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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HIPPOLYTUS/THE BACCHAE *****

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NINE GREEK DRAMAS

By AESCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, EURIPIDES and ARISTOPHANES

Translations by
E.D.A. MORSHEAD
E.H. PLUMPTRE
GILBERT MURRAY
and
B.B. ROGERS

HIPPOLYTUS

and

THE BACCHAE

of

EURIPIDES

Translated by GILBERT MURRAY

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Euripides, the youngest of the trio of great Greek tragedians was born at Salamis in 480 B.C., on the day when the Greeks won their momentous naval victory there over the fleet of the Persians. The precise social status of his parents is not clear but he received a good education, was early distinguished as an athlete, and showed talent in painting and oratory. He was a fellow student of Pericles, and his dramas show the influence of the philosophical ideas of Anaxagoras and of Socrates, with whom he was personally intimate. Like Socrates, he was accused of impiety, and this, along with domestic infelicity, has been supposed to afford a motive for his withdrawal from Athens, first to Magnesia and later to the court of Anchelaüs in Macedonia where he died in 406 B.C.

The first tragedy of Euripides was produced when he was about twenty-five, and he was several times a victor in the tragic contests. In spite of the antagonisms which he aroused and the criticisms which were hurled upon him in, for example, the comedies of Aristophanes, he attained a very great popularity; and Plutarch tells that those Athenians who were taken captive in the disastrous Sicilian expedition of 413 B.C. were offered freedom by their captors if they could recite from the works of Euripides. Of the hundred and twenty dramas ascribed to Euripides, there have come down to us complete eighteen tragedies and one satyric drama, "Cyclops," beside numerous fragments.

The works of Euripides are generally regarded as showing the beginning of the decline of Greek tragedy. The idea of Fate hitherto dominant in the plays of his predecessors, tends to be degraded by him into mere chance; the characters lose much of their ideal quality; and even gods and heroes are represented as moved by the petty motives of ordinary humanity. The chorus is often quite detached from the action; the poetry is florid; and the action is frequently tinged with sensationalism. In spite of all this, Euripides remains a great poet; and his picturesqueness and tendencies to what are now

called realism and romanticism, while marking his inferiority to the chaste classicism of Sophocles, bring him more easily within the sympathetic interest of the modern reader.

HIPPOLYTUS

OF EURIPIDES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE GODDESS APHRODITE

THESEUS, *King of Athens and Trozên*

PHAEDRA, *daughter of Minos, King of Crete, wife to Theseus*

HIPPOLYTUS, *bastard son of Theseus and the Amazon Hippolyte*

THE NURSE OF PHAEDRA

A HENCHMAN OF HIPPOLYTUS

THE GODDESS ARTEMIS

AN OLD HUNTSMAN

A CHORUS OF HUNTSMEN

ATTENDANTS ON THE THREE ROYAL PERSONS

A CHORUS OF TROZENIAN WOMEN, WITH THEIR LEADER

The scene is laid in Trozên. The play was first acted when Epameinon was Archon, Olympiad 87, year 4 (B.C. 429). Euripides was first, Iophon second, Ion third.

APHRODITE

Great among men, and not unnamed am I,
The Cyprian, in God's inmost halls on high.
And wheresoe'er from Pontus to the far
Red West men dwell, and see the glad day-star,
And worship Me, the pious heart I bless,
And wreck that life that lives in stubbornness.
For that there is, even in a great God's mind,
That hungereth for the praise of human kind.

So runs my word; and soon the very deed
Shall follow. For this Prince of Theseus' seed,
Hippolytus, child of that dead Amazon,
And reared by saintly Pittheus in his own
Strait ways, hath dared, alone of all Trozên,
To hold me least of spirits and most mean,
And spurns my spell and seeks no woman's kiss,
But great Apollo's sister, Artemis,
He holds of all most high, gives love and praise,
And through the wild dark woods for ever strays,
He and the Maid together, with swift hounds
To slay all angry beasts from out these bounds,
To more than mortal friendship consecrate!

I grudge it not. No grudge know I, nor hate;
Yet, seeing he hath offended, I this day
Shall smite Hippolytus. Long since my way
Was opened, nor needs now much labour more.

For once from Pittheus' castle to the shore
Of Athens came Hippolytus over-seas
Seeking the vision of the Mysteries.
And Phaedra there, his father's Queen high-born;
Saw him, and as she saw, her heart was torn
With great love, by the working of my will.
And for his sake, long since, on Pallas' hill,
Deep in the rock, that Love no more might roam,
She built a shrine, and named it *Love-at-home*:
And the rock held it, but its face always
Seeks Trozên o'er the seas. Then came the day
When Theseus, for the blood of kinsmen shed,
Spake doom of exile on himself, and fled,
Phaedra beside him, even to this Trozên.
And here that grievous and amazed Queen,
Wounded and wondering, with ne'er a word,
Wastes slowly; and her secret none hath heard
Nor dreamed.

But never thus this love shall end!
To Theseus' ear some whisper will I send,
And all be bare! And that proud Prince, my foe,
His sire shall slay with curses. Even so
Endeth that boon the great Lord of the Main
To Theseus gave, the Three Prayers not in vain.

And she, not in dishonour, yet shall die.
I would not rate this woman's pain so high
As not to pay mine haters in full fee
That vengeance that shall make all well with me.

But soft, here comes he, striding from the chase,
Our Prince Hippolytus!ô I will go my ways.ô
And hunters at his heels: and a loud throng
Glorying Artemis with praise and song!
Little he knows that Hell's gates opened are,
And this his last look on the great Day-star!

[APHRODITE *withdraws, unseen by HIPPOLYTUS*
and a band of huntsmen, who enter from the left, singing.
They pass the Statue of APHRODITE without notice.]

HIPPOLYTUS
Follow, O follow me,
Singing on your ways
Her in whose hand are we,

Her whose own flock we be,
The Zeus-Child, the Heavenly;
To Artemis be praise!

HUNTSMAN

Hail to thee, Maiden blest,
Proudest and holiest:
God's Daughter, great in bliss,
Leto-born, Artemis!
Hail to thee, Maiden, far
Fairest of all that are,
Yea, and most high thine home,
Child of the Father's hall;
Hear, O most virginal,
Hear, O most fair of all,
In high God's golden dome.

[The huntsmen have gathered about the altar of ARTEMIS.

*HIPPOLYTUS now advances from them, and approaches the Statue
with a wreath in his hand.]*

HIPPOLYTUS

To thee this wreathed garland, from a green
And virgin meadow bear I, O my Queen,
Where never shepherd leads his grazing ewes
Nor scythe has touched. Only the river dews
Gleam, and the spring bee sings, and in the glade
Hath Solitude her mystic garden made.

No evil hand may cull it: only he
Whose heart hath known the heart of Purity,
Unlearned of man, and true whate'er befall.
Take therefore from pure hands this coronal,
O mistress loved, thy golden hair to twine.
For, sole of living men, this grace is mine,
To dwell with thee, and speak, and hear replies
Of voice divine, though none may see thine eyes.

Oh, keep me to the end in this same road!

*[An OLD HUNTSMAN, who has stood apart from
the rest, here comes up to HIPPOLYTUS.]*

HUNTSMAN

My Princeô for "Master" name I none but Godô
Gave I good counsel, wouldst thou welcome it?

HIPPOLYTUS

Right gladly, friend; else were I poor of wit.

HUNTSMAN

Knowest thou one law, that through the world has won?

HIPPOLYTUS

What wouldst thou? And how runs thy law? Say on.

HUNTSMAN

It hates that Pride that speaks not all men fair!

HIPPOLYTUS

And rightly. Pride breeds hatred everywhere.

HUNTSMAN

And good words love, and grace in all men's sight?

HIPPOLYTUS

Aye, and much gain withal, for trouble slight.

HUNTSMAN

How deem'st thou of the Gods? Are they the same?

HIPPOLYTUS

Surely: we are but fashioned on their frame.

HUNTSMAN

Why then wilt thou be proud, and worship not í

HIPPOLYTUS

Whom? If the name be speakable, speak out!

HUNTSMAN

She stands here at thy gate: the Cyprian Queen!

HIPPOLYTUS

I greet her from afar: my life is clean.

HUNTSMAN

Clean? Nay, proud, proud; a mark for all to scan!

HIPPOLYTUS

Each mind hath its own bent, for God or man.

HUNTSMAN

God grant thee happiness í and wiser thought!

HIPPOLYTUS

These Spirits that reign in darkness like me not.

HUNTSMAN

What the Gods ask, O Son, that man must pay!

HIPPOLYTUS (*turning from him to the others*). On, huntsmen, to the Castle! Make your way Straight to the feast room; 'tis a merry thing After the chase, a board of

banqueting. And see the steeds be groomed, and in array The chariot dight. I drive them forth to-day [*He pauses, and makes a slight gesture of reverence to the Statue on the left. Then to the OLD HUNTSMAN.*] That for thy Cyprian, friend, and nought beside! [*HIPPOLYTUS follows the huntsmen, who stream by the central door in the Castle. The OLD HUNTSMAN remains.*]

HUNTSMAN (*approaching the Statue and kneeling*)
O Cyprianô for a young man in his pride
I will not follow!ô here before thee, meek,
In that one language that a slave may speak,
I pray thee; Oh, if some wild heart in froth
Of youth surges against thee, be not wroth
For ever! Nay, be far and hear not then:
Gods should be gentler and more wise than men!
[He rises and follows the others into the Castle.]

The Orchestra is empty for a moment, then there enter from right and left several Trosenian women young and old. Their number eventually amounts to fifteen.

CHORUS

There riseth a rock-born river,
Of Ocean's tribe, men say;
The crags of it gleam and quiver,
And pitchers dip in the spray:
A woman was there with raiment white
To bathe and spread in the warm sunlight,
And she told a tale to me there by the river
The tale of the Queen and her evil day:

How, ailing beyond allayment,
Within she hath bowed her head,
And with shadow of silken raiment
The bright brown hair bespread.
For three long days she hath lain forlorn,
Her lips untainted of flesh or corn,
For that secret sorrow beyond allayment
That steers to the far sad shore of the dead.

Some Women

Is this some Spirit, O child of man?
Doth Hecat hold thee perchance, or Pan?
Doth she of the Mountains work her ban,
Or the dread Corybantes bind thee?

Others

Nay, is it sin that upon thee lies,
Sin of forgotten sacrifice,
In thine own Dictynna's sea-wild eyes?
Who in Limna here can find thee;

For the Deep's dry floor is her easy way,
And she moves in the salt wet whirl of the spray.

Other Women

Or doth the Lord of Erechtheus' race,
Thy Theseus, watch for a fairer face,
For secret arms in a silent place,
Far from thy love or chiding?

Others

Or hath there landed, amid the loud
Hum of Piraeus' sailor-crowd,
Some Cretan venturer, weary-browed,
Who bears to the Queen some tiding;
Some far home-grief, that hath bowed her low,
And chained her soul to a bed of woe?

