he cometh with his crafty look,
Whom Earth refuses even dead to hold;¹⁷²
But coming from beneath
He hunts me miserable,
And drives me famished o'er the sea-beach sand.

Strophe

And still his waxened reed-pipe soundeth clear
A soft and slumberous strain;
O heavens! O ye Gods!
Whither do these long wanderings lead me on?
For what offence, O son of Cronos, what,
Hast thou thus bound me fast
In these great miseries?
Ah me! ah me!
And why with terror of the gadfly's sting
Dost thou thus vex me, frenzied in my soul?

¹⁷¹ So Io was represented, we are told, by Greek sculptors (Herod. ii. 41), as Isis was by those of Egypt. The points of contact between the myth of Io and that of Prometheus, as adopted, or perhaps developed, by Æschylos are – (1) that from her the destined deliverer of the chained Titan is to come; (2) that both were suffering from the cruelty of Zeus; (3) that the wanderings of Io gave scope for the wild tales of far countries on which the imagination of the Athenians fed greedily. But, as the *Suppliants* may serve to show, the story itself had a strange fascination for him. In the birth of Epaphos, and Io's release from her frenzy, he saw, it may be, a reconciliation of what had seemed hard to reconcile, a solution of the problems of the world, like in kind to that which was shadowed forth in the lost *Prometheus Unbound*.

¹⁷² Argos had been slain by Hermes, and his eyes transferred by Hera to the tail of the peacock, and that bird was henceforth sacred to her.

Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth,
Or to wild sea-beasts give me as a prey:
Nay, grudge me not, O King,
An answer to my prayers:
Enough my many-wandered wanderings
Have exercised my soul,
Nor have I power to learn
How to avert the woe.

(*To Prometheus.*) Hear'st thou the voice of maiden crowned with horns?

Prom. Surely I heard the maid by gadfly driven,
Daughter of Inachos, who warmed the heart
Of Zeus with love, and now through Hera's hate
Is tried, perforce, with wanderings over-long?

Antistrophe

Io. How is it that thou speak'st my father's name?
Tell me, the suffering one,
Who art thou, who, poor wretch,
Who thus so truly nam'st me miserable,
And tell'st the plague from Heaven,
Which with its haunting stings
Wears me to death? Ah woe!
And I with famished and unseemly bounds
Rush madly, driven by Hera's jealous craft.
Ah, who of all that suffer, born to woe,
Have trouble like the pain that I endure?
But thou, make clear to me,
What yet for me remains,
What remedy, what healing for my pangs.
Show me, if thou dost know:
Speak out and tell to me,
The maid by wanderings vexed.

Prom. I will say plainly all thou seek'st to know;
Not in dark tangled riddles, but plain speech,
As it is meet that friends to friends should speak;
Thou see'st Prometheus who gave fire to men.

Io. O thou to men as benefactor known,
Why, poor Prometheus, sufferest thou this pain?

Prom. I have but now mine own woes ceased to wail.

Io. Wilt thou not then bestow this boon on me?

Prom. Say what thou seek'st, for I will tell thee all.

Io. Tell me, who fettered thee in this ravine?

Prom. The counsel was of Zeus, the hand Hephæstos'.

Io. Of what offence dost thou the forfeit pay?

Prom. Thus much alone am I content to tell.

Io. Tell me, at least, besides, what end shall come
To my drear wanderings; when the time shall be.

Prom. Not to know this is better than to know.

Io. Nay, hide not from me what I have to bear.

Prom. It is not that I grudge the boon to thee.

Io. Why then delayest thou to tell the whole?

Prom. Not from ill will, but loth to vex thy soul.

Io. Nay, care thou not beyond what pleases me.

Prom. If thou desire it I must speak. Hear then.

Chor. Not yet though; grant me share of pleasure too.
Let us first ask the tale of her great woe,
While she unfolds her life's consuming chances;
Her future sufferings let her learn from thee.

Prom. 'Tis thy work, Io, to grant these their wish,
On other grounds and as thy father's kin:¹⁷³
For to bewail and moan one's evil chance,
Here where one trusts to gain a pitying tear
From those who hear, – this is not labour lost.

