THE TRAGEDIES OF
ÆSCHYLOS

A New Translation
WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY, AND AN APPENDIX OF
RHYMED CHORAL ODES

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AGAMEMNON.
ARGUMENT.

Ten years had passed since Agamemnon, son of Atreus, king of Mykenæ, had led the Hellenes to Troia to take vengeance on Alexandros (also known as Paris), son of Priam. For Paris had basely wronged Menelaos, king of Sparta, Agamemnon's brother, in that, being received by him as a guest, he enticed his wife Helena to leave her lord and go with him to Troia. And now the tenth year had come, and Paris was slain, and the city of the Troians was taken and destroyed, and Agamemnon and the Hellenes were on their way homeward with the spoil and prisoners they had taken. But meanwhile Clytemnestra too, Agamemnon's queen, had been unfaithful, and had taken as her paramour Ægisthos, son of that Thyestes whom Atreus, his brother, had made to eat, unknowing, of the flesh of his own children. And now, partly led by her adulterer, and partly seeking to avenge the death of her daughter Iphigeneia, whom Agamemnon had sacrificed to appease the wrath of Artemis, and partly also jealous because he was bringing back Cassandra, the daughter of Priam, as his concubine, she plotted with Ægisthos against her husband's life. But this was done secretly, and she stationed a guard on the roof of the royal palace to give notice when he saw the beacons, by which Agamemnon had promised that he would send tidings that Troia was taken.*

* The unfaithfulness of Clytemnestra and the murder of Agamemnon had entered into the Homeric cycle of the legends of the house of Atreus. In the Odyssey, however, Ægisthos is the chief agent in this crime, (Odysse. iii. 264, iv. 91, 532, xi. 409); and the manner of it differs from that which Æschylus has adopted. Clytemnestra first appears as slaying both her husband and Cassandra in Pindar (Pyth. xi. 28.)
Dramatis Personae.

Watchman.
Chorus of Argive Elders.
Clytemnestra.
Herald, (Talthybios.)
Agamemnon.
Cassandra.
Aegisthus.
AGAMEMNON.


Watchman. I ask the Gods a respite from these toils, This keeping at my post the whole year round, Wherein, upon the Atreids' roof reclined, Like dog, upon my elbow, I have learnt To know night's goodly company of stars, And those bright lords that deck the firmament, And winter bring to men, and harvest-tide; [The rising and the setting of the stars.] And now I watch for sign of beacon-torch, The flash of fire that bringeth news from Troia, And tidings of its capture. So prevails *A woman's manly-purposed, hoping heart; And when I keep my bed of little ease, Drenched with the dew, unvisited by dreams, (For fear, instead of sleep, my comrade is, So that in sound sleep ne'er I close mine eyes,) And when I think to sing a tune, or hum, (My medicine of song to ward off sleep,) Then weep I, wailing for this house's chance, No more, as erst, right well administered. Well! may I now find blest release from toils, When fire from out the dark brings tidings good. [Pauses, then springs up suddenly, seeing a light in the distance. Hail! thou torch-bearer of the night, that shedd'st Light as of morn, and bringest full array
Of many choral bands in Argos met,
Because of this success. Hurrah! hurrah!
So clearly tell I Agamemnon's queen,
With all speed rising from her couch to raise
Shrill cry of triumph o'er this beacon-fire
Throughout the house, since Ilium's citadel
Is taken, as full well that bright blaze shows.
I, for my part, will dance my prelude now;

[Leaps and dances.

For I shall score my lord's new turn of luck,
This beacon-blaze my throw of triple six.¹
Well, would that I with this mine hand may touch
The dear hand of our king when he comes home!
As to all else, the word is "Hush!" An ox²
Rests on my tongue; had the house a voice
'Twould tell too clear a tale. I'm fain to speak
To those who know, forget with those who know not.

[Exit.

Enter Chorus of twelve Argive elders, chanting as they
march to take up their position in the centre of the stage.
A procession of women bearing torches is seen in the
distance.

Lo! the tenth year now is passing
Since, of Priam great avengers,
Menelaus, Agamemnon,

(1) The form of gambling from which the phrase is taken, had clearly
become common in Attica among the class to which the watchman was
supposed to belong, and had given rise to proverbial phrase like that in
the text. The Greeks themselves supposed it to have been invented by
the Lydians, (Herod. i. 94), or Palamedes, one of the heroes of the tale of
Troä, but it enters also into Egyptian legends (Herod. ii. 192,) and its
prevalence from remote antiquity in the farther East, as in the Indian
story of Nala and Damayanti, makes it probable that it originated there.
The game was commonly played, as the phrase shows, with three dice, the
highest throw being that which gave three sixes. Æschylus, it may be
noted, appears in a lost drama, which bore the title of Palamedes, to
have brought the game itself into his plot. It is referred to, as invented
by that hero, in a fragment of Sophocles, (Fr. 360,) and again in the
proverb—

"The dice of Zeus have ever lucky throws."—(Fr. 763.)

(2) Here, also, the watchman takes up another common proverbial
phrase, belonging to the same group as that of "kicking against the
pricks" in v. 1634. He has his reasons for silence, weighty as would be
the tread of an ox to close his lips.
Double-throned and double-sceptred,
Power from sovran Zeus deriving—
Mighty pair of the Atreids—
Raised a fleet of thousand vessels
Of the Argives from our country,
Potent helpers in their warfare,
Shouting cry of Ares fiercely;
E'en as vultures shriek who hover,
Wheeling, whirling o'er their eyrie,
In wild sorrow for their nestlings,
With their oars of stout wings rowing,
Having lost the toil that bound them
To their callow fledglings' couches.
But on high One,—or Apollo,
Zeus, or Pan,—the shrill cry hearing,
Cry of birds that are his clients,¹
Sendeth forth on men transgressing,
Erinnys, slow but sure avenger;
So against young Alexandros²
Atreus' sons the great King sendeth,
Zeus, of host and guest protector:
He, for bride with many a lover,
Will to Danai give and Troians
Many conflicts, men's limbs straining,
When the knee in dust is crouching,
And the spear-shaft in the onset
Of the battle snaps asunder.
But as things are now, so are they,
So, as destined, shall the end be.
Nor by tears, nor yet libations
Shall he soothe the wrath unbending
Caused by sacred rites left fireless.³

(1) The vultures stand, i.e., to the rulers of Heaven, in the same relation as the foreign sojourners in Athens, the Metoecs, did to the citizens under whose protection they placed themselves.
(2) Alexandros, the other name of Paris, the seducer of Helen.
(3) The words, perhaps, refer to the grief of Menelaus, as leading him to neglect the wonted sacrifices to Zeus, but it seems better to see in them a reference to the sin of Paris. He, at least, who had carried off his host's wife, had not offered acceptable sacrifices, had neglected all
We, with old frame little honoured,
Left behind that host are staying,
Resting strength that equals childhood's
On our staff: for in the bosom
*Of the boy, life's young sap rushing,
Is of old age but the equal;
Ares not as yet is found there:
And the man in age exceeding,
When the leaf is sere and withered,
Goes with three feet on his journey; 1
Not more Ares-like than boyhood,
Like a day-seen dream he wanders.

[Enter Clytemnestra, followed by the procession
of torch-bearers.
Thou, of Tyndareus the daughter,
Queen of Argos, Clytemnestra,
What has happened? what news cometh?
What perceiving, on what tidings
Leaning, dost thou put in motion
All this solemn, great procession?
Of the Gods who guard the city,
Those above and those beneath us,
Of the heaven, and of the market,
Lo! with thy gifts blaze the altars;
And through all the expanse of Heaven,
Here and there, the torch-fire rises,
With the flowing, pure persuasion
Of the holy unguent nourished,
*And the chrism rich and kingly
From the treasure-store's recesses.
Telling what of this thou canst tell,
What is right for thee to utter,
Be a healer of my trouble,

sacrifices to Zeus Xenios, the God of host and guest. The allusion to the
sacrifice of Iphigenia, which some (Donaldson and Paley) have found
here, and the wrath of Clytemnestra, which Agamemnon will fail to
soothe, seems more far-fetched.

(1) An allusion, such as the audience would catch and delight in, to the
Trouble now my soul disturbing,
*While anon fond hope displaying
Sacrificial signs propitious,
Wards off care that no rest knoweth,
Sorrow mind and heart corroding.

[The Chorus, taking their places round the central thyme, begin their song.]

STROPHE.

Able am I to utter, setting forth
The might from omens sprung
*What met the heroes as they journeyed on,
(For still, by God's great gift,
My age, yet linked with strength,
*Breathes suasive power of song,)
How the Acheans' twin-throned majesty,
Accordant rulers of the youth of Hellas,
With spear and vengeful hand,
Were sent by fierce, strong bird 'gainst Teucrian shore,
Kings of the birds to kings of ships appearing,
One black, with white tail one,
Near to the palace, on the spear-hand side,
On station seen of all,
A pregnant hare devouring with her young,
Robbed of all runs to come:

(1) The Chorus, though too old to take part in the expedition, are yet able to tell both of what passed as the expedition started, and of the terrible fulfilment of the omens which they had seen. The two eagles are, of course, in the symbolism of prophecy, the two chieftains, Menelaos and Agamemnon. The "white feathers" of the one may point to the less heroic character of Menelaos: so, in v. 128, they are of "diverse mood." The hare whom they devour is, in the first instance, Troia, and so far the omen is good, portending the success of the expedition; but, as Artemis hates the fierceness of the eagles, so there is, in the eyes of the seer, a dark token of danger from her wrath against the Atreidae. Either their victory will be sullied by cruelty which will bring down vengeance, or else there is some secret sin in the past which must be atoned for by a terrible sacrifice. In the legend followed by Sophocles, (Elecr. 566,) Agamemnon had offended Artemis by slaying a doe sacred to her, as he was hunting. In the manifold meanings of such omens there is, probably, a latent suggestion of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia by the two chieftains, though this was at the time hidden from the seer. The fact that they are seen on the right, not on the left hand, was itself ominous of good.
Wail as for Linos, wail, wail bitterly,
And yet may good prevail! 1

**ANTISTROPHE.**

And the wise prophet of the army seeing
The brave Atreidæ twain
Of diverse mood, knew those that tore the hare,
And those that led the host;
And thus divining spake:
"One day this armament
Shall Priam's city sack, and all the herds
Owned by the people, countless, by the towers,
Fate shall with force lay low.
Only take heed lest any wrath of Gods
Blunt the great curb of Troïa yet encamped,
Struck down before its time;
For Artemis the chaste that house doth hate,
Her father's wingèd hounds,
Who slay the mother with her unborn young,
And loathes the eagles' feast.
Wail as for Linos, wail, wail bitterly;
And yet may good prevail!

**EPEEDE.**

"*For she, the fair One, though so kind of heart
*To fresh-dropt dew from mighty lion's womb; 2
And young that suck the teats

(1) The song of Linos, originally the dirge with which men mourned for the death of Linos, the minstrel-son of Apollo and Urania, brother of Orpheus, who was slain by Heracles,—a type, like Thammuz and Adonis, of life prematurely closed and bright hopes never to be fulfilled,—had come to be the representative of all songs of mourning. So Hesiod (in Eustath. on Hom. II., vii. 569) speaks of the name, as applied to all funeral dirges over poets and minstrels. So Herodotos (ii. 79) compares it, as the type of this kind of music among the Greeks, with what he found in Egypt connected with the name of Maneros, the only son of the first king of Egypt, who died in the bloom of youth. The name had, therefore, as definite a connotation for a Greek audience as the words Misericors or Jubilatæ would have for us, and ought not, I believe, to disappear from the translation.

(2) The comparison of a lion’s whelps to dew-drops, bold as the figure is, has something in it analogous to that with which we are more familiar, describing the children, or the army of a king, as the “dew” from “the womb of the morning” (Ps. cx. 3).
Of all that roam the fields,
Yet prays Him bring to pass
The portents of those birds,
The omens good yet also full of dread
And Paeon I invoke
As Healer, lest she on the Danai send
Delays that keep the ships
Long time with hostile blasts,
So urging on a new, strange sacrifice,
Unblest, unfestivalled, ¹
By natural growth artificer of strife,
Bearing far other fruit than wife's true fear,
For there abideth yet,
Fearful, recurring still,
Ruling the house, full subtle, unforgetting,
Vengeance for children slain."²
Such things, with great good mingled, Calchas spake,
In voice that pierced the air,
As destined by the birds that crossed our path
To this our kingly house:
And in accord with them,
Wail as for Linos, wail, wail bitterly;
And yet may good prevail.

Stroph. I.
O Zeus—whate'er He be,³
If that Name please Him well,
By that on Him I call:

(1) The sacrifice, i.e., was to be such as could not, according to the customary ritual, form a feast for the worshippers.
(2) The dark words look at once before and after, back to the murder of the sons of Thyestes, forward, though of this the seer knew not, to the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Clytemnestra is the embodiment of the Vengeance of which the Chorus speaks.
(3) As a part of the drama the whole passage that follows is an assertion by the Chorus that in this their trouble they will turn to no other God, invoke no other name, but that of the Supreme Zeus. But it can hardly be doubted that they have a meaning beyond this, and are the utterance by the poet of his own theology. In the second part of the Prometheus trilogy (all that we now know of it) he had represented Zeus as ruling in the might of despotic sovereignty, the representative of a Power which men could not resist, but also could not love, inflicting needless sufferings on the sons of men. Now he has grown wiser. The
Weighing all other names I fail to guess
Aught else but Zeus, if I would cast aside,
Clearly, in very deed,
From off my soul this idle weight of care.