An Older Woman

Nayô know yet not?ô this burden hath alway lain
On the devious being of woman; yea, burdens twain,
The burden of Wild Will and the burden of Pain.
Through my heart once that wind of terror sped;
But I, in fear confessèd,
Cried from the dark to Her in heavenly bliss,
The Helper of Pain, the Bow-Maid Artemis:
Whose feet I praise for ever, where they tread
Far off among the blessèd!

THE LEADER

But see, the Queen's grey nurse at the door,
Sad-eyed and sterner, methinks, than of yore
With the Queen. Doth she lead her hither
To the wind and sun?ô Ah, fain would I know
What strange betiding hath blanched that brow
And made that young life wither.

[*The NURSE comes out from the central door followed by_ PHAEDRA,
who is supported by two handmaids. They make ready a couch for
PHAEDRA to lie upon.*]

NURSE

O sick and sore are the days of men!
What wouldst thou? What shall I change again
Here is the Sun for thee; here is the sky;
And thy weary pillows wind-swept lie,
By the castle door.
But the cloud of thy brow is dark, I ween;
And soon thou wilt back to thy bower within:
So swift to change is the path of thy feet,
And near things hateful, and far things sweet;
So was it before!

Oh, pain were better than tending pain!
For that were single, and this is twain,
With grief of heart and labour of limb.
Yet all man's life is but ailing and dim,
And rest upon earth comes never.
But if any far-off state there be,
Dearer than life to mortality;
The hand of the Dark hath hold thereof,
And mist is under and mist above.
And so we are sick of life, and cling
On earth to this nameless and shining thing.
For other life is a fountain sealed,
And the deeps below are unrevealed,
And we drift on legends for ever!
[PHAEDRA *during this has been laid on her couch;*
she speaks to the handmaids.]

PHAEDRA

Yes; lift me: not my head so low.
There, hold my arms.ô Fair arms they seem!ô
My poor limbs scarce obey me now!
Take off that hood that weighs my brow,
And let my long hair stream.

NURSE

Nay, toss not, Child, so feveredly.
The sickness best will win relief
By quiet rest and constancy.
All men have grief.

PHAEDRA (*not noticing her*)

Oh for a deep and dewy spring,
With runlets cold to draw and drink!
And a great meadow blossoming,
Long-grassed, and poplars in a ring,
To rest me by the brink!

NURSE

Nay, Child! Shall strangers hear this tone
So wild, and thoughts so fever-flown?

PHAEDRA

Oh, take me to the Mountain! Oh,
Pass the great pines and through the wood,
Up where the lean hounds softly go,
A-whine for wild things' blood,
And madly flies the dappled roe.
O God, to shout and speed them there,
An arrow by my chestnut hair

Drawn tight, and one keen glimmering spear
Ah! if I could!

NURSE

What wouldst thou with them
fancies all!
Thy hunting and thy fountain brink?
What wouldst thou? By the city wall
Canst hear our own brook splash and fall
Downhill, if thou wouldst drink.

PHAEDRA

O Mistress of the Sea-lorn Mere
Where horse-hoofs beat the sand and sing,
O Artemis, that I were there
To tame Enetian steeds and steer
Swift chariots in the ring!

NURSE

Nay, mountainward but now thy hands
Yearned out, with craving for the chase;
And now toward the unseaswept sands
Thou roamest, where the coursers pace!
O wild young steed, what prophet knows
The power that holds thy curb, and throws
Thy swift heart from its race?
*[At these words PHAEDRA gradually recovers herself
and pays attention.]*

PHAEDRA

What have I said? Woe's me! And where
Gone straying from my wholesome mind?
What? Did I fall in some god's snare?
ô Nurse, veil my head again, and blind
Mine eyes.ô There is a tear behind
That lash.ô Oh, I am sick with shame!
Aye, but it hath a sting,
To come to reason; yet the name
Of madness is an awful thing.ô
Could I but die in one swift flame
Unthinking, unknowing!

NURSE

I veil thy face, Child.ô Would that so
Mine own were veiled for evermore,
So sore I love thee! í Though the lore
Of long life mocks me, and I know
How love should be a lightsome thing
Not rooted in the deep o' the heart;
With gentle ties, to twine apart
If need so call, or closer cling.ô

Why do I love thee so? O fool,
O fool, the heart that bleeds for twain,
And builds, men tell us, walls of pain,
To walk by love's unswerving rule
The same for ever, stern and true!
For "Thorough" is no word of peace:
'Tis "Naught-too-much" makes trouble cease.
And many a wise man bows thereto.
[*The LEADER OF THE CHORUS here approaches the NURSE.*]

LEADER

Nurse of our Queen, thou watcher old and true,
We see her great affliction, but no clue
Have we to learn the sickness. Wouldst thou tell
The name and sort thereof, 'twould like us well.

NURSE

Small leechcraft have I, and she tells no man.

LEADER

Thou know'st no cause? Nor when the unrest began?

NURSE

It all comes to the same. She will not speak.

LEADER (*turning and looking at PHAEDRA*).
How she is changed and wasted! And how weak!

NURSE

'Tis the third day she hath fasted utterly.

LEADER

What, is she mad? Or doth she seek to die?

NURSE

I know not. But to death it sure must lead.

LEADER

'Tis strange that Theseus takes hereof no heed.

NURSE

She hides her wound, and vows it is not so.

LEADER

Can he not look into her face and know?

NURSE

Nay, he is on a journey these last days.

LEADER

Canst thou not force her, then? Or think of ways
To trap the secret of the sick heart's pain?

NURSE

Have I not tried all ways, and all in vain?
Yet will I cease not now, and thou shalt tell
If in her grief I serve my mistress well!
[*She goes across to where PHAEDRA lies; and
presently, while speaking, kneels by her.*]
Dear daughter mine, all that before was said
Let both of us forget; and thou instead
Be kindlier, and unlock that prisoned brow.
And I, who followed then the wrong road, now
Will leave it and be wiser. If thou fear
Some secret sickness, there be women here
To give thee comfort. [PHAEDRA *shakes her head.*
No; not secret? Then
Is it a sickness meet for aid of men?
Speak, that a leech may tend thee.

Silent still?

Nay, Child, what profits silence? If 'tis ill
This that I counsel, makes me see the wrong:
If well, then yield to me.

Nay, Child, I long

For one kind word, one look!

[PHAEDRA *lies motionless. The NURSE rises.*]

Oh, woe is me!

Women, we labour here all fruitlessly,
All as far off as ever from her heart!
She ever scorned me, and now hears no part
Of all my prayers! [*Turning to PHAEDRA again.*]

Nay, hear thou shalt, and be,

If so thou will, more wild than the wild sea;
But know, thou art thy little ones' betrayer!
If thou die now, shall child of thine be heir
To Theseus' castle? Nay, not thine, I ween,
But hers! That barbèd Amazonian Queen
Hath left a child to bend thy children low,
A bastard royal-heartedô sayst not so?ô
Hippolytusí

PHAEDRA

Ah!

[*She starts up, sitting, and throws the veil off.*]

NURSE

That stings thee?

PHAEDRA

Nurse, most sore
Thou hast hurt me! In God's name, speak that name no more.

NURSE

Thou seest? Thy mind is clear; but with thy mind
Thou wilt not save thy children, nor be kind
To thine own life.

PHAEDRA

My children? Nay, most dear
I love them,ô Far, far other grief is here.

NURSE (*after a pause, wondering*)

Thy hand is clean, O Child, from stain of blood?

PHAEDRA

My hand is clean; but is my heart, O God?

NURSE

Some enemy's spell hath made thy spirit dim?

PHAEDRA

He hates me not that slays me, nor I him.

NURSE

Theseus, the King, hath wronged thee in man's wise?

PHAEDRA

Ah, could but I stand guiltless in his eyes!

NURSE

O speak! What is this death-fraught mystery?

PHAEDRA

Nay, leave me to my wrong. I wrong not thee.

NURSE (*suddenly throwing herself in supplication at PHAEDRA'S feet*)

Not wrong me, whom thou wouldst all desolate leave?

PHAEDRA (*rising and trying to move away*)

What wouldst thou? Force me? Clinging to my sleeve?

NURSE

Yea, to thy knees; and weep; and let not go!

PHAEDRA

Woe to thee, Woman, if thou learn it, woe!

NURSE

I know no bitterer woe than losing thee.

PHAEDRA

Yet the deed shall honour me.

NURSE

Why hide what honours thee? 'Tis all I claim!

PHAEDRA

Why, so I build up honour out of shame!

NURSE

Then speak, and higher still thy fame shall stand.

PHAEDRA

Go, in God's name!ô Nay, leave me; loose my hand!

NURSE

Never, until thou grant me what I pray.

PHAEDRA (*yielding, after a pause*)

So be it. I dare not tear that hand away.

NURSE (*rising and releasing PHAEDRA*)

Tell all thou wilt, Daughter. I speak no more.

PHAEDRA (*after a long pause*)

Mother, poor Mother, that didst love so sore!

NURSE

What mean'st thou, Child? The Wild Bull of the Tide?

PHAEDRA

And thou, sad sister, Dionysus' bride!

NURSE

Child! wouldst thou shame the house where thou wast born?

PHAEDRA

And I the third, sinking most all-forlorn!

NURSE (*to herself*)

I am all lost and feared. What will she say?

PHAEDRA

From there my grief comes, not from yesterday.

NURSE

I come no nearer to thy parable.

PHAEDRA

Oh, would that thou could'st tell what I must tell!

NURSE

I am no seer in things I wot not of.

PHAEDRA (*again hesitating*)

What is it that they mean, who say mení love?

NURSE

A thing most sweet, my Child, yet dolorous.

PHAEDRA

Only the half, belike, hath fallen on us!

NURSE (*starting*)

On thee? Love?ô Oh, what say'st thou? What man's son?

PHAEDRA

What man's? There was a Queen, an Amazon í

NURSE

Hippolytus, say'st thou?

PHAEDRA (*again wrapping her face in the veil*)

Nay, 'twas thou, not I!

[PHAEDRA *sinks back on the couch and covers her face again.*

The NURSE starts violently from her and walks up and down.]

NURSE

O God! what wilt thou say, Child? Wouldst thou try

To kill me?ô Oh, 'tis more than I can bear;

Women. I will no more of it, this glare

Of hated day, this shining of the sky.

I will fling down my body, and let it lie

Till life be gone!

Women, God rest with you,

My works are over! For the pure and true

Are forced to evil, against their own heart's vow,

And love it!

[*She suddenly sees the Statue of CYPRIS, and stands with her eyes riveted upon it.*]

Ah, Cyprian! No god art thou,

But more than god, and greater, that hath thrust

Me and my queen and all our house to dust!

[*She throws herself on the ground close to the statue.*]

CHORUS

Some Women

O Women, have ye heard? Nay, dare ye hear
The desolate cry of the young Queen's misery?

A Woman

My Queen, I love thee dear,
Yet liefer were I dead than framed like thee.

Others

Woe, woe to me for this thy bitter bane,
Surely the food man feeds upon is pain!