Io. I know not how to disobey your wish;
So ye shall learn the whole that ye desire
In speech full clear. And yet I blush to tell
The storm that came from God, and brought the loss
Of maiden face, what way it seized on me.
For nightly visions coming evermore
Into my virgin bower, sought to woo me

¹⁷³ Inachos the father of Io (identified with the Argive river of the same name), was, like all rivers, a son of Okeanos, and therefore brother to the nymphs who had come to see Prometheus.

With glozing words. "O virgin greatly blest,
Why art thou still a virgin when thou might'st
Attain to highest wedlock? For with dart
Of passion for thee Zeus doth glow, and fain
Would make thee his. And thou, O child, spurn not
The bed of Zeus, but go to Lerna's field,
Where feed thy father's flocks and herds,
That so the eye of Zeus may find repose
From this his craving." With such visions I
Was haunted every evening, till I dared
To tell my father all these dreams of night,
And he to Pytho and Dodona sent
Full many to consult the Gods, that he,
Might learn what deeds and words would please Heaven's lords.
And they came bringing speech of oracles
Shot with dark sayings, dim and hard to know.
At last a clear word came to Inachos
Charging him plainly, and commanding him
To thrust me from my country and my home,
To stray at large¹⁷⁴ to utmost bounds of earth;
And, should he gainsay, that the fiery bolt
Of Zeus should come and sweep away his race.
And he, by Loxias' oracles induced,
Thrust me, against his will, against mine too,
And drove me from my home; but spite of all,
The curb of Zeus constrained him this to do.
And then forthwith my face and mind were changed;
And hornèd, as ye see me, stung to the quick
By biting gadfly, I with maddened leap
Rushed to Kerchneia's fair and limpid stream,
And fount of Lerna.¹⁷⁵ And a giant herdsman,
Argos, full rough of temper, followed me,
With many an eye beholding, on my track:
And him a sudden and unlooked-for doom
Deprived of life. And I, by gadfly stung,
By scourge from Heaven am driven from land to land.
What has been done thou hearest. And if thou
Can'st tell what yet remains of woe, declare it;
Nor in thy pity soothe me with false words;
For hollow words, I deem, are worst of ills.

Chor. Away, away, let be:
Ne'er thought I that such tales
Would ever, ever come unto mine ears;

¹⁷⁴ The words used have an almost technical meaning as applied to animals that were consecrated to the service of a God, and set free to wander where they liked. The fate of Io, as at once devoted to Zeus and animalised in form, was thus shadowed forth in the very language of the Oracle.

¹⁷⁵ Lerna was the lake near the mouth of the Inachos, close to the sea. Kerchneia may perhaps be identified with the Kenchreæ, the haven of Korinth in later geographies.

Nor that such terrors, woes and outrages,
Hard to look on, hard to bear,
Would chill my soul with sharp goad, double-edged.
Ah fate! Ah fate!
I shudder, seeing Io's fortune strange.
Prom. Thou art too quick in groaning, full of fear:
Wait thou a while until thou hear the rest.
Chor. Speak thou and tell. Unto the sick 'tis sweet
Clearly to know what yet remains of pain.

Prom. Your former wish ye gained full easily.
Your first desire was to learn of her
The tale she tells of her own sufferings;
Now therefore hear the woes that yet remain
For this poor maid to bear at Hera's hands.
And thou, O child of Inachos! take heed
To these my words, that thou may'st hear the goal
Of all thy wanderings. First then, turning hence
Towards the sunrise, tread the untilled plains,
And thou shalt reach the Skythian nomads, those¹⁷⁶
Who on smooth-rolling waggons dwell aloft
In wicker houses, with far-darting bows
Duly equipped. Approach thou not to these,
But trending round the coasts on which the surf
Beats with loud murmurs,¹⁷⁷ traverse thou that clime.
On the left hand there dwell the Chalybes,¹⁷⁸
Who work in iron. Of these do thou beware,
For fierce are they and most inhospitable;
And thou wilt reach the river fierce and strong,
True to its name.¹⁷⁹ This seek not thou to cross,
For it is hard to ford, until thou come
To Caucasos itself, of all high hills
The highest, where a river pours its strength
From the high peaks themselves. And thou must cross
Those summits near the stars, must onward go
Towards the south, where thou shalt find the host
Of the Amâzons, hating men, whose home
Shall one day be around Thermôdon's bank,
By Themiskyra,¹⁸⁰ where the ravenous jaws
Of Salmydessos ope upon the sea,

¹⁷⁶ The wicker huts used by Skythian or Thracian nomads (the Calmucks of modern geographers) are described by Herodotos (iv. 46) and are still in use.