ANTISTROPH. I.

Nor He who erst was great,¹
Full of the might to war,
*Avails now; He is gone;
And He who next came hath departed too,
His victor meeting; but if one to Zeus,
High triumph-praise should sing,
His shall be all the wisdom of the wise;

STROPH. II.

Yea, Zeus, who leadeth men in wisdom's way,
And fixeth fast the law,
That pain is gain;
And slowly dropping on the heart in sleep
Comes woe-recording care,
And makes the unwilling yield to wiser thoughts:
And doubtless this too comes from grace of Gods,
*Seated in might upon their awful thrones.

ANTISTROPH. II.

And then of those Achæan ships the chief,²
The elder, blaming not
Or seer or priest;

⁹ The two mighty ones who have passed away are Uranos and Cronos, the representatives in Greek mythology of the earlier stages of the world’s history, (1) mere material creation, (2) an ideal period of harmony, a golden, Saturnian age, preceding the present order of divine government with its mingled good and evil. Comp. Hesiod. Theogon. 439. 
(2) The Cycloids comes, after its deeper speculative thoughts, to its interrupted narrative.
But tempered to the fate that on him smote. ... 180

When that Achaean host
Were vexed with adverse winds and failing stores,
Still kept where Chalkis in the distance lies,
And the vexed waves in Aulis ebb and flow;

STROPH. III.

And breezes from the Strymon sweeping down,
Breeding delays and hunger, driving forth
Our men in wandering course,
On seas without a port.
Sparing nor ships, nor rope, nor sailing gear,
With doubled months wore down the Argive host;
And when, for that wild storm,
Of one more charm far harder for our chiefs
The prophet told, and spake of Artemis,¹
In tone so piercing shrill,
The Atreidæ smote their staves upon the ground,
And could not stay their tears.

ANTISTROPH. III.

And then the old king lifted up his voice,
And spake, "Great woe it is to disobey;
Great too to slay my child,
The pride and joy of home,
Polluting with the streams of maiden's blood
Her father's hands upon the altar steps.
What course is free from ill?
How lose my ships and fail of mine allies?
'Tis meet that they with strong desire should seek
A rite the winds to soothè,
E'en though it be with blood of maiden pure;
May all end well at last!"

STROPH. III.

So when he himself had harnessed
To the yoke of Fate unbending,

(1) The seer saw his augury fulfilled. When he uttered the name of Artemis it was pregnant with all the woe which he had foreboded at the outset.
With a blast of strange, new feeling,
Sweeping o'er his heart and spirit,
Aweless, godless, and unholy,
He his thoughts and purpose altered
To full measure of all daring,
(Still base counsel's fatal frenzy,
Wretched primal source of evils,
Gives to mortal hearts strange boldness,)
And at last his heart he hardened
His own child to slay as victim,
Help in war that they were waging,
To avenge a woman's frailty,
Victim for the good ships' safety.

ANTISTROPH. III.

All her prayers and eager callings
On the tender name of Father,
All her young and maiden freshness,
They but set at nought, those rulers,
In their passion for the battle.
And her father gave commandment
To the servants of the Goddess,
When the prayer was o'er, to lift her,
Like a kid, above the altar,
In her garments wrapt, face downwards,—
Yea, to seize with all their courage,
And that o'er her lips of beauty
Should be set a watch to hinder
Words of curse against the houses,
With the gag's strength silence-working.

STROPH. IV.

And she upon the ground
Pouring rich folds of veil in saffron dyed,
Cast at each one of those who sacrificed
A piteous glance that pierced,

(1) So that the blood may fall upon the altar, as the knife was drawn across the throat.
(2) The whole passage should be compared with the magnificent description in Lucretius i. 84-101.
Fair as a pictured form; ¹
And wishing,—all in vain,—
To speak; for oftentimes
In those her father’s hospitable halls
She sang, a maiden pure with chastest song,
*And her dear father’s life
That poured its threefold cup of praise to God,³
Crowned with all choicest good,
She with a daughter’s love
Was wont to celebrate.

ANTISTROPH. IV.

What then ensued mine eyes
Saw not, nor may I tell, but Calchas’ arts
Were found not fruitless. Justice turns the scale
For those to whom through pain
At last comes wisdom’s gain.
*But for our future fate,
*Since help for it is none,
*Good-bye to it before it comes, and this
Has the same end as wailing premature;
For with to-morrow’s dawn
It will come clear; may good luck crown our fate!
So prays the one true guard,
Nearest and dearest found,
Of this our Apian land.³

[The Chief of the Chorus turns to CLYTEMNESTRA, and her train of handmaids, who are seen approaching.

Chor. I come, O Clytemnestra, honouring

(1) Beautiful as a picture, and as motionless and silent also. The art, young as it was, had already reached the stage when it supplied to the poet an ideal standard of perfection. Other allusions to it are found in vv. 774, 1300.

(2) The words point to the ritual of Greek feasts, which assigned the first libation to Zeus and the Olympian Gods, the second to the Heroes, the third to Zeus in his special character as Saviour and Preserver; the last was commonly accompanied by a psan, hymn of praise. The life of Agamemnon is described as one which had good cause to offer many such libations. Iphigeneia had sung many such psalms.

(3) The mythical explanation of this title for the Argive territory is found in the Supp. v. 266, and its real meaning will be discussed in a note in that passage.
Thy majesty: 'tis meet to pay respect
To a chief's wife, the man's throne empty left:
But whether thou hast heard good news, or else
In hopes of tidings glad dost sacrifice,
I fain would hear, yet will not silence blame.

Clytemnestra. May Morning, as the proverb runs, appear
Bearing glad tidings from his mother Night
Joy thou shalt learn beyond thy hope to hear;
For Argives now have taken Priam's city.

Chor. What? Thy words sound so strange they flit by me.

Clytemnestra. The Achaeans hold Troia. Speak I clear enough?

Chor. Joy creeps upon me, drawing forth my tears.

Clytemnestra. Of loyal heart thine eyes give token true.

Chor. What witness sure hast thou of these events?

Clytemnestra. Full clear (how else?) unless the God deceive.

Chor. Beliest thou on dreams or visions seen?

Clytemnestra. I place no trust in mind weighed down with sleep.

Chor. Hath then some wingless omen charmed thy soul?

Clytemnestra. My mind thou scorn'st, as though 'twere but a girl's.

Chor. What time has passed since they the city sacked?

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(1) To speak of Morning as the child of Night was, we may well believe, among the earliest parables of nature. In its mythical form it appears in Hesiod, (Theogon. 123,) but its traces are found wherever, as among Hebrews, Athenians, Germans, men reckoned by nights rather than by days, and spoke of "the evening and the morning" rather than of "day and night."

(2) The God thought of is, as in v. 272, Hephaestus, as being Lord of the Fire, that had brought the tidings.

(3) It is not without significance that Clytemnestra scorns the channel of divine instruction of which the Chorus had spoken with such reverence. The dramatist puts into her mouth the language of those who scoffed at the notion that truth might come to the soul in "visions of the night," when "deep sleep filleth up men." So Sophocles puts like thoughts into the mouth of Jocasta, (Ed. King, vv. 709, 863.)

(4) Omens came from the flight of birds. An omen which was not trustworthy, or belonged to some lower form of divination, might therefore be spoken of as "wingless." But the word may possibly be intensive, not negative, "swift-winged," and then refer generically to that form of divination.
AGAMEMNON.

Clytem. This very night, the mother of this morn. 270
Chor. What herald could arrive with speed like this?
Clytem. Hephaestos flashing forth bright flames from
Ida:
Beacon to beacon from that courier-fire
Sent on its tidings; Ida to the rock
Hermesian, in Lemnos: from the isle
The height of Athos, dear to Zeus, received
A third great torch of flame, and lifted up,
So as on high to skim the broad sea's back,
The stalwart fire rejoicing went its way;
The pine-wood, like a sun, sent forth its light
Of golden radiance to Makistos' watch;
And he, with no delay, nor unawares
Conquered by sleep, performed his courier's part:
Far off the torch-light, to Euripsos' straits
Advancing, tells it to Messapion's guards:
They, in their turn, lit up and passed it on,
Kindling a pile of dry and aged heath.
Still strong and fresh the torch, not yet grown dim,
Leaping across Asopos' plain in guise
Like a bright moon, towards Kitharon's rock,
Roused the next station of the courier flame.
And that far-travelled light the sentries there
Refused not, burning more than all yet named:
And then the light swooped o'er Gorgopis' lake,
And passing on to Egiplanctos' mount,
Bade the bright fire's due order tarry not;

(1) The description that follows, over and above its general interest,
had, probably, for an Athenian audience, that of representing the actual
succession of beacon-stations, by which they, in the course of the wars
under Pericles, had actually received intelligence from the coasts of Asia.
A glance at the map will show the fitness of the places named—Ida,
Lemnos, Athos, Makistos, (a mountain in Euboea,) Messapion, (on the
coast of Boeotia,) over the plains of the Asopos to Kitharon, in the south
of the same province, then over Gorgopis, a bay of the Corinthian Gulf,
to Egiplanctos in Megaris, then across to a headland overlooking the
Saronic Gulf, to the Arachnean hill in Argolis. The word "courier-fire"
connects itself also with the system of posts or messengers, which the
Persian kings seem to have been the first to organise, and which im-
pressed the minds both of Hebrews (Esth. viii. 14) and Greeks (Herod.
viii. 98) by their regular transmission of the king's edicts, or of special
news.
And they, enkindling boundless store, send on
A mighty beard of flame, and then it passed
The headland e’en that looks on Saron’s gulf,
Still blazing. On it swept, until it came
To Arachnean heights, the watch-tower near;
Then here on the Atreidæ’s roof it swoops,
This light, of Ida’s fire no doubtful heir.
Such is the order of my torch-race games;
One from another taking up the course,¹
But here the winner is both first and last;
And this sure proof and token now I tell thee,
Seeing that my lord hath sent it me from Troia.

Chor. I to the Gods, O Queen, will pray hereafter,
But fain would I hear all thy tale again,
E’en as thou tell’st, and satiate my wonder.

 Clytem. This very day the Achaæans Troia hold.
I trow full diverse cry pervades the town:
Pour in the same vase vinegar and oil,
*And you would call them enemies, not friends;
And so from conquerors and from captives now

(1) Our ignorance of the details of the Lampadephoria, or “torch-race games,” in honour of the fire-God, Prometheus, makes the allusion to them somewhat obscure. As described by Pausanias, (I. xxx. 2,) the runners started with lighted torches from the altar of Prometheus in the Academia and ran towards the city. The first who reached the goal with his torch still burning became the winner. If all the torches were extinguished, then all were losers. As so described, however, there is no succession, no taking the torch from one and passing it on to another, like that described here and in the well-known line of Lucretius, (ii. 78,)

“Et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt.”
(And they, as runners, pass the torch of life.)

On the other hand, there are descriptions which show that such a transfer was the chief element of the game. This is, indeed, implied both in this passage and in the comparison between the game and the Persian courier-system in Herod. viii. 98. The two views may be reconciled by supposing (1) that there were sets of runners, vying with each other as such, rather than individually, or (2) that a runner whose speed failed him though his torch kept burning, was allowed to hand it on to another who was more likely to win the race, but whose torch was out. The next line seems meant to indicate where the comparison failed. In the torch-race which Clytemnestra describes there had been no contest. One and the self-same fire (the idea of succession passing into that of continuity) had started and had reached the goal, and so had won the prize. An alternative rendering would be,—

“He wins who is first in, though starting last.”
The cries of varied fortune one may hear.
For these, low-fallen on the carcases
Of husbands and of brothers, children too
By aged fathers, mourn their dear ones' death,
And that with threats that are no longer free.
And those the hungry toil of sleepless guard,
After the battle, at their breakfast sets;
Not billeted in order fixed and clear,
But just as each his own chance fortuno grasps,
They in the captive houses of the Troians
Dwell, freed at last from all the night's chill frosts,
And dews of heaven, for now, poor wretches, they
Will sleep all night without the sentry's watch;
And if they reverence well the guardian Gods
Of that now-conquered country, and their shrines,
Then they, the captors, will not captured be.
Ah! let no evil lust attack the host
Conquered by greed, to plunder what they ought not:
For yet they need return in safety home,
Doubling the goal to run their backward race.¹
*But should the host come sinning 'gainst the Gods,
Then would the curse of those that perishèd
Be watchful, e'en though no quick ill might fall.
Such thoughts are mine, mere woman though I be.
May good prevail beyond all doubtful chance!
For I have got the blessing of great joy.

Chor. Thou, lady, kindly, like a sage, dost speak,
And I, on hearing thy sure evidence,
Prepare myself to give the Gods due thanks;
For they have wrought full meed for all our toil.

[Exit Clytæm. with her train.

O Zeus our King! O Night beloved,
Mighty winner of great glories,
Who upon the towers of Troia
Casted'st snare of closest meshes,

(1) The complete foot-race was always to the column which marked the end of the course, round it, and back again. In getting to Troia, therefore, but half the race was done.
So that none full-grown or youthful
Could o'erleap the net of bondage,
Woe of universal capture;—
Zeus, of host and guest protector,
Who hath brought these things, I worship;
He long since on Alexandros
Stretched his bow that so his arrow
Might not sweep at random, missing,
Or beyond the stars shoot idly.

STROPH. I.