Others

How wilt thou bear thee through this livelong day,
Lost, and thine evil naked to the light?
Strange things are close upon usô who shall say
How strange?ô save one thing that is plain to sight,
The stroke of the Cyprian and the fall thereof
On thee, thou child of the Isle of fearful Love!

[PHAEDRA *during this has risen from the couch and comes forward collectedly. As she speaks the NURSE gradually rouses herself, and listens more calmly.*]

PHAEDRA

O Women, dwellers in this portal-seat
Of Pelops' land, gazing towards my Crete,
How oft, in other days than these, have I
Through night's long hours thought of man's misery,
And how this life is wrecked! And, to mine eyes,
Not in man's knowledge, not in wisdom, lies
The lack that makes for sorrow. Nay, we scan
And know the rightô for wit hath many a manô
But will not to the last end strive and serve.
For some grow too soon weary, and some swerve
To other paths, setting before the Right
The diverse far-off image of Delight:
And many are delights beneath the sun!
Long hours of converse; and to sit alone
Musingô a deadly happiness!ô and Shame:
Though two things there be hidden in one name,
And Shame can be slow poison if it will;
This is the truth I saw then, and see still;
Nor is there any magic that can stain
That white truth for me, or make me blind again.
Come, I will show thee how my spirit hath moved.
When the first stab came, and I knew I loved,
I cast about how best to face mine ill.
And the first thought that came, was to be still
And hide my sickness.ô For no trust there is

In man's tongue, that so well admonishes
And counsels and betrays, and waxes fat
With griefs of its own gathering!ô After that
I would my madness bravely bear, and try
To conquer by mine own heart's purity.

My third mind, when these two availed me naught
To quell love was to dieô

[*Motion of protest among the Women.*]

ô the best, best thoughtô
ô Gainsay me notô of all that man can say!
I would not have mine honour hidden away;
Why should I have my shame before men's eyes
Kept living? And I knew, in deadly wise,
Shame was the deed and shame the suffering;
And I a woman, too, to face the thing,
Despised of all!

Oh, utterly accurst
Be she of women, whoso dared the first
To cast her honour out to a strange man!
'Twas in some great house, surely, that began
This plague upon us; then the baser kind,
When the good led towards evil, followed blind
And joyous! Cursed be they whose lips are clean
And wise and seemly, but their hearts within
Rank with bad daring! How can they, O Thou
That walkest on the waves, great Cyprian, how
Smile in their husbands' faces, and not fall,
Not cower before the Darkness that knows all,
Aye, dread the dead still chambers, lest one day
The stones find voice, and all be finished!

Nay,

Friends, 'tis for this I die; lest I stand there
Having shamed my husband and the babes I bare.
In ancient Athens they shall some day dwell,
My babes, free men, free-spoken, honourable,

EURIPIDES

And when one asks their mother, proud of me!
For, oh, it crows a man, though bold he be,
To know a mother's or a father's sin.

'Tis written, one way is there, one, to win
This life's race, could man keep it from his birth,
A true clean spirit. And through all this earth
To every false man, that hour comes apace
When Time holds up a mirror to his face,
And girl-like, marvelling, there he stares to see
How foul his heart! Be it not so with me!

LEADER OF CHORUS

Ah, God, how sweet is virtue, and how wise,
And honour its due meed in all men's eyes!

NURSE (*who has now risen and recovered herself*)

Mistress, a sharp swift terror struck me low
A moment since, hearing of this thy woe.
But nowô I was a coward! And men say
Our second thought the wiser is alway.
This is no monstrous thing; no grief too dire
To meet with quiet thinking. In her ire
A most strong goddess hath swept down on thee.
Thou lovest. Is that so strange? Many there be
Beside thee! í And because thou lovest, wilt fall
And die! And must all lovers die, then? All
That are or shall be? A blithe law for them!
Nay, when in might she swoops, no strength can stem
Cypris; and if man yields him, she is sweet;
But is he proud and stubborn? From his feet
She lifts him, andô how think you?ô flings to scorn!

She ranges with the stars of eve and morn,
She wanders in the heaving of the sea,
And all life lives from her.ô Aye, this is she
That sows Love's seed and brings Love's fruit to birth;
And great Love's brethren are all we on earth!

Nay, they who con grey books of ancient days
Or dwell among the Muses, tellô and praiseô
How Zeus himself once yearned for Semelê;
How maiden Eôs in her radiancy
Swept Kephalos to heaven away, away,
For sore love's sake. And there they dwell, men say,
And fear not, fret not; for a thing too stern
Hath met and crushed them!

And must thou, then, turn
And struggle? Sprang there from thy father's blood
Thy little soul all lonely? Or the god
That rules thee, is he other than our gods?

Nay, yield thee to men's ways, and kiss their rods!
How many, deem'st thou, of men good and wise
Know their own home's blot, and avert their eyes?
How many fathers, when a son has strayed
And toiled beneath the Cyprian, bring him aid,
Not chiding? And man's wisdom e'er hath been
To keep what is not good to see, unseen!

A straight and perfect life is not for man;
Nay, in a shut house, let him, if he can,
'Mid sheltered rooms, make all lines true. But here,
Out in the wide sea fallen, and full of fear,
Hopedst thou so easily to swim to land?

Canst thou but set thine ill days on one hand

And more good days on the other, verily,
O child of woman, life is well with thee!

[*She pauses, and then draws nearer to PHAEDRA.*]

Nay, dear my daughter, cease thine evil mind,
Cease thy fierce pride! For pride it is, and blind,
To seek to outpass gods!ô Love on and dare:
A god hath willed it! And, since pain is there,
Make the pain sleep! Songs are there to bring calm,
And magic words. And I shall find the balm,
Be sure, to heal thee. Else in sore dismay
Were men, could not we women find our way!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Help is there, Queen, in all this woman says,
To ease thy suffering. But 'tis thee I praise;
Albeit that praise is harder to thine ear
Than all her chiding was, and bitterer!

PHAEDRA

Oh, this it is hath flung to dogs and birds
Men's lives and homes and cities-fair false word!
Oh, why speak things to please our ears? We crave
Not that. 'Tis honour, honour, we must save!

NURSE

Why prate so proud! 'Tis no words, brave nor base
Thou cravest; 'tis a man's arms!

[*PHAEDRA moves indignantly.*]

Up and face

The truth of what thou art, and name it straight!
Were not thy life thrown open here for Fate
To beat on; hadst thou been a woman pure
Or wise or strong; never had I for lure
Of joy nor heartache led thee on to this!
But when a whole life one great battle is,
To win or loseô no man can blame me then.

PHAEDRA

Shame on thee! Lock those lips, and ne'er again
Let word nor thought so foul have harbour there!

NURSE

Foul, if thou wilt: but better than the fair
For thee and me. And better, too, the deed
Behind them, if it save thee in thy need,
Than that word Honour thou wilt die to win!

PHAEDRA

Nay, in God's name,ô such wisdom and such sin
Are all about thy lips!ô urge me no more.
For all the soul within me is wrought o'er
By Love; and if thou speak and speak, I may
Be spent, and drift where now I shrink away.

NURSE

Well, if thou wilt!ô 'Twere best never to err,
But, having erred, to take a counsellor
Is second.ô Mark me now. I have within
love-philtres, to make peace where storm hath been,
That, with no shame, no scathe of mind, shall save
Thy life from anguish; wilt but thou be brave!

[To herself, rejecting.]

Ah, but from him, the well-beloved, some sign
We need, or word, or raiment's hem, to twine
Amid the charm, and one spell knit from twain.

PHAEDRA

Is it a potion or a salve? Be plain.

NURSE

Who knows? Seek to be helped, Child, not to know.

PHAEDRA

Why art thou ever subtle? I dread thee, so.

NURSE

Thou wouldst dread everything!ô What dost thou dread?

PHAEDRA

Least to his ear some word be whispered.

NURSE

Let be, Child! I will make all well with thee!
ô Only do thou, O Cyprian of the Sea,
Be with me! And mine own heart, come what may,
Shall know what ear to seek, what word to say!

*[The NURSE, having spoken these last words in prayer apart to the Statue of
CYPRIS, turns back and goes into the house. PHAEDRA sits pensive again on her
couch till towards the end of the following Song, when she rises and bends close to
the door.]*

CHORUS

Erôs, Erôs, who blindest, tear by tear,
Men's eyes with hunger; thou swift Foe
that pliest

Deep in our hearts joy like an edged spear;
Come not to me with Evil haunting near,
Wrath on the wind, nor jarring of the clear
Wing's music as thou fliest!
There is no shaft that burneth, not in fire,
Not in wild stars, far off and flinging fear,
As in thine hands the shaft of All Desire,
Erôs, Child of the Highest!

In vain, in vain, by old Alpheüs' shore
The blood of many bulls doth stain the river
And all Greece bows on Phoebus' Pythian floor;
Yet bring we to the Master of Man no store
The Keybearer, who standeth at the door
Close-barred, where hideth ever
The heart of the shrine. Yea, though he sack
man's life
Like a sacked city, and moveth evermore
Girt with calamity and strange ways of strife,
Him have we worshipped never!

* * * * *

There roamed a Steed in Oechalia's wild,
A Maid without yoke, without Master,
And Love she knew not, that far King's child;
But he came, he came, with a song in the night.
With fire, with blood; and she strove in flight,
A Torrent Spirit, a Maenad white,
Faster and vainly faster,
Sealed unto Heracles by the Cyprian's Might.
Alas, thou Bride of Disaster!

O Mouth of Dirce, O god-built wall,
That Dirce's wells run under,
Ye know the Cyprian's fleet footfall!
Ye saw the heavens around her flare,
When she lulled to her sleep that Mother fair
Of twy-born Bacchus, and decked her there
The Bride of the bladed Thunder.
For her breath is on all that hath life, and she floats in the air,
Bee-like, death-like, a wonder.
[During the last lines PHAEDRA has approached the door
and is listening.]

PHAEDRA
Silence ye Women! Something is amiss.

LEADER
How? In the house?ô Phaedra, what fear is this?

PHAEDRA

Let me but listen! There are voices. Hark!

LEADER

I hold my peace: yet is thy presage dark.

PHAEDRA

Oh, misery!

O God, that such a thing should fall on me!

LEADER

What sound, what word,

O Women, Friend, makes that sharp terror start
Out at thy lips? What ominous cry half-heard

Hath leapt upon thine heart?

PHAEDRA

I am undone!ô Bend to the door and hark,
Hark what a tone sounds there, and sinks away!

LEADER

Thou art beside the bars. 'Tis thine to mark
The castle's floating message. Say, Oh, say
What thing hath come to thee?

PHAEDRA (*calmly*)

Why, what thing should it be?

The son of that proud Amazon speaks again
In bitter wrath: speaks to my handmaiden!

LEADER

I hear a noise of voices, nothing clear.
For thee the din hath words, as through barred locks
Floating, at thy heart it knocks.

PHAEDRA

"Pander of Sin" it says.ô Now canst thou hear?ô
And there: "Betrayed of a master's bed."

LEADER

Ah me, betrayed! Betrayed!