¹⁷⁷ *Sc.*, the N.E. boundary of the Euxine, where spurs of the Caucasos ridge approach the sea.

¹⁷⁸ The Chalybes are placed by geographers to the south of Colchis. The description of the text indicates a locality farther to the north.

¹⁷⁹ Probably the Araxes, which the Greeks would connect with a word conveying the idea of a torrent dashing on the rocks. The description seems to imply a river flowing into the Euxine from the Caucasos, and the condition is fulfilled by the Hypanis or *Kouban*.

¹⁸⁰ When the Amazons appear in contact with Greek history, they are found in Thrace. But they had come from the coast of Pontos, and near the mouth of the Thermodon (*Thermeh*). The words of Prometheus point to yet earlier migrations from the East.

Treacherous to sailors, stepdame stern to ships.¹⁸¹
And they with right good-will shall be thy guides;
And thou, hard by a broad pool's narrow gates,
Wilt pass to the Kimmerian isthmus. Leaving
This boldly, thou must cross Mæotic channel;¹⁸²
And there shall be great fame 'mong mortal men
Of this thy journey, and the Bosporos¹⁸³
Shall take its name from thee. And Europe's plain
Then quitting, thou shalt gain the Asian coast.
Doth not the all-ruling monarch of the Gods
Seem all ways cruel? For, although a God,
He, seeking to embrace this mortal maid,
Imposed these wanderings on her. Thou hast found,
O maiden! bitter suitor for thy hand;
For great as are the ills thou now hast heard,
Know that as yet not e'en the prelude's known.

Io. Ah woe! woe! woe!

Prom. Again thou groan'st and criest. What wilt do
When thou shall learn the evils yet to come?

Chor. What! are there troubles still to come for her?

Prom. Yea, stormy sea of woe most lamentable.

Io. What gain is it to live? Why cast I not
Myself at once from this high precipice,
And, dashed to earth, be free from all my woes?
Far better were it once for all to die
Than all one's days to suffer pain and grief.

Prom. My struggles then full hardly thou would'st bear,
For whom there is no destiny of death;
For that might bring a respite from my woes:
But now there is no limit to my pangs
Till Zeus be hurled out from his sovereignty.

Io. What! shall Zeus e'er be hurled from his high state?

Prom. Thou would'st rejoice, I trow, to see that fall.

Io. How should I not, when Zeus so foully wrongs me?

¹⁸¹ Here, as in Soph. *Antig.* (970) the name Salmydessos represents the rockbound, havenless coast from the promontory of Thynias to the entrance of the Bosporos, which had given to the Black Sea its earlier name of Axenos, the "inhospitable."

¹⁸² The track is here in some confusion. From the Amazons south of the Caucasus, Io is to find her way to the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea) and the Kimmerian Bosporos, which flows into the Sea of Azov, and so to return to Asia.

¹⁸³ Here, as in a hundred other instances, a false etymology has become the parent of a myth. The name Bosporos is probably Asiatic not Greek, and has an entirely different signification.

Prom. That this is so thou now may'st hear from me.

Io. Who then shall rob him of his sceptred sway?

Prom. Himself shall do it by his own rash plans.

Io. But how? Tell this, unless it bringeth harm.

Prom. He shall wed one for whom one day he'll grieve.

Io. Heaven-born or mortal? Tell, if tell thou may'st.

Prom. Why ask'st thou who? I may not tell thee that.

Io. Shall his bride hurl him from his throne of might?

Prom. Yea; she shall bear child mightier than his sire.

Io. Has he no way to turn aside that doom?

Prom. No, none; unless I from my bonds be loosed.¹⁸⁴

Io. Who then shall loose thee 'gainst the will of Zeus?

Prom. It must be one of thy posterity.

Io. What, shall a child of mine free thee from ills?