Yes, one may say, 'tis Zeus whose blow they feel;
This one may clearly trace:
They fared as He decreed:
Yes, one there was who said,
"The Gods deign not to care for mortal men"
By whom the grace of things inviolable
Is trampled under foot."
No fear of God had he:
*Now is it to the children manifest*
Of those who, overbold,
Breathed rebel War beyond the bounds of Right,
Their houses overfilled with precious store
*Above the golden mean.
*Ah! let our life be free from all that hurts,
So that for one who gains
Wisdom in heart and soul,
That lot may be enough.

(1) Dramatically the words refer to the practical impiety of evildoers like Paris, with, perhaps, a half-latent allusion to that of Clytemnestra. But it can hardly be doubted that for the Athenian audience it would have a more special significance, as a protest against the growing scepticism, what in a later age would have been called the Epicureanism, of the age of Pericles. It is the assertion of the belief of Aeschylus in the moral government of the world. The very quickness of the singular, "One there was," would lead the hearers to think of some teacher like Anaxagoras, whom they suspected of Atheism.

(2) The Chorus sees in the overthrow of Troy, an instance of this righteous retribution. The audience were, perhaps, intended to think also of the punishment which had fallen on the Persians for the sacrilegious acts of their fathers. The "things inviolable" are the sanctities of the ties of marriage and hospitality, both of which Paris had set at nought.
Since still there is no bulwark strong in wealth
Against destruction's doom,
For one who in the pride of wantonness
Spurns the great altar of the Right and Just.

ANTISTROPH. I.

Him woeful, subtle Impulse urges on,
Resistless in her might,
Atè's far-scheming child:
All remedy is vain.
It is not hidden, but is manifest,
That mischief with its horrid gleaming light;
And, like to worthless bronze,¹
By friction tried and tests,
It turns to tarnished blackness in its hue:
Since, boy-like, he pursues
A bird upon its flight, and so doth bring
Upon his city shame intolerable:
And no God hears his prayer,
But bringeth low the unjust,
Who deals with deeds like this.
Thus Paris came to the Atridæ's home,
And stole its queen away,
And so left brand of shame indelible
Upon the board where host and guest had sat.

STROPH. II.

She, leaving to her countrymen at home
Wild din of spear and shield and ships of war,
And bringing, as her dower,
To Ilion doom of death,
Passed very swiftly through the palace gates,
Daring what none should dare;

(1) Here, and again in v. 612, we have a similitude drawn from the metallurgy of Greek artists. Good bronze, made of copper and tin, takes the green rust which collects prize, but when rubbed, the brightness reappears. If zinc be substituted for tin, as in our brass, or mixed largely with it, the surface loses its polish, oxidizes and becomes black. It is, however, doubtful whether this combination of metals was at the time in use, and the words may simply refer to different degrees of excellence in bronze properly so called.
And many a wailing cry
They raised, the minstrel prophets of the house,
"Woe for that kingly home!
Woe for that kingly home and for its chiefs!
Woe for the marriage-bed and traces left
Of wife who loved her lord!"
*There stands he silent; foully wronged and yet
*Uttering no word of scorn,¹
*In deepest woe perceiving she is gone;
And in his yearning love
For one beyond the sea,
A ghost shall seem to queen it o'er the house;
The grace of sculptured forms²
Is loathed by her lord,
And in the penury of life's bright eyes
All Aphrodite's charm
To utter wreck has gone.

Antistroph. II.

And phantom shades that hover round in dreams
Come full of sorrow, bringing vain delight;
For vain it is, when one
Sees seeming shows of good,
And gliding through his hands the dream is gone,
After a moment's space,
On wings that follow still
Upon the path where sleep goes to and fro.
Such are the woes at home
Upon the altar hearth, and worse than these.

(1) In a corrupt passage like this, the text of which has been so variously restored and rendered, it may be well to give at least one alternative version:
"There stands she silent, with no honour met,
Nor yet with words of scorn,
Sweetest to see of all that he has lost."
The words, as so taken, refer to the vision of Helen, described in the lines that follow. Another, for the line "In deepest woe," &c., . . . would give,
"Believing not he sees the lost one there."

(2) The art of Phidias had already made it natural at Athens to speak of kings as decorating their palaces with the life-size busts or statues of those they loved.
AGAMEMNON.

But on a wider scale for those who went
From Hellas' ancient shore,
A sore distress that causeth pain of heart
Is seen in every house.
Yea, many things there are that touch the quick:
For those whom each did send
He knoweth; but, instead
Of living men, there come to each man's home
Funereal urns alone,
And ashes of the dead.

STROPH. III.

For Ares, trafficking for golden coin
The lifeless shapes of men,
And in the rush of battle holding scales,
Sends now from Ilion
Dust from the funeral pyre,
A burden sore to loving friends at home,
And bitterly bewailed,
Filling the brazen urn
With well-smoothed ashes in the place of men;
And with high praise they mourn
This hero skilled and valiant in the fight,
And that who in the battle nobly fell,
All for another's wife:
And other words some murmur secretly;
And jealous discontent
Against the Atreidæ, champions in the suit,
Creeps on all stealthily;
And some around the wall,
In full and goodly form have sepulture
There upon Ilion's soil,
And their foes' land inters its conquerors.

ANTISTROPH. III.

And so the murmurs of their subjects rise
With sullen discontent;
And do the dread work of a people's curse;
And now my boding fear
Awaits some news of ill,
As yet enwrapt in blackness of the night.
Not heedless are the Gods
Of shedders of much blood,
And the dark-robed Erinnyes in due time,
By adverse chance of life,
Place him who prospers in unrighteousness
In gloom obscure; and once among the unseen,
There is no help for him:
Fame in excess is but a perilous thing;
For on men’s quivering eyes
Is hurled by Zeus the blinding thunder-bolt.
I praise the good success
That rouses not God’s wrath;
Ne’er be it mine a city to lay waste,¹
Nor, as a prisoner, see
My life wear on beneath another’s power!

    EPILOGUE.

And now at bidding of the courier flame,
The herald of good news,
A rumour swift spreads through the city streets,
But who knows clearly whether it be true,
Or whether God has mingled lies with it?
Who is so childish or so reft of sense,
As with his heart a-glow
At that fresh uttered message of the flame,
Then to wax sad at changing rumour’s sound?
It suits the mood that sways a woman’s mind
To pour thanksgiving ere the truth is seen:
Quickly, with rapid steps, too credulous,
The limit which a woman sets to trust
Advances evermore;²
And with swift doom of death
A rumour spread by woman perishes.

¹ Here again one may note a protest against the aggressive policy of Pericles, an assertion of the principle that a nation should be content with independence, without aiming at supremacy.
² Perhaps passively, “Soon suffers trespassers.”
[As the Chorus ends, a Herald is seen approaching, his head wreathed with olive.]

Soon we shall know the sequence of the torches
Light-giving, and of all the beacon-fires,
If they be true; or if, as 'twere a dream,
This sweet light coming hath beguiled our minds.
I see a herald coming from the shore,
With olive boughs o'ershadowed, and the dust,
Dry sister-twin of mire, announces this,
That neither without voice, nor kindling blaze
Of wood upon the mountains, he will signal
With smoke from fire, but either he will come,
With clear speech bidding us rejoice, or else...

The word opposed to this I much dislike.
Nay, may good issue good beginnings crown!
Who for our city utters other prayers,
May he himself his soul's great error reap!

Herald. Hail, soil of this my Argive fatherland.
Now in the light of the tenth year I reach thee,
Though many hopes are shattered, gaining one.
For never did I think in Argive land
To die, and share the tomb that most I craved.
Now hail! thou land; and hail! thou light of day:
Zeus our great ruler, and thou Pythian king,
No longer darting arrows from thy bow.
Full hostile wast thou by Scamandros' banks,
Now be thou Saviour, yea, and Healer found,
O king Apollo! and the Gods of war,

(1) As the play opens on the morning of the day on which Troia was taken, and now we have the arrivals, first, of the herald, and then of Agamemnon, after the capture has been completed, and the spoil divided, and the fleet escaped a storm, an interval of some days must be supposed between the two parts of the play, the imaginary law of the unities notwithstanding.

(2) The customary adornment of heralds who brought good news. Comp. Sophocles, Ed. K., v. 83. The custom prevailed for many centuries, and is recognised by Dante, Purg. ii. 70, as usual in his time in Italy.

(3) So in the Seven against Thebes, (v. 494,) smoke is called "the sister of fire."

(4) A probable reference, not only to the story, but to the actual words of Homer, Iliad. 45-52.
These I invoke; my patron Hermes too,
Dear herald, whom all heralds reverence,—
Those heroes, too, that sent us,¹—graciously
To welcome back the host that war has spared.
Hail, O ye royal dwellings, home beloved!
Ye solemn thrones, and Gods who face the sun!²
If e'er of old, with cheerful glances now
After long time receive our king's array.
For he is come, in darkness bringing light
To you and all, our monarch, Agamemnon.
Salute him with all grace; for so 'tis meet,
Since he hath dug up Troia with the spade
Of Zeus the Avenger, and the plain laid waste;
Fallen their altars and the shrines of Gods;
The seed of all the land is rooted out,
This yoke of bondage casting over Troia,
Our chief, the elder of the Atreides, comes,
A man full blest, and worthiest of high honour
Of all that are. For neither Paris' self,
Nor his accomplice city now can boast
Their deed exceeds its punishment. For he,
Found guilty on the charge of rape and theft,³
Hath lost his prize and brought his father's house,
With lands and all, to waste and utter wreck;
And Priam's sons have double forfeit paid.⁴

(1) Specially the Dioscuri, Castor and Polydeuces.
(2) Such a position (especially in the case of Zeus or Apollo) was common in the temples both of Greece and Rome, and had a very obvious signification. As the play was performed, the actual hour of the day probably coincided with that required by the dramatic sequence of events, and the statues of the Gods were so placed on the stage as to catch the rays of the morning sun when the herald entered. Hence the allusion to the bright "cheerful glances" would have a visible as well as ethical fitness.
(3) It formed part of the guilt of Paris, that, besides his seduction of Helena, he had carried off part of the treasures of Menelaus.
(4) The idea of a payment twofold, the amount of the wrong done, as a complete satisfaction to the sufferer, was common in the early jurisprudence both of Greeks and Hebrews, (Exod. xxii. 4-7.) In some cases it was even more, as in the four or fivefold restitution of Exod. xxii. 1. In the grand opening of Isaiah's message of glad tidings the fact that Jerusalem has received "double for all her sins" is made the ground on the strength of which she may now hope for pardon. Comp. also Isa. lxii. 7; Zech. ix. 12.
Chor. Joy, joy, thou herald of the Achaean host!
Her. All joy is mine: I shrink from death no more.
Chor. Did love for this thy fatherland so try thee?
Her. So that mine eyes weep tears for very joy.
Chor. Disease full sweet then this ye suffered from...
Her. How so? When taught, I shall thy meaning
master.
Chor. Ye longed for us who yearned for you in turn.
Her. Say'st thou this land its yearning host yearned
o'er?
Chor. Yea, so that oft I groaned in gloom of heart.
Her. Whence came these bodings that an army hates?
Chor. Silence I've held long since a charm for ill.
Her. How, when your lords were absent, feared ye any?
Chor. To use thy words, death now would welcome be.
Her. Good is the issue; but in so long time
Some things, one well might say, have prospered well,
And some give cause for murmurs. Save the Gods,
Who free from sorrow lives out all his life?
For should I tell of toils, and how we lodged
Full hardly, seldom putting in to shore,
And then with couch full hard. . . . What gave us not
Good cause for mourning? What ill had we not
As daily portion? And what passed on land,
That brought yet greater hardship: for our beds
Were under our foes' walls, and meadow mists
From heaven and earth still left us wringing wet,
A constant mischief to our garments, making
Our hair as shaggy as the beasts'. And if
One spoke of winter frosts that killed the birds,
By Ida's snow-storms made intolerable,
Or heat, when Ocean in its noontide couch

(1) Perhaps—
"Full hardly, and the close and crowded decks."

(2) So stress is laid upon this form of hardship, as rising from the
climate of Troy, by Sophocles, Ais, 1206.
(3) One may conjecture that here also, as with the passage describing
the succession of beacon fires, (vv. 281-314,) the description would have
for an Athenian audience the interest of recalling personal reminiscences
of some recent campaign in Thrakê, or on the coasts of Asia.
Windless reclined and slept without a wave. ... But why lament o'er this? Our toil is past;
Past too is theirs who in the warfare fell,
So that no care have they to rise again.
Why should I count the number of the dead,
Or he that lives mourn o'er a past mischance?
To change and chance I bid a long Farewell:
With us, the remnant of the Argive host,
Good fortune wins, no ills as counterpoise.
So it is meet to this bright sun we boast,
Who travel homeward over land and sea;
"The Argive host who now have captured Troïa,
These spoils of battle \(^1\) to the Gods of Hellas
Hang on their pegs, enduring prize and joy."
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Hearing these things we ought to bless our country
And our commanders; and the grace of Zeus
That wrought this shall be honoured. My tale's told.

*Chor.* Thy words o'ercome me, and I say not nay;
To learn good keeps youth's freshness with the old.
'Tis meet these things should be a special care
To Clytæmnestra and the house, and yet
That they should make me sharer in their joy.

*Enter Clytæmnestra.*

*Clytæm.* I long ago for gladness raised my cry,
When the first fiery courier came by night,
Telling of Troïa taken and laid waste:
And then one girding at me spake, "Dost think,
Trusting in beacons, Troïa is laid waste?
This heart elate is just a woman's way."
In words like these they made me out distraught;
Yet still I sacrificed, and with a strain

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\(^1\) We may, perhaps, think of the herald, as he speaks, placing some representative trophy upon the pegs on the pedestals of the statues of the great Gods of Hellas, whom he had invoked on his entrance.