Sweet Princess, thou art ill bested,
Thy secret brought to light, and ruin near,
By her thou heldest dear,
By her that should have loved thee and obeyed!

PHAEDRA

Aye, I am slain. She thought to help my fall
With love instead of honour, and wrecked all.

LEADER

Where wilt thou turn thee, where?
And what help seek, O wounded to despair?

PHAEDRA

I know not, save one thing to die right soon.
For such as me God keeps no other boon.

*[The door in the centre bursts open, and HIPPOLYTUS comes forth,
closely followed by the NURSE. PHAEDRA cowers aside.]*

HIPPOLYTUS

O Mother Earth, O Sun that makest clean,
What poison have I heard, what speechless sin!

NURSE

Hush O my Prince, lest others mark, and guess í

HIPPOLYTUS

I have heard horrors! Shall I hold my peace?

NURSE

Yea by this fair right arm, Son, by thy pledge í

HIPPOLYTUS

Down with that hand! Touch not my garment's edge!

NURSE

Oh, by thy knees, be silent or I die!

HIPPOLYTUS

Why, when thy speech was all so guiltless? Why?

NURSE

It is not meet, fair Son, for every ear!

HIPPOLYTUS

Good words can bravely forth, and have no fear.

NURSE

Thine oath, thine oath! I took thine oath before!

HIPPOLYTUS

'Twas but my tongue, 'twas not my soul that swore.

NURSE

O Son, what wilt thou? Wilt thou slay thy kin?

HIPPOLYTUS

I own no kindred with the spawn of sin!
[*He flings her from him.*]

NURSE

Nay, spare me! Man was born to err; oh, spare!

HIPPOLYTUS

O God, why hast Thou made this gleaming snare,
Woman, to dog us on the happy earth?
Was it Thy will to make Man, why his birth
Through Love and Woman? Could we not have rolled
Our store of prayer and offering, royal gold
Silver and weight of bronze before Thy feet,
And bought of God new child souls, as were meet
For each man's sacrifice, and dwelt in homes
Free, where nor Love nor Woman goes and comes
How, is that daughter not a bane confessed,
Whom her own sire sends forthô (He knows her best!)ô
And, will some man but take her, pays a dower!
And he, poor fool, takes home the poison-flower;
Laughs to hang jewels on the deadly thing
He joys in; labours for her robe-wearing,
Till wealth and peace are dead. He smarts the less
In whose high seat is set a Nothingness,
A woman naught availing. Worst of all
The wise deep-thoughted! Never in my hall
May she sit throned who thinks and waits and sighs!
For Cypris breeds most evil in the wise,
And least in her whose heart has naught within;
For puny wit can work but puny sin.

Why do we let their handmaids pass the gate?
Wild beasts were best, voiceless and fanged, to wait
About their rooms, that they might speak with none,
Nor ever hear one answering human tone!
But now dark women in still chambers lay
Plans that creep out into light of day
On handmaids' lipsô [*Turning to the NURSE.*]

As thine accursèd head
Braved the high honour of my Father's bed.
And came to traffic í Our white torrent's spray
Shall drench mine ears to wash those words away!
And couldst thou dream that I í ? I feel impure
Still at the very hearing! Know for sure,
Woman, naught but mine honour saves ye both.
Hadst thou not trapped me with that guileful oath,
No power had held me secret till the King
Knew all! But now, while he is journeying,
I too will go my ways and make no sound.
And when he comes again, I shall be found

Beside him, silent, watching with what grace
Thou and thy mistress shall greet him face to face!
Then shall I have the taste of it, and know
What woman's guile is.ô Woe upon you, woe!
How can I too much hate you, while the ill
Ye work upon the world grows deadlier still?
Too much? Make woman pure, and wild Love tame,
Or let me cry for ever on their shame!

[He goes off in fury to the left.

PHAEDRA still cowering in her place begins to sob.]

PHAEDRA

Sad, sad and evil-starred is Woman's state.
What shelter now is left or guard?
What spell to loose the iron knot of fate?
And this thing, O my God,
O thou sweet Sunlight, is but my desert!
I cannot fly before the avenging rod
Falls, cannot hide my hurt.
What help, O ye who love me, can come near,
What god or man appear,
To aid a thing so evil and so lost?
Lost, for this anguish presses, soon or late,
To that swift river that no life hath crossed.
No woman ever lived so desolate!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Ah me, the time for deeds is gone; the boast
Proved vain that spake thine handmaid; and all lost!
*[At these words PHAEDRA suddenly remembers the NURSE, who is
cowering silently where HIPPOLYTUS had thrown her from him.
She turns upon her.]*

PHAEDRA

O wicked, wicked, wicked! Murderess heart
To them that loved thee! Hast thou played thy part?
Am I enough trod down?
May Zeus, my sire,
Blast and uproot thee! Stab thee dead with fire!
Said I notô Knew I not thine heart?ô to name
To no one soul this that is now my shame?
And thou couldst not be silent! So no more
I die in honour. But enough; a store
Of new words must be spoke and new things thought.
This man's whole being to one blade is wrought
Of rage against me. Even now he speeds
To abase me to the King with thy misdeeds;
Tell Pittheus; fill the land with talk of sin!
Cursèd be thou, and whoso else leaps in
To bring bad aid to friends that want it not.

[The NURSE has raised herself, and faces PHAEDRA, downcast but calm.]

NURSE

Mistress, thou blamest me; and all thy lot
So bitter sore is, and the sting so wild,
I bear with all. Yet, if I would, my Child,
I have mine answer, couldst thou hearken aught.

I nursed thee, and I love thee; and I sought
Only some balm to heal thy deep despair,
And foundô not what I sought for. Else I were
Wise, and thy friend, and good, had all sped right.
So fares it with us all in the world's sight.

PHAEDRA

First stab me to the heart, then humour me
With words! 'Tis fair; 'tis all as it should be!

NURSE

We talk too long, Child. I did ill; but, oh,
There is a way to save thee, even so!

PHAEDRA

A way? No more ways! One way hast thou trod
Already, foul and false and loathed of god!
Begone out of my sight; and ponder how
Thine own life stands! I need no helpers now.

[She turns from the NURSE, who creeps abashed away into the Castle.]

Only do ye, high Daughters of Trozên,
Let all ye hear be as it had not been;
Know naught, and speak of naught! 'Tis my last prayer.

LEADER

By God's pure daughter, Artemis, I swear,
No word will I of these thy griefs reveal!

PHAEDRA

'Tis well. But now, yea, even while I reel
And falter, one poor hope, as hope now is,
I clutch at in this coil of miseries;
To save some honour for my children's sake;
Yea, for myself some fragment, though things break
In ruin around me. Nay, I will not shame
The old proud Cretan castle whence I came,
I will not cower before King Theseus' eyes,
Abased, for want of one life's sacrifice!

LEADER

What wilt thou? Some dire deed beyond recall?

PHAEDRA (*musings*)
Die; but how die?

LEADER

Let not such wild words fall!

PHAEDRA (*turning upon her*)
Give thou not such light counsel! Let me be
To sate the Cyprian that is murdering me!
To-day shall be her day; and, all strife past
Her bitter Love shall quell me at the last.
Yet, dying, shall I die another's bane!
He shall not stand so proud where I have lain
Bent in the dust! Oh, he shall stoop to share
The life I live in, and learn mercy there!
[*She goes off wildly into the Castle.*]

CHORUS

Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,
In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod;
Or a cloud make the home of mine abiding,
As a bird among the bird-droves of God!
Could I wing me to my rest amid the roar
Of the deep Adriatic on the shore,
Where the waters of Eridanus are clear,
And Phaëthon's sad sisters by his grave
Weep into the river, and each tear
Gleams, a drop of amber, in the wave.

To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,
The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold;
Where the mariner must stay him from his onset,
And the red wave is tranquil as of old;
Yea, beyond that Pillar of the End
That Atlas guardeth, would I wend;
Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
In God's quiet garden by the sea,
And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
Joy among the meadows, like a tree.

* * * * *

O shallop of Crete, whose milk-white wing
Through the swell and the storm-beating,
Bore us thy Prince's daughter,
Was it well she came from a joyous home
To a far King's bridal across the foam?
What joy hath her bridal brought her?
Sure some spell upon either hand

Flew with thee from the Cretan strand,
Seeking Athena's tower divine;
And there, where Munychus fronts the brine,
Crept by the shore-flung cables' line,
The curse from the Cretan water!

And for that dark spell that about her clings,
Sick desires of forbidden things
The soul of her rend and sever;
The bitter tide of calamity
Hath risen above her lips; and she,
Where bends she her last endeavour?
She will hie her alone to her bridal room,
And a rope swing slow in the rafters' gloom;
And a fair white neck shall creep to the noose,
A-shudder with dread, yet firm to choose
The one strait way for fame, and lose
The Love and the pain for ever.

*[The Voice of the NURSE is heard from within, crying,
at first inarticulately, then clearly.]*

VOICE

Help ho! The Queen! Help, whoso hearkeneth!
Help! Theseus' spouse caught in a noose of death!

A WOMAN

God, is it so soon finished? That bright head
Swinging beneath the rafters! Phaedra dead!

VOICE

O haste! This knot about her throat is made
So fast! Will no one bring me a swift blade?

A WOMAN

Say, friends, what think ye? Should we haste within,
And from her own hand's knotting loose the Queen?

ANOTHER

Nay, are there not men there? 'Tis an ill road
In life, to finger at another's load.

VOICE

Let it lie straight! Alas! the cold white thing
That guards his empty castle for the King!

A WOMAN

Ah! "Let it lie straight!" Heard ye what she said?
No need for helpers now; the Queen is dead!

[The Women, intent upon the voices from the Castle, have not noticed

the approach of THESEUS. He enters from the left; his dress and the garland on his head show that he has returned from some oracle or special abode of a God. He stands for a moment perplexed.]

THESEUS

Ho, Women, and what means this loud acclaim
Within the house? The vassals' outcry came
To smite mine ears far off. It were more meet
To fling out wide the Castle gates, and greet
With a joy held from God's Presence!

*[The confusion and horror of the Women's faces gradually affects him.
A dirge-cry comes from the Castle.]*

How?

Not Pittheus? Hath Time struck that hoary brow?
Old is he, old, I know. But sore it were,
Returning thus, to find his empty chair!

[The Women hesitate; then the Leader comes forward.]

LEADER

O Theseus, not on any old man's head
This stroke falls. Young and tender is the dead.

THESEUS

Ye Gods! One of my children torn from me?

LEADER

Thy motherless children live, most grievously.

THESEUS

How sayst thou? What? My wife? í
Say how she died.

LEADER

In a high death-knot that her own hands tied.

THESEUS

A fit of the old cold anguish? Tell me allô
That held her? Or did some fresh thing befall?

LEADER

We know no more. But now arrived we be,
Theseus, to mourn for thy calamity.

*[THESEUS stays for a moment silent, and puts his hand on his brow.
He notices the wreath.]*

THESEUS

What? And all garlanded I come to her
With flowers, most evil-starred God's-messenger!