Prom. Yea, the third generation after ten.¹⁸⁵

Io. No more thine oracles are clear to me.

Prom. Nay, seek not thou thine own drear fate to know.

Io. Do not, a boon presenting, then withdraw it.

Prom. Of two alternatives, I'll give thee choice.

Io. Tell me of what, then give me leave to choose.

Prom. I give it then. Choose, or that I should tell
Thy woes to come, or who shall set me free.

¹⁸⁴ The lines refer to the story that Zeus loved Thetis the daughter of Nereus, and followed her to Caucasos, but abstained from marriage with her because Prometheus warned him that the child born of that union should overthrow his father. Here the future is used of what was still contingent only. In the lost play of the Trilogy the myth was possibly brought to its conclusion and connected with the release of Prometheus.

¹⁸⁵ Heracles, whose genealogy was traced through Alcmena, Perseus, Danae, Danaos and seven other names, to Epaphos and Io.

Chor. Of these be willing one request to grant
To her, and one to me; nor scorn my words:
Tell her what yet of wanderings she must bear,
And me who shall release thee. This I crave.

Prom. Since ye are eager, I will not refuse
To utter fully all that ye desire.
Thee, Io, first I'll tell thy wanderings wild,
Thou, write it in the tablets of thy mind.
When thou shalt cross the straits, of continents
The boundary,¹⁸⁶ take thou the onward path
On to the fiery-hued and sun-tracked East.
[And first of all, to frozen Northern blasts
Thou'lt come, and there beware the rushing whirl,
Lest it should come upon thee suddenly,
And sweep thee onward with the cloud-rack wild;]¹⁸⁷
Crossing the sea-surf till thou come at last
Unto Kisthene's Gorgoneian plains,
Where dwell the grey-haired virgin Phorkides,¹⁸⁸
Three, swan-shaped, with one eye between them all
And but one tooth; whom nor the sun beholds
With radiant beams, nor yet the moon by night:
And near them are their wingèd sisters three,
The Gorgons, serpent-tressed, and hating men,
Whom mortal wight may not behold and live.
Such is one ill I bid thee guard against;
Now hear another monstrous sight: Beware
The sharp-beaked hounds of Zeus that never bark,¹⁸⁹
The Gryphons, and the one-eyed, mounted host
Of Arimaspians, who around the stream
That flows o'er gold, the ford of Pluto, dwell:¹⁹⁰
Draw not thou nigh to them. But distant land
Thou shalt approach, the swarthy tribes who dwell
By the sun's fountain,¹⁹¹ Æthiopia's stream:

¹⁸⁶ Probably the Kimmerian Bosphoros. The Tanais or Phasis has, however, been conjectured.

¹⁸⁷ The history of the passage in brackets is curious enough to call for a note. They are not in any extant MS., but they are found in a passage quoted by Galen (v. p. 454), as from the *Prometheus Bound*, and are inserted here by Mr. Paley.

¹⁸⁸ Kisthene belongs to the geography of legend, lying somewhere on the shore of the great ocean-river in Lybia or Æthiopia, at the end of the world, a great mountain in the far West, beyond the Hesperides, the dwelling-place, as here, of the Gorgons, the daughters of Phorkys. Those first-named are the Graiæ.

¹⁸⁹ Here, like the "wingèd hound" of v. 1043, for the eagles that are the messengers of Zeus.

¹⁹⁰ We are carried back again from the fabled West to the fabled East. The Arimaspians, with one eye, and the Grypes or Gryphons (the griffins of mediæval heraldry), quadrupeds with the wings and beaks of eagles, were placed by most writers (Herod. iv. 13, 27) in the north of Europe, in or beyond the *terra incognita* of Skythia. The mention of the "ford of Pluto" and Æthiopia, however, may possibly imply (if we identify it, as Mr. Paley does, with the Tartessos of Spain, or Bætis — *Guadalquivir*) that Æschylos followed another legend which placed them in the West. There is possibly a *paronomasia* between Pluto, the God of Hades, and Plutos, the ideal God of riches.