\(^2\) Or,

"So that to this bright morn our sons may boast,
As they o'er land and ocean take their flight,
'The Argive host of old, who captured Troïa,
These spoils of battle to the Gods of Hellas,
Hung on their pegs, a trophy of old days.'"
Shrill as a woman's, they, now here, now there,
Throughout the city hymns of blessing raised
In shrines of Gods, and lulled to gentle sleep
The fragrant flame that on the incense fed.
And now why needst thou lengthen out thy words?
I from the king himself the tale shall learn;
And that I show all zeal to welcome back
My honoured lord on his return (for what
Is brighter joy for wife to see than this,
When God has brought her husband back from war,
To open wide her gates?) tell my lord this,
"To come with all his speed, the city's idol;"
And "may he find a faithful wife at home,
Such as he left her, noble watch-dog still
For him, and hostile to his enemies;
And like in all things else, who has not broken
One seal of his in all this length of time." 1
No pleasure have I known, nor scandal ill
With any other more than . . . stains on bronze. 2
Such is my vaunt, and being full of truth,
Not shameful for a noble wife to speak. 3

[Exit.

(1) The husband, on his departure, sealed up his special treasures. It
was the glory of the faithful wife or the trusty steward to keep these seals
unbroken.

(2) There is an ambiguity, possibly an intentional one, in the compara-
son which Clytemnestra uses. If there was no such art as that of
"staining bronze" (or copper) known at the time, the words would be a
natural phrase enough to describe what was represented as an impossibility.
Later on in the history of art, however, as in the time of Plutarch,
a process so described (perhaps analogous to enamelling) is described
(De Pyth. Orac. 12) as common. If we suppose the art to have been a
mystery known to the few, but not to the many, in the time of Eschylus,
then the words would have for the hearers the point of a double entendre.
She seems to the mass to disclaim what yet, to those in the secret she
acknowledges.

Another rendering refers "bronze" to the "sword," and makes the
stains those of blood; as though she said, "I am as guiltless of adultery
as of murder," while yet she knew that she had committed the one, and
meant to commit the other. The possibility of such a meaning is cer-
tainly in the words, and with a sharp-witted audience catching at enigmas
and dark sayings may have added to their suggestiveness. The ambig-
uous comment of the Chorus shows that they read, as between the lines,
the shameful secret which they knew, but of which the Herald was
ignorant.

(3) The last two lines are by some editors assigned to the Herald.
Chor. [to Herald.] She hath thus spoken in thy hearing now
A goodly word for good interpreters.
But tell me, herald, tell of Menelaos,
If, coming home again in safety he
Is with you, the dear strength of this our land.

Her. I cannot make report of false good news,
So that my friends should long rejoice in it.

Chor. Ah! could'st thou good news speak, and also true!
These things asunder are not well concealed.

Her. The chief has vanished from the Achaean host,
He and his ship. I speak no falsehood here.

Chor. In sight of all when he from Ilion sailed?
Or did a storm's wide evil part him from you?

Her. Like skilful archer thou hast hit the mark,
And in few words hast told of evil long.

Chor. And was it of him as alive or dead
The whisper of the other sailors ran?

Her. None to that question answer clear can give,
Save the Sun-God who feeds the life of earth.

Chor. How say'st thou? Did a storm come on our fleet,
And do its work through anger of the Gods?

Her. It is not meet a day of tidings good
To mar with evil news. Apart for each
Is special worship. But when courier brings
With louring face the ills men pray against,
And tells a city that its host has fallen,
That for the State there is a general wound,
That many a man from many a home is driven,
As banned by double scourge that Ares loves,
Woe doubly-barbed, Death's two-horsed chariot this...
When with such griefs as freight a herald comes,
'Tis meet to chant the Erinnyes' dolorous song;
But for glad messenger of good deeds wrought
That bring deliverance, coming to a town
Rejoicing in its triumph, ... how shall I
Blend good with evil, telling of a storm
That smote the Achaean, not without God's wrath?
For they a compact swore who erst were foes,
Ocean and Fire, and their pledges gave,
Wrecking the ill-starred army of the Argives;
And in the night rose ill of raging storm:
For Thrakian tempests shattered all the ships,
Each on the other. Some thus crashed and bruised,
By the storm stricken and the surging foam
Of wind-tost waves, soon vanished out of sight,
Whirled by an evil pilot. And when rose
The sun's bright orb, behold, the Ægean sea
Blossomed with wrecks of ships and dead Achaean.
And as for us and our uninjured ship,
Surely 'twas some one stole or begged us off,
Some God, not man, presiding at the helm;
And on our ship with good will Fortune sat,
Giver of safety, so that nor in haven
Felt we the breakers, nor on rough rock-beach
Ran we aground. But when we had escaped
The hell of waters, then in clear, bright day,
Not trusting in our fortune, we in thought
O'er new ills brooded of our host destroyed,
And eke most roughly handled. And if still
Breathe any of them they report of us
As having perished. How else should they speak?
And we in our turn deem that they are so.
God send good ending! Look you, first and chief,
For Menelaus' coming; and indeed,
If any sunbeam know of him alive
And well, by help of Zeus who has not willed
As yet to blot out all the regal race,
Some hope there is that he'll come back again.
Know, hearing this, that thou the truth hast heard.

[Exit Herald.

Stroph. I.

Chor. Who was it named her with such wondrous truth?
(Could it be One unseen,
In strange prevision of her destined work,
   Guiding the tongue through chance? 
Who gave that war-wed, strife-upstirring one
The name of Helen, ominous of ill? 
   For all too plainly she
Hath been to men, and ships,
   And towers, as doom of Hell.
From bower of gorgeous curtains forth she sailed
With breeze of Zephyr Titan-born and strong; 
   And hosts of many men,
Hunters that bore the shield,
Went on the track of those who steered their boat
Unseen to leafy banks of Simois,
   On her account who came,
Dire cause of strife with bloodshed in her train.

ANTISTROPH. I.

And so the wrath which works its vengeance out
   Dear bride to Ilion brought,
(Ah, all too truly named!) exacting still
   After long lapse of time
The penalty of foul dishonour done
To friendship's board and Zeus, of host and guest
   The God, from those who paid
Their loud-voiced honour then
   Unto that bridal strain,
That hymeneal chorus which to chant

(1) It need hardly be said that it is as difficult to render a _paronomasia_ of this kind as it is to reproduce those, more or less analogous, which we find in the prophets of the Old Testament, (comp. especially Micah i.;) but it seems better to substitute something which approaches, however imperfectly, to an equivalent than to obscure the reference to the _omen_ et _omen_ by abandoning the attempt to translate it. "Heil of men, and hell of ships, and hell of towers," has been the rendering adopted by many previous translators. The Greek fondness for this play on names is seen in Sophocles, _Ajax_, v. 401.
(2) Zephyros, Boreas, and the other great winds were represented in the _Theogony_ of Hesiod (v. 134) as the offspring of Astræos and Eós, and Astræos was a Titan. The west wind was, of course, favourable to Paris as he went with Helen from Greece to Troy.
(3) Here again the translator has to meet the difficulty of a _pun_. As an alternative we might take—
   "To Ilion brought, well-named,
   A marriage marring all."
Fell to the lot of all the bridegroom’s kin.\(^1\)
But learning other song,
Priam’s ancient city now
Bewaileth sore, and calls on Paris' name,
Wedded in fatal wedlock; all the time
* Enduring tear-fraught life
* For all the blood its citizens had lost.

Stroph. II.

So once a lion’s cub,
A mischief in his house,
As foster child one reared,\(^2\)
While still it loved the teats;
In life’s preluding dawn
Tame, by the children loved,
And fondled by the old,\(^3\)
Oft in his arms ’twas held,
Like infant newly born,
With eyes that brightened to the hand that stroked,
And fawning at the best of hunger keen.

Antistroph. II.

But when full-grown, it showed
The nature of its sires;
For it unbidden made
A feast in recompense
Of all their fostering care,
* By banquet of slain sheep;
With blood the house was stained,

(1) The sons of Priam are thought of as taking part in the celebration of Helen's marriage with Paris, and as, therefore, involving themselves in the guilt and the penalty of his crime.

(2) Here, too, it may be well to give an alternative rendering—

"A mischief in his house,
A man reared, not on milk."

Home-reared lions seem to have been common as pets, both among Greeks and Latins, (Arist., Hist. Anim. ix. 31; Plutarch, de Cabin. 144, p. 822,) sometimes, as in Martial's Epigram, ii. 25, with fatal consequences.

The text shows the practice to have been common enough in the time of Pericles to supply a similitude.

(3) There may, possibly, be a half allusion here to the passage in the Iliad, (vv. 154-160,) which describes the fascination which the beauty of Helen exercised on the Trojan elders.
A curse no slaves could check,
Great mischief murderous:
By God's decree a priest of Ate thus
Was reared, and grew within the man's own house.

STROPH. III.
So I would tell that thus to Ilion came
Mood as of calm when all the air is still,
The gentle pride and joy of kingly state,
A tender glance of eye,
The full-blown blossom of a passionate love,
Thrilling the very soul;
And yet she turned aside,
And wrought a bitter end of marriage feast,
Coming to Priam's race,
Ill sojourner, ill friend,
Sent by great Zeus, the God of host and guest—
Erinnys, for whom wives weep many tears.

ANTISTROPH. III.
There lives an old saw, framed in ancient days,¹
In memories of men, that high estate
Full-grown brings forth its young, nor childless dies,
But that from good success
Springs to the race a woe insatiable.
But I, apart from all,
Hold this my creed alone:
For impious act it is that offspring breeds,
Like to their parent stock:
For still in every house
That loves the right their fate for evermore
Rejoiceth in an issue fair and good.

(1) The poet becomes a prophet, and asserts what it has been given
him to know of the righteous government of God. The dominant creed
of Greece at the time was, that the Gods were envious of man's pros-
perity, that this alone, apart from moral evil, was enough to draw down
their wrath, and bring a curse upon the prosperous house. So, e.g.,
Amasis tells Polyorates (Herod. iii. 40) that the unseen Divinity that
rules the world is envious, that power and glory are inevitably the
precursors of destruction. Comp. also the speech of Artabanus,
(Herod. vii. 10, 46.) Against this, in the tone of one who speaks single-
handed for the truth, Æschylus, through the Chorus, enters his protest.
Strophe. IV.
But Recklessness of old
Is wont to breed another Recklessness,
Sporting its youth in human miseries,
Or now, or then, when'er the fixed hour comes:
That in its youth, in turn,
Doth full-flushed Lust beget,
And that dread demon-power unconquerable,
Daring that fears not God,—
Two curses black within the homes of men,
Like those that gendered them.

Antistrophe. IV.
But Justice shineth bright
In dwellings that are dark and dim with smoke,
And honours life law-ruled,
While gold-decked homes conjoined with hands defiled
She with averted eyes
Hath left, and draweth near
To holier things, nor worships might of wealth,
If counterfeit its praise;
But still directeth all the course of things
Towards its destined goal.

[Agamemnon is seen approaching in his chariot,
followed by another chariot, in which Cassandra is standing, carrying her prophet's wand in her hand, and wearing fillets round her temples, and by a great train of soldiers bearing trophies. As they come on the stage the Chorus sings its welcome.

Come then, king, thou son of Atreus,
Waster of the towers of Troia,
What of greeting and of homage
Shall I give, nor overshooting,
Nor due need of honour missing?
Men there are who, right transgressing,
Honour semblance more than being.
O'er the sufferer all are ready.
Wail of bitter grief to utter,
Though the biting pang of sorrow
Never to their heart approaches;
So with counterfeit rejoicing
Men strain faces that are smileless;
But when one his own sheep knoweth,
Then men's eyes cannot deceive him,
When they deem with kindly purpose,
And with fondness weak to flatter.
Thou, when thou did'st lead thine army
For Helen's sake—(I will not hide it)—
Wast to me as one whose features
Have been limned by unskilled artist,
Guiding ill the helm of reason,
Giving men to death's doom sentenced
*Courage which their will rejected. ¹

Now nor from the spirit's surface,
Nor with touch of thought unfriendly,
All the toil, I say, is welcome,
If men bring it to good issue.

And thou soon shalt know, enquiring,
Him who rightly, him who wrongly
Of thy citizens fulfilleth
Task of office for the city. ²

Agam. First Argos, and the Gods who guard the land,
'Tis right to greet; to them in part I owe
This my return, and vengeance that I took
On Priam's city. Not on hearsay proof
Judging the cause, with one consent the Gods
Cast in their votes into the urn of blood
For Ilion's ruin and her people's death;
* I' the other urn Hope touched the rim alone,

(1) Oe. Agamemnon, by the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, had induced his
troops to persevere in an expedition from which, in their inmost hearts,
they shrunk back with strong dislike. A conjectural reading gives,
"By the sacrifice he offered
Giving death-doomed men false boldness."

(2) The tone of ambiguous irony mingles, it will be seen, even here,
with the praises of the Chorus.
Still far from being filled full.¹ And even yet
The captured city by its smoke is seen,
*The incense clouds of Até live on still;
And, in the act of dying with its prey,
From richest store the dust sends savours sweet.
For these things it is meet to give the Gods
Thank-offerings long-enduring; for our nets
Of vengeance we set close, and for a woman
Our Argive monster laid the city low,²
Foaled by the mare, a people bearing shield,
Taking its leap when set the Pleiades;³
And, bounding o'er the tower, that ravenous lion
Lapped up its fill of blood of kingly race.
This prelude to the Gods I lengthen out;
And as concerns thy feeling (this I well
Remember hearing) I with thee agree,
And thou in me may'st find an advocate.
With but few men is it their natural bent
To honour without grudging prosperous friend:
For ill-souled envy that the heart besets,
Doubles his woe who suffers that disease:
He by his own griefs first is overwhelmed,
And groans at sight of others' happier lot.
*And I with good cause say, (for well I know,) They are but friendship's mirror, phantom shade, Who seemed to be my most devoted friends. Odysseus only, who against his will ⁴ Sailed with us, still was found true trace-fellow: And this I say of him or dead or living.