Ho, varlets, loose the portal bars; undo
The bolts; and let me see the bitter view

Of her whose death hath brought me to mine own.

[The great central door of the Castle is thrown open wide, and the body of PHAEDRA is seen lying on a bier, surrounded by a group of Handmaids, wailing.]

THE HANDMAIDS

Ah me, what thou hast suffered and hast done:

A deed to wrap this roof in flame!

Why was thine hand so strong, thine heart so bold?

Wherefore. O dead in anger, dead in shame,

The long, long wrestling ere thy breath was cold?

O ill-starred Wife,

What brought this blackness over all thy life?

[A throng of Men and Women has gradually collected.]

THESEUS

Ah me, this is the last

ô Hear, O my countrymen!ô and bitterest

Of Theseus' labours! Fortune all unblest,

How hath thine heavy heel across me passed!

Is it the stain of sins done long ago,

Some fell God still remembereth,

That must so dim and fret my life with death?

I cannot win to shore; and the waves flow

Above mine eyes, to be surmounted not.

Ah wife, sweet wife, what name

Can fit thine heavy lot?

Gone like a wild bird, like a blowing flame,

In one swift gust, where all things are forgot!

Alas! this misery!

Sure 'tis some stroke of God's great anger rolled

From age to age on me,

For some dire sin wrought by dim kings of old.

LEADER

Sire, this great grief hath come to many an one,

A true wife lost. Thou art not all alone.

THESEUS

Deep, deep beneath the Earth,

Dark may my dwelling be,

And night my heart's one comrade, in the dearth,

O Love, of thy most sweet society.

This is my death, O Phaedra, more than thine.

[He turns suddenly on the Attendants.]

Speak who speak can! What was it? What malign

Swift stroke, O heart discounselled, leapt on thee?

[He bends over PHAEDRA; then, as no one speaks looks fiercely up.]

What, will ye speak? Or are they dumb as death,

This herd of thralls, my high house harboureth?
[There is no answer. He bends again over PHAEDRA.]

SOME WOMEN

Woe, woe! God brings to birth
A new grief here, close on the other's tread!
My life hath lost its worth.
May all go now with what is finishèd!
The castle of my King is overthrown,
A house no more, a house vanished and gone!

OTHER WOMEN

O God, if it may be in any way,
Let not this house be wrecked! Help us who pray!
I know not what is here: some unseen thing
That shows the Bird of Evil on the wing.
[THESEUS has read the tablet and breaks out in uncontrollable emotion.]

THESEUS

Oh, horror piled on horror!ô Here is writ
Nay, who could bear it, who could speak of it?

LEADER

What, O my King? If I may hear it, speak!

THESEUS

Doth not the tablet cry aloud, yea, shriek,
Things not to be forgotten?ô Oh, to fly
And hide mine head! No more a man am I.
God what ghastly music echoes here!

LEADER

How wild thy voice! Some terrible thing is near.

THESEUS

No; my lips' gates will hold it back no more;
This deadly word,
That struggles on the brink and will not o'er,
Yet will not stay unheard.
[He raises his hand, to make proclamation to all present.]
Ho, hearken all this land!
[The people gather expectantly about him.]
Hippolytus by violence hath laid hand
On this my wife, forgetting God's great eye.
[Murmurs of amazement and horror; THESEUS, apparently calm, raises both arms to heaven.]
Therefore, O Thou my Father, hear my cry,
Poseidon! Thou didst grant me for mine own
Three prayers; for one of these, slay now my son,

Hippolytus; let him not outlive this day,
If true thy promise was! Lo, thus I pray.

LEADER

Oh, call that wild prayer back! O King, take heed!
I know that thou wilt live to rue this deed.

THESEUS

It may not be. And more, I cast him out
From all my realms. He shall be held about
By two great dooms. Or by Poseidon's breath
He shall fall swiftly to the house of Death;
Or wandering, outcast, o'er strange land and sea,
Shall live and drain the cup of misery.

LEADER

Ah; see! here comes he at the point of need.
Shake off that evil mood, O King; have heed
For all thine house and folk! Great Theseus, hear!
[THESEUS *stands silent in fierce gloom.*
HIPPOLYTUS *comes in from the right.*]

HIPPOLYTUS

Father, I heard thy cry, and sped in fear
To help thee, but I see not yet the cause
That racked thee so. Say, Father, what it was.
[*The murmurs in the crowd, the silent gloom of his Father,
and the horror of the Chorus-women gradually work on HIPPOLYTUS
and bewilder him. He catches sight of the bier.*]

Ah, what is that! Nay, Father, not the Queen
Dead!

[*Murmurs in the crowd.*]

'Tis most strange. 'Tis passing strange, I ween.
'Twas here I left her. Scarce an hour hath run
Since here she stood and looked on this same sun.
What is it with her? Wherefore did she die?

[THESEUS *remains silent. The murmurs increase.*]

Father, to thee I speak. Oh, tell me, why,
Why art thou silent? What doth silence know
Of skill to stem the bitter flood of woe?
And human hearts in sorrow crave the more,
For knowledge, though the knowledge grieve them sore.
It is not love, to veil thy sorrows in
From one most near to thee, and more than kin.

THESEUS (*to himself*)

Fond race of men, so striving and so blind,
Ten thousand arts and wisdoms can ye find,
Desiring all and all imagining:

But ne'er have reached nor understood one thing,
To make a true heart there where no heart is!

HIPPOLYTUS

That were indeed beyond man's mysteries,
To make a false heart true against his will.
But why this subtle talk? It likes me ill,
Father; thy speech runs wild beneath this blow.

THESEUS (*as before*)

O would that God had given us here below
Some test of love, some sifting of the soul,
To tell the false and true! Or through the whole
Of men two voices ran, one true and right,
The other as chance willed it; that we might
Convict the liar by the true man's tone,
And not live duped forever, every one!

HIPPOLYTUS (*misunderstanding him; then guessing at something
of the truth*)

What? Hath some friend proved false?
Or in thine ear
Whispered some slander? Stand I tainted here,
Though utterly innocent? [*Murmurs from the crowd.*]
Yea, dazed am I;
'Tis thy words daze me, falling all awry,
Away from reason, by fell fancies vexed!

THESEUS

O heart of man, what height wilt venture next?
What end comes to thy daring and thy crime?
For if with each man's life 'twill higher climb,
And every age break out in blood and lies
Beyond its fathers, must not God devise
Some new world far from ours, to hold therein
Such brood of all unfaithfulness and sin?
Look, all, upon this man, my son, his life
Sprung forth from mine! He hath defiled my wife;
And standeth here convicted by the dead,
A most black villain!

[HIPPOLYTUS *falls back with a cry and covers his face with his robe.*]

Nay, hide not thine head!
Pollution, is it? Thee it will not stain.
Look up, and face thy Father's eyes again!
Thou friend of Gods, of all mankind elect;
Thou the pure heart, by thoughts of ill unflecked!
I care not for thy boasts. I am not mad,
To deem that Gods love best the base and bad.
Now is thy day! Now vaunt thee; thou so pure,
No flesh of life may pass thy lips! Now lure

Fools after thee; call Orpheus King and Lord;
Make ecstasies and wonders! Thumb thine hoard
Of ancient scrolls and ghostly mysteriesô
Now thou art caught and known!

Shun men like these,

I charge ye all! With solemn words they chase
their prey, and in their hearts plot foul disgrace.
My wife is dead.ô "Ha, so that saves thee now,"
That is what grips thee worst, thou caitiff, thou!
What oaths, what subtle words, shall stronger be
Than this dead hand, to clear the guilt from thee?
"She hated thee," thou sayest; "the bastard born
Is ever sore and bitter as a thorn
To the true brood."ô A sorry bargainer
In the ills and goods of life thou makest her,
If all her best-beloved she cast away
To wreck blind hate on thee!ô What, wilt thou say
"Through every woman's nature one blind strand
Of passion winds, that men scarce understand?"ô
Are we so different? Know I not the fire
And perilous flood of a young man's desire,
Desperate as any woman, and as blind,
When Cypris stings? Save that the man behind
Has all men's strength to aid him. Nay, 'twas thou!
But what avail to wrangle with thee now,
When the dead speaks for all to understand,
A perfect witness!

Hie thee from this land

To exile with all speed. Come never more
To god-built Athens, not to the utmost shore
Of any realm where Theseus' arm is strong!
What? Shall I bow my head beneath this wrong,
And cower to thee? Not Isthmian Sinis so
Will bear men witness that I laid him low,
Nor Skiron's rocks, that share the salt sea's prey,
Grant that my hand hath weight vile things to slay!

LEADER

Alas! whom shall I call of mortal men
Happy? The highest are cast down again.

HIPPOLYTUS

Father, the hot strained fury of thy heart
Is terrible. Yet, albeit so swift thou art
Of speech, if all this matter were laid bare,
Speech were not then so swift; nay, nor so fair!
[Murmurs again in the crowd.]
I have no skill before a crowd to tell
My thoughts. 'Twere best with few, that know me well.ô
Nay that is natural; tongues that sound but rude

In wise men's ears, speak to the multitude
With music.

None the less, since there is come
This stroke upon me, I must not be dumb,
But speak perforce! And there will I begin
Where thou beganst, as though to strip my sin
Naked, and I not speak a word!

Dost see
This sunlight and this earth? I swear to thee
There dwelleth not in these one man
All that thou wilt! more pure of sin than I.
Two things I know on earth: God's worship first;
Next to win friends about me, few, that thirst
To hold them clean of all unrighteousness.
Our rule doth curse the tempters, and no less
Who yieldeth to the tempters. How, thou say'st,
"Dupes that I jest at?" Nay; I make a jest
Of no man. I am honest to the end,
Near or far off, with him I call my friend.
And most in that one thing, where now thy mesh
Would grip me, stainless quite! No woman's flesh
Hath e'er this body touched. Of all such deed
Naught wot I, save what things a man may read
In pictures or hear spoke; nor am I fain,
Being virgin-souled, to read or hear again.

My life of innocence moves thee not; so be it.
Show then what hath seduced me; let me see it.
Was that poor flesh so passing fair, beyond
All woman's loveliness?

Was I some fond
False plotter, that I schemed to win through her
Thy castle's heirdom? Fond indeed I were!
Nay, a stark madman! "But a crown," thou sayest,
"Usurped, is sweet." Nay, rather most unblest
To all wise-hearted; sweet to fools and them
Whose eyes are blinded by the diadem.
In contests of all valour fain would I
Lead Hellas; but in rank and majesty
Not lead, but be at ease, with good men near
To love me, free to work and not to fear.
That brings more joy than any crown or throne.

*[He sees from the demeanor of THESEUS and of the crowd that his words
are not winning them, but rather making them bitterer than before.*

It comes to his lips to speak the whole truth.]

I have said my say; save one thing! one alone
O had I here some witness in my need,
As I was witness! Could she hear me plead,
Face me and face the sunlight; well I know,
Our deeds would search us out for thee, and show
Who lies!