¹⁹¹ The name was applied by later writers (Quintus Curtius, iv. 7, 22; Lucretius, vi. 848) to the fountain in the temple of Jupiter Ammon in the great Oasis. The "river Æthiops" may be purely imaginary, but it may also suggest the possibility of some vague knowledge of the Niger, or more probably of the Nile itself in the upper regions of its course. The "Byblin hills" carry the name Byblos, which we only read of as belonging to a town in the Delta, to the Second Cataract.

By its banks wend thy way until thou come
To that great fall where from the Bybline hills
The Neilos pours its pure and holy flood;
And it shall guide thee to Neilotic land,
Three-angled, where, O Io, 'tis decreed
For thee and for thy progeny to found
A far-off colony. And if of this
Aught seem to thee as stammering speech obscure,
Ask yet again and learn it thoroughly:
Far more of leisure have I than I like.

Chor. If thou hast aught to add, aught left untold
Of her sore-wasting wanderings, speak it out;
But if thou hast said all, then grant to us
The boon we asked. Thou dost not, sure, forget it.

Prom. The whole course of her journeying she hath heard,
And that she know she hath not heard in vain
I will tell out what troubles she hath borne
Before she came here, giving her sure proof
Of these my words. The greater bulk of things
I will pass o'er, and to the very goal
Of all thy wanderings go. For when thou cam'st
To the Molossian plains, and by the grove¹⁹²
Of lofty-ridged Dodona, and the shrine
Oracular of Zeus Thesprotian,
And the strange portent of the talking oaks,
By which full clearly, not in riddle dark,
Thou wast addressed as noble spouse of Zeus, —
If aught of pleasure such things give to thee, —
Thence strung to frenzy, thou did'st rush along
The sea-coast's path to Rhea's mighty gulf,¹⁹³
In backward way from whence thou now art vexed,
And for all time to come that reach of sea,
Know well, from thee Ionian shall be called,
To all men record of thy journeyings.
These then are tokens to thee that my mind
Sees somewhat more than that is manifest.

What follows (*to the Chorus*) I will speak to you and her
In common, on the track of former words
Returning once again. A city stands,
Canôbos, at its country's furthest bound,
Hard by the mouth and silt-bank of the Nile;
There Zeus shall give thee back thy mind again,¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Comp. Sophocles, *Trachin.*, v. 1168.

¹⁹³ The Adriatic or Ionian Gulf.

¹⁹⁴ In the *Suppliants*, Zeus is said to have soothed her, and restored her to her human consciousness by his “divine breathings.” The

With hand that works no terror touching thee, —
Touch only – and thou then shalt bear a child
Of Zeus begotten, Epaphos, “Touch-born,”
Swarthy of hue, whose lot shall be to reap
The whole plain watered by the broad-streamed Neilos:
And in the generation fifth from him
A household numbering fifty shall return
Against their will to Argos, in their flight
From wedlock with their cousins.¹⁹⁵ And they too,
(Kites but a little space behind the doves)
With eager hopes pursuing marriage rites
Beyond pursuit shall come; and God shall grudge
To give up their sweet bodies. And the land
Pelagian¹⁹⁶ shall receive them, when by stroke
Of woman's murderous hand these men shall lie
Smitten to death by daring deed of night:
For every bride shall take her husband's life,
And dip in blood the sharp two-edged sword
(So to my foes may Kypris show herself!)¹⁹⁷
Yet one of that fair band shall love persuade
Her husband not to slaughter, and her will
Shall lose its edge; and she shall make her choice
Rather as weak than murderous to be known.
And she at Argos shall a royal seed
Bring forth (long speech 'twould take to tell this clear)
Famed for his arrows, who shall set me free¹⁹⁸
From these my woes. Such was the oracle
Mine ancient mother Themis, Titan-born,
Gave to me; but the manner and the means, —
That needs a lengthy tale to tell the whole,
And thou can'st nothing gain by learning it.

Io. Eleleu! Oh, Eleleu!¹⁹⁹
The throbbing pain inflames me, and the mood
Of frenzy-smitten rage;
The gadfly's pointed sting,
Not forged with fire, attacks,
And my heart beats against my breast with fear.
Mine eyes whirl round and round:
Out of my course I'm borne

thought underlying the legend may be taken either as a distortion of some primitive tradition, or as one of the “unconscious prophecies” of heathenism. The deliverer is not to be born after the common manner of men, and is to have a divine as well as a human parentage.