(1) Possibly an allusion to Pandora's box. Here, too, Hope alone was left, but it only came up to where the curve of the rim began, not to its top. The imagery is drawn from the older method of voting, in which (as in Hemenides, v. 676) the votes for condemnation and acquittal were cast into separate urns.

(2) The lion, as the symbol of the house of Atreus, still seen in the sculptures of Mykenæ; the horse, in allusion to the stratagem by which Troia had been taken.

(3) At the end of autumn, and therefore at a season when a storm like that described by the herald would be a probable incident enough.

(4) So in Sophocles, Philoctetes (v. 1025) taunts Odysseus:—

"And yet thou salldest with them by constraint,
By tricks fast bound."
But as for all that touches on the State,
Or on the Gods, in full assembly we,
Calling our council, will deliberate:
For what goes well we should with care provide
How longest it may last; and where there needs
A healing charm, there we with all good-will,
By surgery or cautery will try
To turn away the mischief of disease.
And now will I to home and household hearth
Move on, and first give thanks unto the Gods
Who led me forth, and brought me back again.
Since Victory follows, long may she remain!

_Enter Clytemnestra, followed by female attendants carrying purple tapestry._

_Clytemn. _Ye citizens, ye Argive senators,
I will not shrink from telling you the tale
Of wife’s true love. As time wears on one drops
All over-shyness. Not learning it from others,
I will narrate my own unhappy life,
The whole long time my lord at Ilion stayed.
For first, that wife should sit at home alone
Without her husband is a monstrous grief,
Hearing full many an ill report of him,
Now one and now another coming still,
Bringing news home, worse trouble upon bad.
Yea, if my lord had met as many wounds
As rumour told of, floating to our house,
He had been riddled more than any net;
And had he died, as tidings still poured in,
Then he, a second Geryon with three lives,
Had boasted of a threefold coverlet
Of earth above, (I will not say below him,)²

(1) Geryon appears in the myth of Hercules as a monster with three heads and three bodies, ruling over the island Erytheia, in the far West, beyond Hyperborea. To destroy him and seize his cattle was one of the “twelve labours,” with which Hesiod (Theogon, vv. 287-294) had already made men familiar.

(2) When a man is buried, there is earth above and earth below him. Clytemnestra having used the words “coverlet,” pauses to make her
Dying one death for each of those his forms;  
And so, because of all these ill reports,  
Full many a noose around my neck have others  
Loosed by main force, when I had hung myself.  
And for this cause no son is with me now,  
Holding in trust the pledges of our love,  
As he should be, Orestes. Wonder not;  
For now a kind ally doth nurture him,  
Strophios the Phokian, telling me of woes  
Of twofold aspect, danger on thy side  
At Ilion, and lest loud-voiced anarchy  
Should overthrow thy council, since 'tis still  
The wont of men to kick at those who fall.  
No trace of guile bears this excuse of mine;  
As for myself, the fountains of my tears  
Have flowed till they are dry, no drop remains,  
And mine eyes suffer from o'er-late repose,  
Watching with tears the beacons set for thee,  
Left still unheeded. And in dreams full oft  
I from my sleep was startled by the gnat  
With thin wings buzzing, seeing in the night  
Ills that stretched far beyond the time of sleep.  
Now, having borne all this, with mind at ease,  
I hail my lord as watch-dog of the fold,  
The stay that saves the ship, of lofty roof  
Main column-prop, a father's only child,  
Land that beyond all hope the sailor sees,  
Morn of great brightness following after storm,

Language accurate to the very letter. She is speaking only of the earth  
which would have been laid over her husband's corpse, had he died as  
often as he was reported to have done. She will not utter anything so  
ominous as an allusion to the depths below him stretching down to  
Hades.

(1) Or—

"Weeping because the torches in thy house  
No more were lighted as they were of yore."

(2) The words touch upon the psychological fact that in dreams, as in  
other abnormal states of the mind, the usual measures of time disappear,  
and we seem to pass through the experiences of many years in the slum-
ber of a few minutes.
Clear-flowing fount to thirsty traveller.  
Yes, it is pleasant to escape all straits:  
With words of welcome such as these I greet thee;  
May jealous Heaven forgive them! for we bore  
Full many an evil in the past; and now,  
Dear husband, leave thy car, nor on the ground,  
O King, set thou the foot that Ilion trampled.  
Why linger ye, [turning to her attendants.] ye maids,  
whose task it was  
To strew the pathway with your tapestries?  
Let the whole road be straightway purple-strown,  
That Justice lead to home he looked not for.  
All else my care, by slumber not subdued,  
Will with God's help work out what fate decrees.  

(The handmaids advance, and are about to lay the purple carpets on the ground.)  

Agam. O child of Leda, guardian of my home,  
Thy speech hath with my absence well agreed—  
For long indeed thou mad'st it—but fit praise  
Is boon that I must seek at other hands.  
I pray thee, do not in thy woman's fashion  
Pamper my pride, nor in barbaric guise  
Prostrate on earth raise full-mouthed cries to me;  
Make not my path offensive to the Gods  
By spreading it with carpets.  

(1) The rhetoric of the passage, with all its multiplied similitudes, fine as it is in itself, receives its dramatic significance by being put into the lips of Clytemnestra. She "doth protest too much." A true wife would have been content with fewer words.  
(2) The last three lines of the speech are of course intentionally ambiguous, carrying one meaning to the ear of Agamemnon, and another to that of the audience.  
(3) There is obviously a side-thrust, such as an Athenian audience would catch at, at the token of homage which the Persian kings required of their subjects, the prostration at their feet, the earth spread over with costly robes. Of the latter custom we have examples in the history of Jehu, (2 Kings ix. 13,) in our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, (Mark xi. 8,) in the usages of modern Persian kings, (Malcolm's Persia, i. 580;) perhaps also in the true rendering of Ps. xlv. 14, "She shall be brought unto the king on raiment of needle-work." In the march of Xerxes across the Hellespont myrtle-boughs strown on the bridge of boats took the place of robes, (Herod. vii. 64.) To the Greek character, with its strong love of independence, such customs were hateful. The case of
May claim that honour; but for mortal men
To walk on fair embroidery, to me
Seems nowise without peril. So I bid you
To honour me as man, and not as God.
Apart from all foot-mats and tapestry
My fame speaks loudly; and God's greatest gift
Is not to err from wisdom. We must bless
Him only who ends life in fair estate.¹
Should I thus act throughout, good hope were mine.

_Clytaem._ Nay, say not this my purposes to thwart.
_Agam._ Know I change not for the worse my pur-
pose.

_Clytaem._ In fear, perchance, thou vow'd'st thus to act.
_Agam._ If any, I, with good ground spoke my will.²

_Clytaem._ What think'st thou Priam, had he wrought
such deeds . . . ?

_Agam._ Full gladly he, I trow, had trod on carpets.

_Clytaem._ Then shrink not thou through fear of men's
dispraise.

_Agam._ And yet a people's whisper hath great might.³

_Clytaem._ Who is not envied is not enviable.

_Agam._ 'Tis not a woman's part to crave for strife.

_Clytaem._ True, yet the prosperous e'en should some-
times yield.

_Agam._ Dost thou then prize that victory in the strife?

_Clytaem._ Nay, list; with all good-will yield me this
boon.

_Agam._ Well, then, if thou wilt have it so, with speed
Let some one loose my buskins,⁴ (servants they

Pausanias, who offended the national feeling by assuming the outward
state of the Persian kings, must have been recalled to the minds of the
Athenians, intentionally or otherwise, by such a passage as this.
(1) The *old saying, famed of many men,* which we find in the
_Trachinias* of Sophocles, (v. 1,) and in the counsel of Solon to Creæsas,
(Herod. i. 32.)
(2) He who had suffered so much from the wrath of Artemis at Aulis
knew what it was to rouse the wrath and jealousy of the Gods,
(3) An echo of a line in Hesiod, (*Works and Days,* 763)—
"No whispered rumours which the many spread
Can ever wholly perish."
(4) Here, too, we may trace a reference to the Oriental custom of
recognising the sanctity of a consecrated place by taking the shoes from
Doing the foot's true work,) and as I tread
Upon these robes sea-purpled, may no wrath
From glance of Gods smite on me from afar!
Great shame I feel to trample with my foot
This wealth of carpets, costliest work of looms;
So far for this. This stranger [pointing to Cassandra]
lead thou in
With kindliness. On him who gently wields
His power God's eye looks kindly from afar.
None of their own will choose a bondslave's life;
And she, the chosen flower of many spoils,
Has followed with me as the army's gift.
But since I turn, obeying thee in this,
I'll to my palace go, on purple treading.

Clytemnestra. There is a sea,—and who shall drain it dry?
Producing still new store of purple juice,
Precious as silver, staining many a robe.
And in our house, with God's help, O my king,
'Tis ours to boast our palace knows no stint.
Trampling of many robes would I have vowed,
Had that been ordered me in oracles,
When for my lord's return I then did plan
My votive gifts. For while the root lives on,
The foliage stretches even to the house,
And spreads its shade against the dog-star's rage;
So when thou comest to thy hearth and home,
Thou show'st that warmth hath come in winter time;
And when from unripe clusters Zeus matures
The wine, then is there coolness in the house,
If the true master dwelleth in his home.
Ah, Zeus! the All-worker, Zeus, work out for me

off the feet, as in Exod. iii. 5, in the services of the Tabernacle and
Temple, through all their history, (Juv. Sat. vi. 159,) in all mosques to the
present day. Agamemnon, yielding to the temptress, seeks to make
a compromise with his conscience. He will walk upon the tapestry, but
will treat it as if it, of right, belonged to the Gods, and were a con-
secrated thing. It is probably in connexion with this incident that
Aeschylus was said to have been the first to bring actors on the stage in
these boots or buskins, (Suidas, a v. ἀγάμεμνον.)
(1) The words of Isaiah, (xviii. 5,) "when the sour grape is ripening in
the flower," present an almost verbal parallel.
All that I pray for; let it be thy care
To look to what Thou purposest to work.¹

[Exeunt AGAMEMNON, walking on the tapestry,
CLYTEMNESTRA, and her attendants.

STROPH. I.

Chor. Why thus continually
Do haunting phantoms hover at the gate?
Of my foreboding heart?
Why floats prophetic song, unbought, unbidden?
Why doth no steadfast trust
Sit on my mind’s dear throne,
To fling it from me as a vision dim?
Long time hath passed since stern-ropes of our ships
Were fastened on the sand, when our great host
Of those that sailed in ships
Had come to Ilion’s towers:³

ANTISTROPH. I.

And now from these mine eyes
I learn, myself reporting to myself,
Their safe return; and yet
My mind within itself, taught by itself,
Chanteth Erinnys’ dirge,
The lyreless melody,
And hath no strength of wonted confidence.
Not vain these inner pulses, as my heart
Whirls eddying in breast oracular.
I, against hope, will pray
It prove false oracle.

STROPH. II.

Of high, o’erflowing health
There is no bound that stays the wish for more,
For evermore disease, as neighbour close
Whom but a wall divides,

(1) The ever-recurring ambiguity of Clytemnestra’s language is again traceable, as is also her fondness for rhetorical similitudes.
(2) The Chorus speaks in perplexity. It cannot get rid of its forebodings, and yet it would seem as if the time for the fulfilment of the dark words of Calchas must have passed long since. It actually sees the safe return of the leader of the host, yet still its fears haunt it.
Upon it presses; and man's prosperous state
  *Moves on its course, and strikes
  Upon an unseen rock;
But if his fear for safety of his freight,
A part, from well-poised sling, shall sacrifice,
  Then the whole house sinks not,
  O'erfilled with wretchedness,
  Nor does he swamp his boat:
  So, too, abundant gift
From Zeus in bounteous fulness, and the fruit
  Of glebe at harvest tide
Have caused to cease sore hunger's pestilence;
  
**Antistrophe. II.**

But blood that once hath flowed
In purple stains of death upon the ground
At a man's feet, who then can bid it back
  By any charm of song?
Else him who knew to call the dead to life
  *Zeus had not sternly checked,
  *As warning unto all;
But unless Fate, firm-fixed, had barred our fate
From any chance of succour from the Gods,
  Then had my heart poured forth
  Its thoughts, outstripping speech.
  But now in gloom it wails
  Sore vexed, with little hope
At any time hereafter fitting end
  To find, unravelling,
My soul within me burning with hot thoughts.

**Re-enter Clytemnestra.**

_Clytem._ [to Cassandra, who has ridden in the chariot
during the choral ode.]

Thou too—I mean Cassandra—go within;

(1) Asclepius, whom Zeus smote with his thunderbolt for having restored
Hippolytos to life.
(2) The Chorus, in spite of their suspicions and forebodings, have
given the king no warning. They excuse themselves by the plea of
necessity, the sovereign decree of Zeus overruling all man's attempts to
withstand it.
Since Zeus hath made it thine, and not in wrath,
To share the lustral waters in our house,
Standing with many a slave the altar nigh
Of Zeus, who guards our goods.¹ Now get thee down
From out this car, nor look so over proud.
They say that e’en Alcmena’s son endured²
Being sold a slave, constrained to bear the yoke:
And if the doom of this ill chance should come,
Great boon it is to meet with lords who own
Ancestral wealth. But whoso reap full crops
They never dared to hope for, these in all,
And beyond measure, to their slaves are harsh:³
From us thou hast what usage doth prescribe.