But now, I swearô so hear me both,
The Earth beneath and Zeus who Guards the Oathô
I never touched this woman that was thine!
No words could win me to it, nor incline
My heart to dream it. May God strike me down,
Nameless and fameless, without home or town,
An outcast and a wanderer of the world;
May my dead bones rest never, but be hurled
From sea to land, from land to angry sea,
If evil is my heart and false to thee!

[He waits a moment; but sees that his Father is unmoved.

The truth again comes to his lips.]

If 'twas some fear that made her cast away
Her life í I know not. More I must not say.
Right hath she done when in her was no right;
And Right I follow to mine own despite!

LEADER

It is enough! God's name is witness large,
And thy great oath, to assoil thee of this charge,

THESEUS

Is not the man a juggler and a mage,
Cool wits and one right oathô what more?ô to assuage
Sin and the wrath of injured fatherhood!

HIPPOLYTUS

Am I so cool? Nay, Father, 'tis thy mood
That makes me marvel! By my faith, wert thou
The son, and I the sire; and deemed I now
In very truth thou hadst my wife assailed,
I had not exiled thee, nor stood and railed,
But lifted once mine arm, and struck thee dead!

THESEUS

Thou gentle judge! Thou shalt not so be sped
To simple death, nor by thine own decree.
Swift death is bliss to men in misery.
Far off, friendless forever, thou shalt drain
Amid strange cities the last dregs of pain!

HIPPOLYTUS

Wilt verily cast me now beyond thy pale,
Not wait for Time, the lifter of the veil?

THESEUS

Aye, if I could, past Pontus, and the red
Atlantic marge! So do I hate thine head.

HIPPOLYTUS

Wilt weigh nor oath nor faith nor prophet's word
To prove me? Drive me from thy sight unheard?

THESEUS

This tablet here, that needs no prophet's lot
To speak from, tells me all. I ponder not
Thy fowls that fly above us! Let them fly.

HIPPOLYTUS

O ye great Gods, wherefore unlock not I
My lips, ere yet ye have slain me utterly,
Ye whom I love most? No. It may not be!
The one heart that I need I ne'er should gain
To trust me. I should break mine oath in vain.

THESEUS

Death! but he chokes me with his saintly tone!ô
Up, get thee from this land! Begone! Begone!

HIPPOLYTUS

Where shall I turn me? Think. To what friend's door
Betake me, banished on a charge so sore?

THESEUS

Whoso delights to welcome to his hall
Vile ravishers í to guard his hearth withal!

HIPPOLYTUS

Thou seekst my heart, my tears? Aye, let it be
Thus! I am vile to all men, and to thee!

THESEUS

There was a time for tears and thought; the time
Ere thou didst up and gird thee to thy crime.

HIPPOLYTUS

Ye stones, will ye not speak? Ye castle walls!
Bear witness if I be so vile, so false!

THESEUS

Aye, fly to voiceless witnesses! Yet here
A dumb deed speaks against thee, and speaks clear!

HIPPOLYTUS

Alas!
Would I could stand and watch this thing, and see
My face, and weep for very pity of me!

THESEUS

Full of thyself, as ever! Not a thought
For them that gave thee birth; nay, they are naught!

HIPPOLYTUS

O my wronged Mother! O my birth of shame!
May none I love e'er bear a bastard's name!

THESEUS (*in a sudden blaze of rage*)

Up, thralls, and drag him from my presence! What,
'Tis but a foreign felon! Heard ye not?
[*The thralls still hesitate in spite of his fury.*]

HIPPOLYTUS

They touch me at their peril! Thine own hand
Lift, if thou canst, to drive me from the land.

THESEUS

That will I straight, unless my will be done!
[HIPPOLYTUS *comes close to him and kneels.*]
Nay! Not for thee my pity! Get thee gone!
[HIPPOLYTUS *rises, makes a sign of submission, and slowly moves away.*
THESEUS, *as soon as he sees him going, turns rapidly and enters the
Castle. The door is closed again.* HIPPOLYTUS *_has stopped for a
moment before the Statue of _ARTEMIS, _and, as THESEUS departs,
breaks out in prayer._*]

HIPPOLYTUS

So; it is done! O dark and miserable!
I see it all, but see not how to tell
The tale.ô O thou belovèd, Leto's Maid,
Chase-comrade, fellow-rester in the glade,
Lo, I am driven with a caitiff's brand
Forth from great Athens! Fare ye well, O land
And city of old Erechtheus! Thou, Trozên,
What riches of glad youth mine eyes have seen
In thy broad plain! Farewell! This is the end;
The last word, the last look!

 Come, every friend

And fellow of my youth that still may stay,
Give me god-speed and cheer me on my way.
Ne'er shall ye see a man more pure of spot
Than me, though mine own Father loves me not!

[HIPPOLYTUS *goes away to the right, followed by many Huntsmen and other
young men. The rest of the crowd has by this time dispersed, except the
Women of the Chorus and some Men of the Chorus of Huntsmen.*]

CHORUS

Men

Surely the thought of the Gods hath balm in it alway, to win me
Far from my griefs; and a thought, deep in the dark of my mind,
Clings to a great Understanding. Yet all the spirit within me
Faints, when I watch men's deeds matched with the guerdon they find.

For Good comes in Evil's traces,
And the Evil the Good replaces;
And Life, 'mid the changing faces,
Wandereth weak and blind.

Women

What wilt thou grant me, O God? Lo, this is the prayer of my travailô
Some well-being; and chance not very bitter thereby;
Spirit uncrippled by pain; and a mind not deep to unravel
Truth unseen, nor yet dark with the brand of a lie.

With a veering mood to borrow
Its light from every morrow,
Fair friends and no deep sorrow,
Well could man live and die!

Men

Yet my spirit is no more clean,
And the weft of my hope is torn,
For the deed of wrong that mine eyes have seen,
The lie and the rage and the scorn;
A Star among men, yea, a Star
That in Hellas was bright,
By a Father's wrath driven far
To the wilds and the night.
Oh, alas for the sands of the shore!
Alas for the brakes of the hill,
Where the wolves shall fear thee no more,
And thy cry to Dictynna is still!

Women

No more in the yoke of thy car
Shall the colts of Enetia fleet;
Nor Limna's echoes quiver afar
To the clatter of galloping feet.
The sleepless music of old,
That leaped in the lyre,
Ceaseth now, and is cold,
In the halls of thy sire.
The bowers are discrowned and unladen
Where Artemis lay on the lea;
And the love-dream of many a maiden
Lost, in the losing of thee.

A Maiden

And I, even I,

For thy fall, O Friend,
Amid tears and tears,
Endure to the end
Of the empty years,
Of a life run dry.
In vain didst thou bear him,
Thou Mother forlorn!
Ye Gods that did snare him,
Lo, I cast in your faces
My hate and my scorn!
Ye love-linkèd Graces,
(Alas for the day!)
Was he naught, then, to you,
That ye cast him away,
The stainless and true,
From the old happy places?

LEADER

Look yonder! 'Tis the Prince's man, I ween
Speeding toward this gate, most dark of mien.
[A HENCHMAN *enters in haste.*]

HENCHMAN

Ye women, whither shall I go to seek
King Theseus? Is he in this dwelling? Speak!

LEADER

Lo, where he cometh through the Castle gate!
[THESEUS *comes out from the Castle.*]

HENCHMAN

O King, I bear thee tidings of dire weight
To thee, aye, and to every man, I ween,
From Athens to the marches of Trozên.

THESEUS

What? Some new stroke hath touched, unknown to me,
The sister cities of my sovrantry?

HENCHMAN

Hippolytus isí Nay, not dead; but stark
Outstretched, a hairsbreadth this side of the dark.

THESEUS (*as though unmoved*)

How slain? Was there some other man, whose wife
He had like mine denied, that sought his life?

HENCHMAN

His own wild team destroyed him, and the dire
Curse of thy lips.

The boon of thy great Sire
Is granted thee, O King, and thy son slain.

THESEUS

Ye Gods! And thou, Poseidon! Not in vain
I called thee Father; thou hast heard my prayer!
How did he die? Speak on. How closed the snare
Of Heaven to slay the shamer of my blood?

HENCHMAN

'Twas by the bank of beating sea we stood,
We thralls, and decked the steeds, and combed each mane;
Weeping; for word had come that ne'er again
The foot of our Hippolytus should roam
This land, but waste in exile by thy doom.

So stood we till he came, and in his tone
No music now save sorrow's, like our own,
And in his train a concourse without end
Of many a chase-fellow and many a friend.
At last he brushed his sobs away, and spake:
"Why this fond loitering? I would not break
My Father's law! Ho, there! My coursers four
And chariot, quick! This land is mine no more."

Thereat, be sure, each man of us made speed.
Swifter than speech we brought them up, each steed
Well dight and shining, at our Prince's side.
He grasped the reins upon the rail: one stride
And there he stood, a perfect charioteer,
Each foot in its own station set. Then clear
His voice rose, and his arms to heaven were spread:
"O Zeus, if I be false, strike thou me dead!
But, dead or living, let my Father see
One day, how falsely he hath hated me!"

Even as he spake, he lifted up the goad
And smote; and the steeds sprang. And down the road
We henchmen followed, hard beside the rein,
Each hand, to speed him, toward the Argive plain
And Epidaurus.

So we made our way
Up toward the desert region, where the bay
Curls to a promontory near the verge
Of our Trozên, facing the southward surge
Of Saron's gulf. Just there an angry sound,
Slow-swelling, like God's thunder underground
Broke on us, and we trembled. And the steeds
Pricked their ears skyward, and threw back their heads.
And wonder came on all men, and affright,
Whence rose that awful voice. And swift our sight
Turned seaward, down the salt and roaring sand.
And there, above the horizon, seemed to stand

A wave unearthly, crested in the sky;
Till Skiron's Cape first vanished from mine eye,
Then sank the Isthmus hidden, then the rock
Of Epidaurus. Then it broke, one shock
And roar of gasping sea and spray flung far,
And shoreward swept, where stood the Prince's car.

Three lines of wave together raced, and, full
In the white crest of them, a wild Sea-Bull
Flung to the shore, a fell and marvellous Thing.
The whole land held his voice, and answering
Roared in each echo. And all we, gazing there,
Gazed seeing not; 'twas more than eyes could bear.

Then straight upon the team wild terror fell.
Howbeit, the Prince, cool-eyed and knowing well
Each changing mood a horse has, gripped the reins
Hard in both hands; then as an oarsman strains
Up from his bench, so strained he on the thong,
Back in the chariot swinging. But the young
Wild steeds bit hard the curb, and fled afar;
Nor rein nor guiding hand nor morticed car
Stayed them at all. For when he veered them round,
And aimed their flying feet to grassy ground,
In front uprose that Thing, and turned again
The four great coursers, terror-mad. But when
Their blind rage drove them toward the rocky places,
Silent and ever nearer to the traces,
It followed rockward, till one wheel-edge grazed.