¹⁹⁵ See the argument of the *Suppliants*, who, as the daughters of Danaos, descended from Epaphos, are here referred to. The passage is noticeable as showing that the theme of that tragedy was already present to the poet's thoughts.

¹⁹⁶ Argos. So in the *Suppliants*, Pelasgos is the mythical king of the Apian land who receives them.

¹⁹⁷ Hypermnæstra, who spared Lynceus, and by him became the mother of Abas and a line of Argive kings.

¹⁹⁸ Heracles, who came to Caucasos, and with his arrows slew the eagle that devoured Prometheus.

¹⁹⁹ The word is simply an interjection of pain, but one so characteristic that I have thought it better to reproduce it than to give any English equivalent.

By the wild spirit of fierce agony,
And cannot curb my lips,
And turbid speech at random dashes on
Upon the waves of dread calamity.

Strophe I

Chor. Wise, very wise was he
Who first in thought conceived this maxim sage,
And spread it with his speech,²⁰⁰—
That the best wedlock is with equals found,
And that a craftsman, born to work with hands,
Should not desire to wed
Or with the soft luxurious heirs of wealth,
Or with the race that boast their lineage high.

Antistrophe I

Oh ne'er, oh ne'er, dread Fates,
May ye behold me as the bride of Zeus,
The partner of his couch,
Nor may I wed with any heaven-born spouse!
For I shrink back, beholding Io's lot
Of loveless maidenhood,
Consumed and smitten low exceedingly
By the wild wanderings from great Hera sent!

Strophe II

To me, when wedlock is on equal terms,
It gives no cause to fear:
Ne'er may the love of any of the Gods,
The strong Gods, look on me
With glance I cannot 'scape!

Antistrophe II

That fate is war that none can war against,

²⁰⁰ The maxim, "Marry with a woman thine equal," was ascribed to Pittacos.

Source of resourceless ill;
Nor know I what might then become of me:
I see not how to 'scape
The counsel deep of Zeus.

Prom. Yea, of a truth shall Zeus, though stiff of will,
Be brought full low. Such bed of wedlock now
Is he preparing, one to cast him forth
In darkness from his sovereignty and throne.
And then the curse his father Cronos spake
Shall have its dread completion, even that
He uttered when he left his ancient throne;
And from these troubles no one of the Gods
But me can clearly show the way to 'scape.
I know the time and manner: therefore now
Let him sit fearless, in his peals on high
Putting his trust, and shaking in his hands
His darts fire-breathing. Nought shall they avail
To hinder him from falling shamefully
A fall intolerable. Such a combatant
He arms against himself, a marvel dread,
Who shall a fire discover mightier far
Than the red levin, and a sound more dread
Than roaring of the thunder, and shall shiver
That plague sea-born that causeth earth to quake,
The trident, weapon of Poseidon's strength:
And stumbling on this evil, he shall learn
How far apart a king's lot from a slave's.

Chor. What thou dost wish thou mutterest against Zeus.

Prom. Things that shall be, and things I wish, I speak.

Chor. And must we look for one to master Zeus?

Prom. Yea, troubles harder far than these are his.

Chor. Art not afraid to vent such words as these?

Prom. What can I fear whose fate is not to die?

Chor. But He may send on thee worse pain than this.

Prom. So let Him do: nought finds me unprepared.

Chor. Wisdom is theirs who Adrasteia worship.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ The Euhemerism of later scholiasts derived the name from a king Adrastos, who was said to have been the first to build a temple to Nemesis, and so the power thus worshipped was called after his name. A better etymology leads us to see in it the idea of

Prom. Worship then, praise and flatter him that rules;
My care for Zeus is nought, and less than nought:
Let Him act, let Him rule this little while,
E'en as He will; for long He shall not rule
Over the Gods. But lo! I see at hand
The courier of the Gods, the minister
Of our new sovereign. Doubtless he has come
To bring me tidings of some new device.

Enter Hermes

Herm. Thee do I speak to, – thee, the teacher wise,

the “inevitable” law of retribution working unseen by men, and independently even of the arbitrary will of the Gods, and bringing destruction upon the proud and haughty.

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