Chor. So ends she, speaking words full clear to thee:
And seeing thou art in the toils of fate,
If thou obey, thou wilt obey; and yet,
Perchance, obey thou wilt not.

Clytem. Nay, but unless she, like a swallow, speaks
A barbarous tongue unknown, I, speaking now
Within her apprehension, bid obey.

Chor. [to Cassandra, still standing motionless] Go with
her. What she bids is now the best;
Obey her: leave thy seat upon this car.

Clytem. I have no leisure here to stay without:
For as regards our central altar, there
The sheep stand by as victims for the fire;
For never had we hoped such thanks to give:
If thou wilt do this, make no more delay;

¹ Cassandra is summoned to an act of worship. The household is
gathered, the altar to Zeus Ktesios, (the God of the family property,
slaves included,) standing in the servants’ hall, is ready. The new slave
must come in and take her place with the others.
² As in the story which forms the groundwork of the Trachiniae of
Sophocles, vv. 250-280, that Heracles had been sold to Omphale as a slave,
in penalty of the murder of Iphitos.
³ Political as well as dramatic. The Eupatrid poet appeals to public
opinion against the nouveaux riches, the tanners and lamp-makers, who
were already beginning to push themselves forward towards prominence
and power. The way was thus prepared in the first play of the Trilogy
for what is known to have been the main object of the last. Comp. Arist.,
Rhet. ii. 92.
But if thou understandest not my words,
Then wave thy foreign hand in lieu of speech.

[CASSANDRA shudders as in horror, but
makes no sign.

Chor. The stranger seems a clear interpreter
To need. Her look is like a captured deer’s.

Clytem. Nay, she is mad, and follows evil thoughts,
Since, leaving now her city, newly-captured,
She comes, and knows not how to take the curb,
Ere she foam out her passion in her blood.
I will not bear the shame of uttering more.  [Exit.

Chor. And I—I pity her, and will not rage:
Come, thou poor sufferer, empty leave thy car;
Yield to thy doom, and handsel now the yoke.

[CASSANDRA leaves the chariot, and bursts
into a cry of wailing.

STROPH. I.

Cass. Woe! woe, and well-a-day!
Apollo! O Apollo!

Chor. Why criest thou so loud on Loxias?
The wailing cry of mourner suits not him.

ANTISTROPH. I.

Cass. Woe! woe, and well-a-day!
Apollo! O Apollo!

Chor. Again with boding words she calls the God,
Though all unmeet as helper to men’s groans.

STROPH. II.

Cass. Apollo! O Apollo!
God of all paths, Apollo true to me;
For still thou dost appal me and destroy.¹

Chor. She seems her own ills like to prophecy:
The God’s great gift is in the slave’s mind yet.

(1) Here again the translator has the task of finding an English paraphrase which approximates to that of the Greek, between Apollo and ἀπόλλων the destroyer. To Apollo, as the God of paths, (Augeus,) an altar stood, column-fashion, before the street-door of every house, and to such an altar, placed by the door of Agamemnon’s palace, Cassandra turns, with the twofold play upon the name.
ANTISTROPH. II.

Cass. Apollo! O Apollo!
God of all paths, Apollo true to me;
What path hast led me? To what roof hast brought?
Chor. To that of the Atreids. This I tell,
If thou know'st not. Thou wilt not find it false.

STROPH. III.

Cass. Ah! Ah! Ah me!
Say rather to a house God hates—that knows
Murder, self-slaughter, ropes;¹
* A human shambles, staining earth with blood. ¹⁰⁶⁹
Chor. Keen scented seems this stranger, like a hound,
And sniffs to see whose murder she may find.

ANTISTROPH. III.

Cass. Ah! Ah! Ah me!
Lo! [looking wildly, and pointing to the house,] there the
witnesses whose word I trust,—
Those babes who wail their death,
The roasted flesh that made a father's meal.
Chor. We of a truth had heard thy seeress fame,
But prophets now are not the race we seek.²

STROPH. IV.

Cass. Ah me! O horror! What ill schemes she now?
What is this new great woe?
Great evil plots she in this very house,
Hard for its friends to bear, immedicable;
And help stands far aloof.
Chor. These oracles of thine surpass my ken;
Those I know well. The whole town rings with them.³

(1) This refers, probably, to the death of Hippodameia, the wife of
Pelops, who killed herself, in remorse for the death of Chrysippus, or
fear of her husband's anger. The horrors of the royal house of Argos
pass, one by one, before the vision of the prophetess, and this leads
the procession, followed by the spectre of the murdered children of
Thyestes.

(2) The Chorus, as in their last ode, had made up their minds, though
foreboding ill, to let destiny take its course. They do not wish that
policy of non-interference to be changed by any too clear vision of the
future.

(3) The Chorus understands the vision of the clairvoyants as regards the
ANTISTROPH. IV.

Cass. Ah me! O daring one! what work'st thou here,
    Who having in his bath
Tended thy spouse, thy lord, then ... How tell the rest?
For quick it comes, and hand is following hand,
    Stretched out to strike the blow.

Chor. Still I discern not; after words so dark
I am perplexed with thy dim oracles.

STROPH. V.

Cass. Ah, horror, horror! What is this I see?
    Is it a snare of Hell?
Nay, the true net is she who shares his bed,
    Who shares in working death.
Ha! let the Band insatiable in hate
Howl for the race its wild exulting cry
    O'er sacrifice that calls
For death by storm of stones.

STROPH. VI.

Chor. What dire Erinys bidd'st thou o'er our house
To raise shrill cry? Thy speech but little cheers;
    And to my heart there rush
Blood-drops of saffron hue,
    * Which, when from deadly wound
They fall, together with life's setting rays
End, as it fails, their own appointed course:
    And mischief comes apace.

ANTISTROPH. V.

Cass. See, see, I say, from that fell heifer there.
    Keep thou the bull: in robes

past tragedy of the house of Atreus, but not that which seems to portend another actually imminent.

1) Fresh visions come before the eyes of the seeress. She beholds the company of Erinnyes hovering over the accursed house, and calls on them to continue their work till the new crime has met with its due punishment. The murder which she sees as if already wrought, demands death by stoning.
2) The "yellow" look of fear is thought of as being caused by an actual change in the colour of the blood as it flows through the veins to the heart.
3) Here there is prevision as well as clairvoyance. The deed is not yet
Entangling him, she with her weapon gores
    Him with the swarthy horns;¹
Lo! in that bath with water filled he falls,
Smitten to death, and I to thee set forth
    Crime of a bath of blood,
By murderous guile devised.

ANTISTROPH. VI.

Chor. I may not boast that I keen insight have
1100
In words oracular; yet bode I ill.
What tidings good are brought
By any oracles
To mortal men? These arts,
In days of evils sore, with many words,
Do still but bring a vague, portentous fear
For men to learn and know.

STROPHE. VII.

Cass. Woe, woe! for all sore ills that fall on me!
It is my grief thou speak’st of, blending it
    With his.² [Pausing, and then crying out.] Ah!
wherefore then
Hast thou³ thus brought me here,
Only to die with thee?
What other doom is mine?

STROPHE. VIII.

Chor. Frenzied art thou, and by some God’s might
swayed,
    And utterest for thyself
A melody which is no melody,
Like to that tawny one,

done. The sacrifice and the feast are still going on, yet she sees the crime
in all its circumstances.

¹ As before (v. 115) the black eagle had been the symbol of the
warrior-chief, so here the black-horned bull, that being one of the notes
of the best breed of cattle. A various reading gives “with her swarthy
horn.”

² What the Chorus had just said as to the fruitlessness of prophetic
insight tallied all too well with her own bitter experience.

³ The ecstasy of horror interrupts the tenor of her speech, and the
second “thou” is addressed not to the Chorus, but to Agamemnon, whose
dead Cassandra has just witnessed in her vision.
Insatiate in her wail,
The nightingale, who still with sorrowing soul,
   And "Itya, Itya," cry,
Bemoans a life o'erflourishing in ills.

**Antistroph. VII.**

*Cass.* Ah, for the doom of clear-voiced nightingale!
The Gods gave her a body bearing wings,
   And life of pleasant days
With no fresh cause to weep:
But for me waiteth still
Stroke from the two-edged sword.

**Antistroph. VIII.**

*Chor.* From what source hast thou these dread agonies
Sent on thee by thy God,
Yet vague and little meaning; and thy cries
Dire with ill-omened shrieks
Dost utter as a chant,
And blendest with them strains of shrillest grief?
   Whence treadest thou this track
Of evil-boding path of prophecy?

**Stroph. IX.**

*Cass.* Woe for the marriage-ties, the marriage-ties
Of Paris that brought ruin on his friends!
Woe for my native stream,
Scamandros, that I loved!
Once on thy banks my maiden youth was reared,
   (Ah, miserable me!)
Now by Cokytos and by Acheron's shores
I seem too likely soon to utter song
Of wild, prophetic speech.

(1) The song of the nightingale, represented by these sounds, was connected with a long legend, specially Attic in its origin. Philomela, daughter of Pandion, king of Attica, suffered outrage at the hands of Tereus, who was married to her sister Procne, and was then changed into a nightingale, destined ever to lament the fate of Itya, her sister's son. The earliest form of the story appears in the Odyssey, (xix. 518). Comp. Sophocles, *Electr.* v. 148.
AGAMEMNON.

STROPH. X.

Chor. What hast thou spoken now
With utterance all too clear?
*Even a boy its gist might understand;
I to the quick am pierced
With throe of deadly pain,
Whilst thou thy moaning cries art uttering
Over thy sore mischance,
Wondrous for me to hear.

ANTISTROPH. IX.

Cass. Woe for the toil and trouble, toil and trouble
Of city that is utterly destroyed!
Woe for the victims slain
Of herds that roamed the fields,
My father's sacrifice to save his towers!
No healing charm they brought
To save the city from its present doom:
And I with hot thoughts wild myself shall cast
Full soon upon the ground.

ANTISTROPH. X.

Chor. This that thou utterest now
With all before agrees.
Some Power above dooms thee with purpose ill,
Down-swooping heavily,
To utter with thy voice
Sorrows of deepest woe, and bringing death.
And what the end shall be
Perplexes in the extreme.

Cass. Nay, now no more from out of maiden veils
My oracle shall glance, like bride fresh wed; ¹
But seems as though 'twould rush with speedy gales
In full, clear brightness to the morning dawn;
So that a greater woe than this shall surge

(1) In the marriage-rites of the Greeks of the time of Æschylus, the bride
for three days after the wedding wore her veil; then, as now no longer
shrinking from her matron life, she laid it aside and looked on her hus-
band with unveiled face.
Like wave against the sunlight.\(^1\) Now I'll teach
No more in parables. Bear witness ye,
As running with me, that I scent the track
Of evil deeds that long ago were wrought:
For never are they absent from this house,
That choral band which chants in full accord,
Yet no good music; good is not their theme.
And now, as having drunk men's blood,\(^2\) and so
Grown wilder, bolder, see, the revelling band,
Erinnyes of the race, still haunt the halls,
Not easy to dismiss. And so they sing,
Close cleaving to the house, its primal woe,\(^3\)
And vent their loathing in alternate strains
On marriage-bed of brother ruthless found
To that defiler. *Miss I now, or hit,
Like archer skilled? or am I seeress false,
A babbler vain that knocks at every door?
Yea, swear beforehand, ere I die, I know
(And not by rumour only) all the sins
Of ancient days that haunt and vex this house.

Chor. How could an oath, how firm soe'er confirmed,
Bring aught of healing? Lo, I marvel at thee,
That thou, though born far off beyond the sea,
Should'st tell an alien city's tale as clear
As though thyself had stood by all the while.

Cass. The seer Apollo set me to this task.

Chor. Was he, a God, so smitten with desire?

Cass. There was a time when shame restrained my
speech.

Chor. True; they who prosper still are shy and coy.

Cass. He wrestled hard, breathing hot love on me.

Chor. And were ye one in act whence children spring?

---

(1) The picture might be drawn by any artist of power, but we may, perhaps, trace a reproduction of one of the grandest pass ges in the Iliad,
(iv. 422-426.)

(2) So in the Eumenides, (v. 293.) the Erinnyes appear as vampires,
drinking the blood of their victims.

(3) The death of Myrtileus as the first crime in the long history of the
house of Pelops. Comp. Soph. Electr. v. 470. The "defiler" is Thyestes,
who seduced Aerope, the wife of Atreus.
Cass. I promised Loxias, then I broke my vow.

Chor. Wast thou e’en then possessed with arts divine?

Cass. E’en then my country’s woes I prophesied.

Chor. How wast thou then unsathed by Loxias’ wrath?

Cass. I for that fault with no man gained belief.

Chor. To us, at least, thou seem’st to speak the truth.

Cass. [Again speaking wildly, as in an ecstasy] Ah, woe is me! Woe’s me! Oh, ills on ills!

Again the dread pang of true prophet’s gift
With preludes of great evil dizzies me.

See ye those children sitting on the house
In fashion like to phantom forms of dreams?