The chariot tript and flew, and all was mazed
In turmoil. Up went wheel-box with a din,
Where the rock jagged, and nave and axle-pin.
And thereô the long reins round himô there was he
Dragging, entangled irretrievably.
A dear head battering at the chariot side,
Sharp rocks, and rippled flesh, and a voice that cried:
"Stay, stay, O ye who fattened at my stalls,
Dash me not into nothing!ô O thou false
Curse of my Father!ô Help! Help, whoso can,
An innocent, innocent and stainless man!"

Many there were that laboured then, I wot,
To bear him succour, but could reach him not,
Tillô who knows how?ô at last the tangled rein
Unclasped him, and he fell, some little vein
Of life still pulsing in him.

All beside,

The steeds, the hornèd Horror of the Tide,
Had vanishedô who knows where?ô in that wild land.

O King, I am a bondsman of thine hand;
Yet love nor fear nor duty me shall win
To say thine innocent son hath died in sin.
All women born may hang themselves, for me,

And swing their dying words from every tree
On Ida! For I know that he was true!

LEADER

O God, so cometh new disaster, new
Despair! And no escape from what must be!

THESEUS

Hate of the man thus stricken lifted me
At first to joy at hearing of thy tale;
But now, some shame before the Gods, some pale
Pity for mine own blood, hath o'er me come.
I laugh not, neither weep, at this fell doom.

HENCHMAN

How then? Behoves it bear him here, or how
Best do thy pleasure? Speak, Lord. Yet if thou
Wilt mark at all my word, thou wilt not be
Fierce-hearted to thy child in misery.

THESEUS

Aye, bring him hither. Let me see the face
Of him who durst deny my deep disgrace
And his own sin; yea, speak with him, and prove
His clear guilt by God's judgments from above.

[The HENCHMAN departs to fetch HIPPOLYTUS; THESEUS sits waiting in stern gloom, while the CHORUS sing. At the close of their song a Divine Figure is seen approaching on a cloud in the air and the voice of ARTEMIS speaks.]

CHORUS

Thou comest to bend the pride
Of the hearts of God and man,
Cypris; and by thy side,
In earth-encircling span,
He of the changing plumes,
The Wing that the world illumines,
As over the leagues of land flies he,
Over the salt and sounding sea.

For mad is the heart of Love,
And gold the gleam of his wing;
And all to the spell thereof
Bend, when he makes his spring;
All life that is wild and young
In mountain and wave and stream,
All that of earth is sprung,
Or breathes in the red sunbeam;
Yea, and Mankind. O'er all a royal throne,
Cyprian, Cyprian, is thine alone!

A VOICE FROM THE CLOUD

O thou that rulest in Aegeus' Hall,
I charge thee, hearken!

Yea, it is I,

Artemis, Virgin of God most High.

Thou bitter King, art thou glad withal

For thy murdered son?

For thine ear bent low to a lying Queen,

For thine heart so swift amid things unseen?

Lo, all may see what end thou hast won!

Go, sink thine head in the waste abyss;

Or aloft to another world than this,

Birdwise with wings,

Fly far to thine hiding,

Far over this blood that clots and clings;

For in righteous men and in holy things

No rest is thine nor abiding!

[The cloud has become stationary in the air.]

Hear, Theseus, all the story of thy grief!

Verily, I bring but anguish, not relief;

Yet, 'twas for this I came, to show how high

And clean was thy son's heart, that he may die

Honoured of men; aye, and to tell no less

The frenzy, or in some sort the nobleness,

Of thy dead wife. One Spirit there is, whom we

That know the joy of white virginity,

Most hate in heaven. She sent her fire to run

In Phaedra's veins, so that she loved thy son.

Yet strove she long with love, and in the stress

Fell not, till by her Nurse's craftiness

Betrayed, who stole, with oaths of secrecy,

To entreat thy son. And he, most righteously,

Nor did her will, nor, when thy railing scorn

Beat on him, broke the oath that he had sworn,

For God's sake. And thy Phaedra, panic-eyed,

Wrote a false writ, and slew thy son, and died,

Lying; but thou wast nimble to believe!

*[THESEUS, at first bewildered, then dumfounded,
now utters a deep groan.]*

It stings thee, Theseus?ô Nay, hear on and grieve

Yet sorer. Wottest thou three prayers were thine

Of sure fulfilment, from thy Sire divine?

Hast thou no foes about thee, then, that oneô

Thou vile King!ô must be turned against thy son?

The deed was thine. Thy Sea-born Sire but heard

The call of prayer, and bowed him to his word.

But thou in his eyes and in mine art found

Evil, who wouldst not think, nor probe, nor sound

The deeps of prophet's lore, nor day by day

Leave Time to search; but swifter than man may,
Let loose the curse to slay thine innocent son!

THESEUS

O Goddess, let me die!

ARTEMIS

Nay; thou hast done
A heavy wrong; yet even beyond this ill
Abides for thee forgiveness. 'Twas the will
Of Cypris that these evil things should be,
Sating her wrath. And this immutably
Hath Zeus ordained in heaven: no God may thwart
A God's fixed will; we grieve but stand apart.
Else, but for fear of the Great Father's blame,
Never had I to such extreme of shame
Bowed me, be sure, as here to stand and see
Slain him I loved best of mortality!

Thy fault, O King, its ignorance sunders wide
From very wickedness; and she who died
By death the more disarmed thee, making dumb
The voice of question. And the storm has come
Most bitterly of all on thee! Yet I
Have mine own sorrow, too. When good men die,
There is no joy in heaven, albeit our ire
On child and house of the evil falls like fire.

*[A throng is seen approaching; HIPPOLYTUS enters,
supported by his attendants.]*

CHORUS

Lo, it is he! The bright young head
Yet upright there!
Ah the torn flesh and the blood-stained hair;
Alas for the kindred's trouble!
It falls as fire from a God's hand sped,
Two deaths, and mourning double.

HIPPOLYTUS

Ah, pain, pain, pain!
O unrighteous curse! O unrighteous sire!
No hope.ô My head is stabbed with fire,
And a leaping spasm about my brain.
Stay, let me rest. I can no more.
O fell, fell steeds that my own hand fed,
Have ye maimed me and slain, that loved me of yore?
ô Soft there, ye thralls! No trembling hands
As ye lift me, now!ô Who is that that stands
At the right?ô Now firm, and with measured tread,
Lift one accursèd and stricken sore
By a father's sinning.

Thou, Zeus, dost see me? Yea, it is I;
The proud and pure, the server of God,
The white and shining in sanctity!
To a visible death, to an open sod,
 I walk my ways;
And all the labour of saintly days
 Lost, lost, without meaning!

Ah God, it crawls
 This agony, over me!
Let be, ye thralls!
 Come, Death, and cover me:
Come, O thou Healer blest!

But a little more,
 And my soul is clear,
 And the anguish o'er!
Oh, a spear, a spear!
To rend my soul to its rest!

Oh, strange, false Curse! Was there some blood-stained head,
Some father of my line, unpunishèd,
 Whose guilt lived in his kin,
And passed, and slept, till after this long day
It lightsí Oh, why on me? Me, far away
 And innocent of sin?

O words that cannot save!
When will this breathing end in that last deep
Pain that is painlessness? 'Tis sleep I crave.
 When wilt thou bring me sleep,
Thou dark and midnight magic of the grave!

ARTEMIS
Sore-stricken man, bethink thee in this stress,
Thou dost but die for thine own nobleness.

HIPPOLYTUS
Ah!
O breath of heavenly fragrance! Though my pain
Burns, I can feel thee and find rest again.
The Goddess Artemis is with me here.

ARTEMIS
With thee and loving thee, poor sufferer!

HIPPOLYTUS
Dost see me, Mistress, nearing my last sleep?

ARTEMIS

Aye, and would weep for thee, if Gods could weep.

HIPPOLYTUS

Who now shall hunt with thee or hold thy quiver?

ARTEMIS

He dies but my love cleaves to him for ever.

HIPPOLYTUS

Who guide thy chariot, keep thy shrine-flowers fresh?

ARTEMIS

The accursed Cyprian caught him in her mesh!

HIPPOLYTUS

The Cyprian? Now I see it!ô Aye, 'twas she.

ARTEMIS

She missed her worship, loathed thy chastity!

HIPPOLYTUS

Three lives by her one hand! 'Tis all clear now.

ARTEMIS

Yea, three; thy father and his Queen and thou.

HIPPOLYTUS

My father; yea, he too is pitiable!

ARTEMIS

A plotting Goddess tripped him, and he fell.

HIPPOLYTUS

Father, where art thou? í Oh, thou sufferest sore!

THESEUS

Even unto death, child. There is joy no more.

HIPPOLYTUS

I pity thee in this coil; aye, more than me.

THESEUS

Would I could lie there dead instead of thee!

HIPPOLYTUS

Oh, bitter bounty of Poseidon's love!

THESEUS

Would God my lips had never breathed thereof!

HIPPOLYTUS (*gently*)

Nay, thine own rage had slain me then, some wise!

THESEUS

A lying spirit had made blind mine eyes!

HIPPOLYTUS

Ah me!

Would that a mortal's curse could reach to God!

ARTEMIS

Let be! For not, though deep beneath the sod
Thou liest, not unrequited nor unsung
Shall this fell stroke, from Cypris' rancour sprung,
Quell thee, mine own, the saintly and the true!

My hand shall win its vengeance through and through,
Piercing with flawless shaft what heart soe'er
Of all men living is most dear to Her.

Yea, and to thee, for this sore travail's sake,
Honours most high in Trozên will I make;
For yokeless maids before their bridal night
Shall shear for thee their tresses; and a rite
Of honouring tears be thine in ceaseless store;
And virgin's thoughts in music evermore
Turn toward thee, and praise thee in the Song
Of Phaedra's far-famed love and thy great wrong.

O seed of ancient Aegeus, bend thee now
And clasp thy son. Aye, hold and fear not thou!
Not knowingly hast thou slain him; and man's way,
When Gods send error, needs must fall astray.

And thou, Hippolytus, shrink not from the King,
Thy father. Thou wast born to bear this thing.

Farewell! I may not watch man's fleeting breath,
Nor strain mine eyes with the effluence of death.
And sure that Terror now is very near.

[The cloud slowly rises and floats away.]

HIPPOLYTUS

Farewell, farewell, most Blessèd! Lift thee clear
Of soiling men! Thou wilt not grieve in heaven
For my long love! í Father, thou art forgiven.

It was Her will. I am not wroth with theeí

I have obeyed Her all my days! í

Ah me,

The dark is drawing down upon mine eyes;
It hath me! í Father! í Hold me! Help me rise!

THESEUS (*supporting him in his arms*)

Ah, woe! How dost thou torture me, my son!

HIPPOLYTUS

I see the Great Gates opening. I am gone.

THESEUS

Gone? And my hand red-reeking from this thing!

HIPPOLYTUS

Nay, nay; thou art assoiled of manslaying.

THESEUS

Thou leav'st me clear of murder? Sayst thou so?

HIPPOLYTUS

Yea, by the Virgin of the Stainless Bow!

THESEUS

Dear Son! Ah, now I see thy nobleness!

HIPPOLYTUS

Pray that a true-born child may fill my place.

THESEUS

Ah me, thy righteous and god-fearing heart!