Infants who perished at their own kin’s hands,
Their palms filled full with meat of their own flesh,
Loom on my sight, the heart and entrails bearing,
(A sorry burden that!) on which of old
Their father fed.¹ And in revenge for this,
I say a lion, dwelling in his lair,

With not a spark of courage, stay-at-home,
Plots ’gainst my master, now he’s home returned,
(Yes mine—for still I must the slave’s yoke bear;)
And the ship’s ruler, Ilion’s conqueror,

Knows not what things the tongue of that lewd bitch
Has spoken and spun out in welcome smooth,

And, like a secret Atè, will work out
With dire success: thus ’tis she plans: the man
Is murdered by the woman. By what name
Shall I that loathed monster rightly call?
An Amphisbaena? or a Skylla dwelling²

Among the rocks, the sailors’ enemy?

(1) The horror of the Thystes banquet again haunts her as the source of all the evils that followed, of the deaths both of Iphigeneia and Agamemnon. The “stay-at-home” is Egisto.

(2) Both words point to the Sindbad-like stories of distant marvels brought back by Greek sailors. The Amphisbaena, (double-goer), wriggling itself backward and forward, believed to have a head at each extremity, was looked upon as at once the most subtle and the most venomous of serpents. Skylla, already famous in its mythical form from the story in the Odyssey, (xii. 85-100,) was probably a “development” of the monstrous cuttle-fish of the straits of Messina.
Hades' fierce raging mother, breathing out
Against her friends a curse implacable?
Ah, how she raised her cry, (oh, daring one!)  
As for the rout of battle, and she feigns
To hail with joy her husband's safe return!
And if thou dost not credit this, what then?
What will be will. Soon, present, pitying me
Thou'lt own I am too true a prophetess.

Chor. Thyestes' banquet on his children's flesh
I know and shudder at, and fear o'ercomes me,
Hearing not counterfeits of fact, but truths;
Yet in the rest I hear and miss my path.

Cass. I say thou'lt witness Agamemnon's death.

Chor. Hush, wretched woman, close those lips of thine!

Cass. For this my speech no healing God's at hand.

Chor. True, if it must be; but may God avert it!

Cass. Thou utterest prayers, but others murder plot.

Chor. And by what man is this dire evil wrought?

Cass. Sure, thou hast seen my bodings all amiss.

Chor. I see not his device who works the deed.

Cass. And yet I speak the Hellenic tongue right well.

Chor. So does the Pythian, yet her words are hard.

Cass. [In another access of frenzy.] Ah me, this fire!

It comes upon me now!

Ah me, Apollo, wolf-slayer! woe is me!
This biped lioness who takes to bed
A wolf in absence of the noble lion,
Will slay me, wretched me. And, as one
Mixing a poisoned draught, she boasts that she
Will put my price into her cup of wrath,
Sharpening her sword to smite her spouse with death,
So paying him for bringing me. Oh, why
Do I still wear what all men flout and scorn,
My wand and seeress wreaths around my neck?  

(1) As in Homer (II. i. 14) so here, the servant of Apollo bears the wand of anger, and fillets or wreaths round head and arms. The divining garments, in like manner, were of white linen.
Thee, ere myself I die I will destroy: [breaks her wand.]
Perish ye thus: [casting off her wreaths.] I soon shall
follow you:
Make rich another Atê in my place;
Behold Apollo's self is stripping me
Of my divining garments, and that too,
When he has seen me even in this garb
Scorned without cause among my friends and kin,
*By foes, with no diversity of mood.
Reviled as vagrant, wandering prophetess,
Poor, wretched, famished, I endured to live:
And now the Seer who me a seeress made
Hath brought me to this lot of deadly doom.
Now for my father's altar there awaits me
A butcher's block, where I am smitten down
By slaughtering stroke, and with hot gush of blood.
But the Gods will not slight us when we're dead;
Another yet shall come as champion for us,
A son who slays his mother, to avenge
His father; and the exiled wanderer
Far from his home, shall one day come again,
Upon these woes to set the coping-stone:
For the high Gods have sworn a mighty oath,
His father's fall, laid low, shall bring him back.
Why then do I thus groan in this new home,?
When, to begin with, Ilion's town I saw
Faring as it did fare, and they who held
That town are gone by judgment of the Gods?
I too will fare as they, and venture death:
So I these gates of Hades now address,
And pray for blow that bringeth death at once,
That so with no fierce spasm, while the blood
Flows in calm death, I then may close mine eyes.

[Goest towards the door of the palace.

(1) If we adopt this reading, we must think of Cassandra as identifying herself with the woe (Atê) which makes up her life, just as afterwards Clytemnestra speaks of herself as one with the avenging Demon (Alastor) of the house of Atreus (1473.) The alternative reading gives,—
"Make rich in woe another in my place."

(2) Perhaps, "in home not mine."
Chor. O thou most wretched, yet again most wise:
Long hast thou spoken, lady, but if well
Thou know'st thy doom, why to the altar go'st thou,
Like heifer driven of God, so confidently? 1

Cass. For me, my friends, there is no time to 'scape. 3
Chor. Yea; but he gains in time who comes the last.
Cass. The day is come: small gain for me in flight.
Chor. Know then thou sufferest with a heart full brave.

Cass. Such words as these the happy never hear.
Chor. Yet mortal man may welcome noble death.

Cass. [Shrinking back from opening the door.] Woe's me for thee and thy brave sons, my father! 4
Chor. What cometh now? What fear oppresseth thee?
Cass. [Again going to the door and then shuddering in another burst of frenzy.] Fie on't, fie!
Chor. Whence comes this "Fie?" unless from mind that loathes? 5

Cass. The house is tainted with the scent of death.
Chor. How so? This smells of victims on the hearth.
Cass. Nay, it is like the blast from out a grave.
Chor. No Syrian ritual tell'st thou for our house.: 6
Cass. Well then I go, and e'en within will wail
My fate and Agamemnon's. And for me,
Enough of life. Ah, friends! Ah! not for nought
I shrink in fear, as bird shrinks from the brake. 5
When I am dead do ye this witness bear,
When in revenge for me, a woman, Death
A woman smites, and man shall fall for man

(1) When the victim, instead of shrinking and struggling, went, as with good courage, to the altar, it was noted as a sign of divine impulse. Such a strange, new courage the Chorus notices in Cassandra.
(2) Possibly,
"My one escape, my friends, is but delay."
(3) The implied thoughts of the words is that Priam and his sons, though they had died nobly, were yet miserable, and not happy.
(4) The Syrian ritual had, it would seem, become proverbial for its lavish use of frankincense and other spices.
(5) The close parallel of Shakespeare's Henry VI., Act. v. sc. 6, is worth quoting—
"The bird that hath been limed in a bush,
With trembling eyes misdoubteth every bush."
In evil wedlock wed. This friendly office,
As one about to die, I pray you do me.

Chor. Thy doom foretold, poor sufferer, moves my pity.

Cnes. I fain would speak once more, yet not to wail
Mine own death-song; but to the Sun I pray,
To his last rays, that my avengers wreak
Upon my hated murderers judgment due
For me, who die a slave's death, easy prey.
Ah, life of man! when most it prospereth,
* It is but limned in outline;¹ and when brought
To low estate, then doth the sponge, full soaked,
Wipe out the picture with its frequent touch:
And this I count more piteous e'en than that.²

[Passes through the door into the palace.

Chor. 'Tis true of all men that they never set
A limit to good fortune; none doth say,
As bidding it depart,
* And warding it from palaces of pride,
"Enter thou here no more."

To this our lord the Blest Ones gave to take
Priam's city; and he comes
Safe to his home and honoured by the Gods;
But if he he now shall pay
The forfeit of blood-guiltiness of old,
And, dying, so work out for those who died,
By his own death another penalty,
Who then of mortal men,
Hearing such things as this,
Can boast that he was born
With fate from evil free?

Agam. [from within.] Ah, me! I am struck down
with deadly stroke.

Chor. Hush! Who cries out with deadly stroke sore
smitten?

Agam. Ah me, again! struck down a second time! [Dies.

(1) The older reading gives—
"A shadow might o'erturn it."

(2) Her own doom, hard as it was, touches her less than the common
lot of human suffering and mutability.
Chor. By the king's groans I judge the deed is done; 
But let us now confer for counsels safe.¹
Chor. a. I give you my advice to summon here,
Here to the palace, all the citizens.
Chor. b. I think it best to rush at once on them,
And take them in the act with sword yet wet.
Chor. c. And I too give like counsel, and I vote
For deed of some kind. 'Tis no time to pause.
Chor. d. Who will see, may.—They but the prelude
work
Of tyranny usurped o'er all the State.
Chor. e. Yes, we are slow, but they who trample down
The thought of hesitation slumber not.
Chor. f. I know not what advice to find or speak:
He who can act knows how to counsel too.
Chor. g. I too think with thee; for I have no hope
With words to raise the dead again to life.
Chor. h. What! Shall we drag our life on and submit
To these usurpers that defile the house?
Chor. i. Nay, that we cannot bear: To die were better;
For death is gentler far than tyranny.
Chor. k. Shall we upon this evidence of groans
Guess, as divining that our lord is dead?
Chor. l. When we know clearly, then should we
discuss:
To guess is one thing, and to know another.
Chor.² So vote I too, and on the winning side,
Taking the votes all round that we should learn
How he, the son of Atreus, fareth now.

Enter Clytæmnestra from the palace, in robes with
stains of blood, followed by soldiers and attendants.
The open doors show the corpses of Agamemnon
and Cassandra, the former lying in a silvered
bath.

Clytæm. Though many words before to suit the time

(1) So far the dialogue has been sustained by the Coryphæus, or leader
of the Chorus. Now each member of it speaks and gives his counsel.
(2) The Coryphæus again takes up his part, sums up, and pronounces
his decision.
Were spoken, now I shall not be ashamed
The contrary to utter: How could one
By open show of enmity to foes
Who seemed as friends, fence in the snares of death
Too high to be o’erleapt? But as for me,
Not without forethought for this long time past,
This conflict comes to me from triumph old
Of his, though slowly wrought. I stand where I
1350
Did smite him down, with all my task well done.
So did I it, (the deed deny I not,) That he could nor avert his doom nor flee:
I cast around him drag-net as for fish,
With not one outlet, evil wealth of robe:
And twice I smote him, and with two deep groans
He dropped his limbs: And when he thus fell down
1360
I gave him yet a third, thank-offering true
To Hades of the dark, who guards the dead.
So fallen, he gasps out his struggling soul,
And breathing forth a sharp, quick gush of blood,
He showers dark drops of gory rain on me,
Who no less joy felt in them than the corn,
When the blade bears, in glad shower given of God.
Since this is so, ye Argive elders here,
Yea, as ye will, may hail the deed, but I
Boast of it. And were’t fitting now to pour
Libation o’er the dead, 
’twere justly done,
Yea more than justly; such a goblet full
Of ills hath he filled up with curses dire
At home, and now has come to drain it off.

Chor. We marvel at the boldness of thy tongue,
1370
Who o’er thy husband’s corpse speak’st vaunt like this.

(1) i.e. He had had his triumph over her when, forgetful of her mother’s feelings, he had sacrificed Iphigeneia. She has now repaid him to the full.

(2) The third libation at all feasts was to Zeus, as the Preserver or Guardian Deity. Clytemnestra boasts that her third blow was as an offering to a God of other kind, to Him who had in his keeping not the living, but the dead.

(3) So in the Choëphori, (vv. 361, 476,) the custom of pouring libations on the burial-place of the dead is recognised as an element of their blessedness or shame in Hades, and Agamemnon is represented as lacking the honour which comes from them till he receives it at the hand of Orestes.
Clytæm. Ye test me as a woman weak of mind;
But I with dauntless heart to you that know
Say this, and whether thou dost praise or blame,
Is all alike:—here Agamemnon lies,
My husband, now a corpse, of this right hand,
As artist just, the handiwork: so stands it.

STROPHAE.

Chor. What evil thing, O Queen, or reared on earth,
Or draught from salt sea-wave
Hast thou fed on, to bring
Such incense on thyself,¹
A people’s loud-voiced curse?
’Twas thou did’st sentence him,
’Twas thou did’st strike him down;
But thou shalt exiled be,
Hated with strong hate of the citizens.

Clytæm. Ha! now on me thou lay’st the exile’s doom,
My subjects’ hate, and people’s loud-voiced curse,
Though ne’er did’st thou oppose my husband there,
Who, with no more regard than had been due
To a brute’s death, although he called his own
Full many a fleecy sheep in pastures bred,
Yet sacrificed his child, the dear-loved fruit
Of all my travail-pangs, to be a charm
Against the winds of Thrakia. Should’st thou not
Have banished him from out this land of ours,
As meed for all his crimes? Yet hearing now
My deeds, thou art a judge full stern. But I
Tell thee to speak thy threats, as knowing well
I am prepared that thou on equal terms
Should’st rule, if thou dost conquer. But if God
Should otherwise decree, then thou shalt learn,
Late though it be, the lesson to be wise.

¹ Incense was placed on the head of the victim. The Chorus tells Clytemnestra that she has brought upon her own head the incense, not of praise and admiration, but of hatred and wrath, as though some poison had driven her mad.
AGAMEMNON.

ANTISTROPHE.

Chor. Yea, thou art stout of heart, and speak'st big words;
And maddened is thy soul
As by a murderous hate;
And still upon thy brow
Is seen, not yet avenged,
The stain of blood-spot foul;
And yet it needs must be,
One day thou, rest of friends,
Shalt pay the penalty of blow for blow.

Clytæm. Now hear thou too my oaths of solemn dread:
By my accomplished vengeance for my child,
By Até and Erinnys, unto whom
I slew him as a victim, I look not
That fear should come beneath this roof of mine,
So long as on my hearth Ægisthos kindles
The flaming fire, as well disposed to me
As he hath been aforetime. He to us
Is no slight shield of stoutest confidence.
There lies he, [pointing to the corpse of AGAMEMNON,] one
who foully wronged his wife,
The darling of the Chryseids at Troïa;
And there [pointing to CASSANDRA] this captive slave, this auguress,

His concubine, this seeress trustworthy,
*Who shared his bed, and yet was as well known
To the sailors as their benches! . . . They have fared
Not otherwise than they deserved: for he
Lies as you see. And she who, like a swan,\(^1\)
Has chanted out her last and dying song,

---

\(^1\) The species of swan referred to is said to be in the *Cygnus Muscius*. Aristotle (*Hist. Anim.* ix. 12) describes swans of some kind as having been heard by sailors near the coast of Libya, "singing with a lamentable cry." Mrs. Somerville (*Phys. Geog.*, c. xxxiii. 3) describes their note as "like that of a violin." The same fact is reported of the swans of Iceland and other regions of the far North. The strange, tender beauty of the passage in the *Phaedo* of Plato, (p. 85, a.) which speaks of them as singing when at the point of death, has done more than anything else to make the illustration one of the commonplaces of rhetoric and poetry.
Lies close to him she loved, and so has brought
The zest of a new pleasure to my bed.

STROPH. I.

Chor. Ah me, would death might come
Quickly, with no sharp throe of agony,
Nor long bed-ridden pain,
Bringing the endless sleep;
Since he, the watchman most benign of all,
Hath now been smitten low,
And by a woman's means hath much endured,
And at a woman's hand hath lost his life!

STROPH. II.

Alas! alas! O Helen, evil-souled,
Who, though but one, hast slain
Many, yea, very many lives at Troia.²

* * * * *

STROPH. III.

* But now for blood that may not be washed out
* Thou hast to full bloom brought
*A deed of guilt for ever memorable,
For strife was in the house,
Wrought out in fullest strength,
Woe for a husband's life.

STROPH. IV.

Clytem. Nay, pray not thou for destiny of death,
Oppressed with what thou see'st;
Nor turn thou against Helena thy wrath,
As though she murderess were,
And, though but one, had many Danai's souls
Brought low in death, and wrought o'erwhelming woe.

ANTISTROPH. I.

Chor. O Power that dost attack

(1) The structure of the lyrical dialogue that follows is rather complicated, and different editors have adopted different arrangements. I have followed Paley's.
(2) Several lines seem to have dropped out by some accident of transcription.
Our palace and the two Tantalidae,¹
*And dost through women wield
*A might that grieves my heart!²
And o'er the body, like a raven foul,
Against all laws of right,
*Standing, she boasteth in her pride of heart³
That she can chant her psæan hymn of praise. 1450

ANTISTROPH. IV.

Clytaem. Now thou dost guide aright thy speech and
thought,
Invoking that dread Power,
*The thrice-gorged evil genius of this house;
For he it is who feeds
In the heart's depth the raging lust of blood:
Ere the old wound is healed, new bloodshed comes.

STROPH. V.

Chor. Yes, of a Power thou tell'st
*Mighty and very wrathful to this house;
Ah me! ah me! an evil tale enough
Of baleful chance of doom,
Insatiable of ill:
Yet, ah! it is through Zeus,
The all-appointing and all-working One;
For what with mortal men
Is wrought apart from Zeus?
What of all this is not by God decreed?⁴

STROPH. VI.

Ah me! ah me!
My king, my king, how shall I weep for thee?

(1) Agamemnon and Menelaos, as descended from Tantalos, the father
of Pelops.
(2) In each case women, Helen and Clytemnestra, had been the uncon-
scious instruments of the Divine Nemesis, to which the Chorus traces the
ruin of the house of Atreus.
(3) Or, with another reading,—
"He (so. the avenging Demon) boasteth in his pride of heart."
(4) It is characteristic of the teaching of Æschylus that the Chorus
passes from the thought of the agency of any lower Power to the supreme
will of Zeus.
What shall I speak from heart that truly loves?
And now thou liest there, breathing out thy life,
   In impious deed of death,
   In this fell spider's web,—

Strophe. VII.

(Yes, woe is me! woe, woe!
Woe for this couch of thine dishonourable!)—
Slain by a subtle death,¹
With sword two-edged which her right hand did wield.

Strophe. VIII.

Clytæm. Thou speakest big words, as if the deed were mine;
   Yet think thou not of me,
As Agamemnon's spouse;
But in the semblance of this dead man's wife,
The old and keen Avenger of the house
Of Atreus, that cruel banqueter of old,
   Hath wrought out vengeance full
On him who lieth here,
   And full-grown victim slain
Over the younger victims of the past.³

Antistrophe. V.

Chor. That thou art guiltless found
Of this foul murder who will witness bear?
How can it be so, how? And yet, perchance,
   As helper to the deed,
   Might come the avenging Fiend
Of that ancestral time;
And in this rush of murders of near kin
   Dark Ares presses on,
   Where he will vengeance work
For clotted gore of children slain as food.

¹ Or, "Dying, as dies a slave."
² Clytemnestra still harps (though in ambiguous words, which may refer also to the murder of the children of Thyestes) upon the death of Iphigeneia as the crime which it had been her work to avenge.
ANTISTROPH. VI.

Ah me! ah me!
My king, my king, how shall I weep for thee?
What shall I speak from heart that truly loves?
And now thou liest there, breathing out thy life,
In impious deed of death,
In this fell spider's web,—

ANTISTROPH. VII.

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Woe for this couch of thine dishonourable!)
Slain by a subtle death,
With sword two-edged which her right hand did wield.

ANTISTROPH. VIII.

Clytem. Nay, not dishonourable
His death doth seem to me:
Did he not work a doom,
In this our house with guile? 1

Mine own dear child, begotten of this man,
Iphigeneia, wept with many a tear,
He slew; now slain himself in recompense,
Let him not boast in Hell,
Since he the forfeit pays,
Pierced by the sword in death,
For all the evil that his hand began.

STROPH. IX.

Chor. I stand perplexed in soul, deprived of power
Of quick and ready thought,
Where now to turn, since thus
Our home is falling low.
I shrink in fear from the fierce pelting storm
Of blood that shakes the basement of the house:
No more it rains in drops:
And for another deed of mischief dire,
Fate whets the righteous doom
On other whetstones still.

(1) Perhaps, "And that, too, not a slave's."
Antistrophe. II.
O Earth! O Earth! Oh, would thou had'st received me,
Ere I saw him on couch
Of bath with silvered walls thus stretched in death!
Who now will bury him, who wail? Wilt thou,
When thou hast slain thy husband, have the heart
To mourn his death, and for thy monstrous deeds
Do graceless grace? And who will chant the dirge
With tears in truth of heart,
Over our godlike chief?

Strophe. X.
Clytem. It is not thine to speak;
'Twas at our hands he fell,
Yea, he fell low in death,
And we will bury him,
Not with the bitter tears of those who weep
As inmates of the house;
But she, his child, Iphigeneia, there
Shall meet her father, and with greeting kind,
E'en as is fit, by that swift-flowing ford,
Dark stream of bitter woes,
Shall clasp him in her arms,
And give a daughter's kiss.

Antistrophe. IX.
Chor. Lo! still reproach upon reproach doth come;
Hard are these things to judge:
The spolier still is spoiled,
The slayer pays his debt;
Yea, while Zeus liveth through the ages, this
Lives also, that the doer dree his weird:
For this is law fast fixed.
Who now can drive from out the kingly house
The brood of curses dark?
The race to Atē cleaves.

Antistrophe. X.
Clytem. Yes, thou hast touched with truth
That word oracular;
But I for my part wish,
(Binding with strongest oath
The evil demon of the Pleisthenids,)¹
Though hard it be to bear,
To rest content with this our present lot;
And, for the future, that he go to vex
Another race with homicidal deaths.
Lo! 'tis enough for me,
Though small my share of wealth,
At last to have freed my house
From madness that sets each man's hand 'gainst each.

Enter Ægisthos.

Ægis. Hail, kindly light of day that vengeance brings!
Now I can say the Gods on high look down,
Avenging men, upon the woes of earth,
Since lying in the robes the Erinnyes wove
I see this man, right welcome sight to me,
Paying for deeds his father's hand had wrought.
Atreus, our country's ruler, this man's father,
Drove out my sire Thyestes, his own brother,
(To tell the whole truth,) quarrelling for rule,
An exile from his country and his home.
And coming back a suppliant on the hearth,
The poor Thyestes found a lot secure,
Nor did he, dying, stain the soil with blood,
There in his home. But this man's godless sire,²
Atreus, more prompt than kindly in his deeds,
On plea of keeping festal day with cheer,
To my sire banquet gave of children's flesh,
His own. The feet and finger-tips of hands
*He, sitting at the top, apart concealed;
And straight the other, in his blindness taking
The parts that could not be discerned, did eat

¹ Here the genealogy is carried one step further to Pleisthenes, the father of Tantalos.
² Ægisthos, in his version of the story, suppresses the adultery of Thyestes with the wife of Atreus, which led the latter to his horrible revenge.
A meal which, as thou see'st, perdition works
For all his kin. And learning afterwards
The deed of dread, he groaned and backward fell,
Vomits the feast of blood, and impirates
On Pelops' sons a doom intolerable,
And makes the o'erturning of the festive board,
With fullest justice, as a general curse,
That so might fall the race of Pleisthenes.
And now thou see'st how here accordingly
This man lies fallen; I, of fullest right,
The weaver of the plot of murderous doom.
For me, a babe in swaddling-clothes, he banished
With my poor father, me, his thirteenth child;
And Vengeance brought me back, of full age grown:
And e'en far off I wrought against this man,
And planned the whole scheme of this dark device.
And so e'en death were now right good for me,
Seeing him into the nets of Vengeance fallen.

Chor. I honour not this arrogance in guilt,
Ægisthos. Thou confessest thou hast slain
Of thy free will our chieftain here,—that thou
Alone did'st plot this murder lamentable;
Be sure, I say, thy head shall not escape
The righteous curse a people hurls with stones.

Ægisth. Dost thou say this, though seated on the bench
Of lowest oarsmen, while the upper row
Commands the ship? But thou shalt find, though old,
How hard it is at such an age to learn,
When the word is, 'keep temper.' But a prison
And fasting pains are admirably apt,
As prophet-healers even for old age.
Dost see, and not see this? Against the pricks
Kick not, lest thou perchance should'st smart for it.

(1) The image is taken from the trireme with its three benches full of rowers. The Chorus is compared to the men on the lowest, Ægisthos and Clytemnestra to those on the uppermost bench.

(2) The earliest occurrence of the proverb with which we are familiar through the history of St. Paul's conversion, Acts ix. 5, xxvi. 14.
Chor. Thou, thou, O Queen, when thy lord came from war,
While keeping house, thy husband’s bed defiling,
Did’st scheme this death for this our hero-chief.
Ægish. These words of thine shall parents prove of tears:
But this thy tongue is Orpheus’ opposite;
He with his voice led all things on for joy,
But thou, provoking with thy childish cries,
Shalt now be led; and then, being kept in check,
Thou shalt appear in somewhat gentler mood. 1610

Chor. As though thou should’st o’er Argives ruler be,
Who even when thou plotted’st this man’s death
Did’st lack good heart to do the deed thyself?
Ægish. E’en so; to work this fraud was clearly part
Fit for a woman. I was foe, of old
Suspected. But now will I with his wealth
See whether I his subjects may command,
And him who will not hearken I will yoke
In heavy harness as a full-fed colt,
Nowise as trace-horse; 1 but sharp hunger joined
With darksome dungeon shall behold him tamed. 1620

Chor. Why did’st not thou then, coward as thou art,
Thyself destroy him? but a woman with thee,
Pollution to our land and our land’s Gods,
She slew him. Does Orestes see the light,
Perchance, that he, brought back by Fortune’s grace,
May for both these prove slayer strong to smite?
Ægish. Well, since thou think’st to act, not merely talk,
Thou shalt know clearly....

[Calling his Guards from the palace.

Chor. On then, my troops, the time for deeds is come.

Chor. On then, let each man grasp his sword in hand.
Ægish. With sword in hand, I too shrink not from death. 1630

Chor. Thou talkest of thy death; we hail the word;
And make our own the fortune it implies.

1 The trace-horse, as not under the pressure of the collar, was taken
as the type of free, those that wore the yoke, of enforced submission.
Clytem. Nay, let us not do other evil deeds,
Thou dearest of all friends. An ill-starred harvest
It is to have reaped so many. Enough of woe:
Let no more blood be shed: Go thou—[to the Chorus]—
go ye,
Ye aged sires, to your allotted homes,
Ere ye do aught amiss and dree your weird:
* This that we have done ought to have sufficed;
But should it prove we've had enough of ills,
We will accept it gladly, stricken low
In evil doom by heavy hand of God.
This is a woman's counsel, if there be
That deigns to hear it.
Ægisth. But that these should fling
The blossoms of their idle speech at me,
And utter words like these, so tempting Fate,
And fail of counsel wise, and flout their master . . . !
Chor. It suits not Argives on the vile to fawn.
Ægisth. Be sure, hereafter I will hunt thee down.
Chor. Not so, if God should guide Orestes back.
Ægisth. Right well I know how exiles feed on hopes.
Chor. Prosper, wax fat, do foul wrong—'tis thy day.
Ægisth. Know thou shalt pay full price for this thy folly.
Chor. Be bold, and boast, like cock beside his mate.
Clytem. Nay, care not thou for these vain howlings; I
And thou together, ruling o'er the house,
Will settle all things rightly.
[Exeunt.