HIPPOLYTUS

Farewell;

A long farewell, dear Father, ere we part!

[THESEUS *bends down and embraces him passionately.*]

THESEUS

Not yet!ô O hope and bear while thou hast breath!

HIPPOLYTUS

Lo, I have borne my burden. This is deathí

Quick, Father; lay the mantle on my face.

[THESEUS *covers his face with a mantle and rises.*]

THESEUS

Ye bounds of Pallas and of Pelops' race,

What greatness have ye lost!

Woe, woe is me!

Thou Cyprian, long shall I remember thee!

CHORUS

On all this folk, both low and high,

A grief hath fallen beyond men's fears.

There cometh a throbbing of many tears,

A sound as of waters falling.

For when great men die,

A mighty name and a bitter cry

Rise up from a nation calling.
[*They move into the Castle, carrying the body of HIPPOLYTUS.*]

THE BACCHAE

OF EURIPIDES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DIONYSUS, THE GOD; *son of Zeus and of the Theban princess Semelê.*

CADMUS, *formerly King of Thebes, father of Semelê.*

PENTHEUS, *King of Thebes, grandson of Cadmus.*

AGAVE, *daughter of Cadmus, mother of Pentheus.*

TEIRESIAS, *an aged Theban prophet.*

A SOLDIER OF PENTHEUS' GUARD.

TWO MESSENGERS.

A CHORUS OF INSPIRED DAMSELS, *following Dionysus from the East.*

"The play was first produced after the death of Euripides by his son who bore the same name, together with the Iphigenia in Aulis and the Alcmaeon, probably in the year 405 B.C."

The background represents the front of the Castle of PENTHEUS, King of Thebes. At one side is visible the sacred Tomb of Semelê, a little enclosure overgrown with wild vines, with a cleft in the rocky floor of it from which there issues at times steam or smoke. The God DIONYSUS is discovered alone.

DIONYSUS

Behold, God's Son is come unto this land
Of heaven's hot splendour lit to life, when she
Of Thebes, even I, Dionysus, whom the brand
Who bore me, Cadmus' daughter Semelê,
Died here. So, changed in shape from God to man,
I walk again by Dirce's streams and scan
Ismenus' shore. There by the castle side
I see her place, the Tomb of the Lightning's Bride,
The wreck of smouldering chambers, and the great
Faint wreaths of fire undyingô as the hate
Dies not, that Hera held for Semelê.

Aye, Cadmus hath done well; in purity
He keeps this place apart, inviolate,
His daughter's sanctuary; and I have set
My green and clustered vines to robe it round
Far now behind me lies the golden ground
Of Lydian and of Phrygian; far away

The wide hot plains where Persian sunbeams play,
The Bactrian war-holds, and the storm-oppressed
Clime of the Mede, and Araby the Blest,
And Asia all, that by the salt sea lies
In proud embattled cities, motley-wise
Of Hellene and Barbarian interwrought;
And now I come to Hellasô having taught
All the world else my dances and my rite
Of mysteries, to show me in men's sight
Manifest God.

And first of Helene lands

I cry this Thebes to waken; set her hands
To clasp my wand, mine ivied javelin,
And round her shoulders hang my wild fawn-skin.
For they have scorned me whom it least beseemed,
Semelê's sisters; mocked by birth, nor deemed
That Dionysus sprang from Dian seed.
My mother sinned, said they; and in her need,
With Cadmus plotting, cloaked her human shame
With the dread name of Zeus; for that the flame
From heaven consumed her, seeing she lied to God.

Thus must they vaunt; and therefore hath my rod
On them first fallen, and stung them forth wild-eyed
From empty chambers; the bare mountain side
Is made their home, and all their hearts are flame.
Yea, I have bound upon the necks of them
The harness of my rites. And with them all
The seed of womankind from hut and hall
Of Thebes, hath this my magic goaded out.
And there, with the old King's daughters, in a rout
Confused, they make their dwelling-place between
The roofless rocks and shadowy pine trees green.
Thus shall this Thebes, how sore soe'er it smart,
Learn and forget not, till she crave her part
In mine adoring; thus must I speak clear
To save my mother's fame, and crown me here,
As true God, born by Semelê to Zeus.

Now Cadmus yieldeth up his throne and use
Of royal honour to his daughter's son
Pentheus; who on my body hath begun
A war with God. He thrusteth me away
From due drink-offering, and, when men pray,
My name entreats not. Therefore on his own
Head and his people's shall my power be shown.
Then to another land, when all things here
Are well, must I fare onward, making clear
My godhead's might. But should this Theban town
Essay with wrath and battle to drag down
My maids, lo, in their path myself shall be,

And maniac armies battled after me!
For this I veil my godhead with the wan
Form of the things that die, and walk as Man.

O Brood of Tmolus o'er the wide world flown,
O Lydian band, my chosen and mine own,
Damsels uplifted o'er the orient deep
To wander where I wander, and to sleep
Where I sleep; up, and wake the old sweet sound,
The clang that I and mystic Rhea found,
The Timbrel of the Mountain! Gather all
Thebes to your song round Pentheus' royal hall.
I seek my new-made worshippers, to guide
Their dances up Kithaeron's pine clad side.

[As he departs, there comes stealing in from the left a band of fifteen Eastern Women, the light of the sunrise streaming upon their long white robes and ivy-bound hair. They wear fawn-skins over the robes, and carry some of them timbrels, some pipes and other instruments. Many bear the thyrsus, or sacred Wand, made of reed ringed with ivy. They enter stealthily till they see that the place is empty, and then begin their mystic song of worship.]

CHORUS

A Maiden

From Asia, from the dayspring that uprises
To Bromios ever glorying we came.
We laboured for our Lord in many guises;
We toiled, but the toil is as the prize is;
Thou Mystery, we hail thee by thy name!

Another

Who lingers in the road? Who espies us?
We shall hide him in his house nor be bold.
Let the heart keep silence that defies us;
For I sing this day to Dionysus
The song that is appointed from of old.

All the Maidens

Oh, blessèd he in all wise,
Who hath drunk the Living Fountain,
Whose life no folly staineth,
And his soul is near to God;
Whose sins are lifted, pall-wise,
As he worships on the Mountain,
And where Cybele ordaineth,
Our Mother, he has trod:

His head with ivy laden
And his thyrsus tossing high,

For our God he lifts his cry;
"Up, O Bacchae, wife and maiden,
Come, O ye Bacchae, come;
Oh, bring the Joy-bestower,
God-seed of God the Sower,
Bring Bromios in his power
From Phrygia's mountain dome;
To street and town and tower,
Oh, bring ye Bromios home."

Whom erst in anguish lying
For an unborn life's desire,
As a dead thing in the Thunder
His mother cast to earth;
For her heart was dying, dying,
In the white heart of the fire;
Till Zeus, the Lord of Wonder,
Devised new lairs of birth;

Yea, his own flesh tore to hide him,
And with clasps of bitter gold
Did a secret son enfold,
And the Queen knew not beside him;
Till the perfect hour was there;
Then a hornèd God was found,
And a God of serpents crowned;
And for that are serpents wound
In the wands his maidens bear,
And the songs of serpents sound
In the mazes of their hair.

Some Maidens

All hail, O Thebes, thou nurse of Semelê!
With Semelê's wild ivy crown thy towers;
Oh, burst in bloom of wreathing bryony,
Berries and leaves and flowers;
Uplift the dark divine wand,
The oak-wand and the pine-wand,
And don thy fawn-skin, fringed in purity
With fleecy white, like ours.

Oh, cleanse thee in the wands' waving pride!
Yea, all men shall dance with us and pray,
When Bromios his companies shall guide
Hillward, ever hillward, where they stay,
The flock of the Believing,
The maids from loom and weaving
By the magic of his breath borne away.

Others

Hail thou, O Nurse of Zeus, O Caverned Haunt
Where fierce arms clanged to guard God's cradle rare,
For thee of old crested Corybant
First woke in Cretan air
The wild orb of our orgies,
The Timbrel; and thy gorges
Rang with this strain; and blended Phrygian chant
And sweet keen pipes were there.

But the Timbrel, the Timbrel was another's,
And away to Mother Rhea it must wend;
And to our holy singing from the Mother's
The mad Satyrs carried it, to blend
In the dancing and the cheer
Of our third and perfect Year;
And it serves Dionysus in the end!

A Maiden

O glad, glad on the mountains
To swoon in the race outworn,
When the holy fawn-skin clings,
And all else sweeps away,
To the joy of the red quick fountains,
The blood of the hill-goat torn,
The glory of wild-beast ravengings,
Where the hill-tops catch the day;
To the Phrygian, Lydian, mountains!
'Tis Bromios leads the way.

Another Maiden

Then streams the earth with milk, yea, streams
With wine and nectar of the bee,
And through the air dim perfume steams
Of Syrian frankincense; and He,
Our leader, from his thyrsus spray
A torchlight tosses high and higher,
A torchlight like a beacon-fire,
To waken all that faint and stray;
And sets them leaping as he sings,
His tresses rippling to the sky,
And deep beneath the Maenad cry
His proud voice rings:
"Come, O ye Bacchae, come!"

All the Maidens

Hither, O fragrant of Tmolus the Golden,
Come with the voice of timbrel and drum;
Let the cry of your joyance uplift and embolden
The God of the joy-cry; O Bacchanals, come!

With pealing of pipes and with Phrygian clamour,
On, where the vision of holiness thrills,
And the music climbs and the maddening glamour,
With the wild White Maids, to the hills, to the hills!
Oh, then, like a colt as he runs by a river,
A colt by his dam, when the heart of him sings,
With the keen limbs drawn and the fleet foot a-quiver,
Away the Bacchanal springs!

*[Enter TEIRESIAS. He is an old man and blind, leaning upon a staff
and moving with slow stateliness, though wearing the Ivy and the
Bacchic fawn-skin.]*

TEIRESIAS

Ho, there, who keeps the gate? Go, summon me
Cadmus, Agênor's son, who crossed the sea
From Sidon and upreared this Theban hold.
Go, whosoe'er thou art. See he be told
Teiresias seeketh him. Himself will gauge
Mine errand, and the compact, age with age,
I vowed with him, grey hair with snow-white hair,
To deck the new God's thyrsus, and to wear
His fawn-skin, and with ivy crown our brows.

*[Enter CADMUS from the Castle. He is even older than
TEIRESIAS, and wears the same attire.]*

CADMUS

True friend! I knew that voice of thine, that flows
Like mellow wisdom from a fountain wise.
And, lo, I come prepared, in all the guise
And harness of this God. Are we not told
His is the soul of that dead life of old
That sprang from mine own daughter? Surely then
Must thou and I with all the strength of men
Exalt him.

Where then shall I stand, where tread
The dance and toss this bowed and hoary head?
O friend, in thee is wisdom; guide my grey
And eld-worn steps, eld-worn Teiresias. Nay;
I am not weak.

*[At the first movement of worship his manner begins to change;
a mysterious strength and exaltation enter into him.]*

Surely this arm could smite
The wild earth with its thyrsus, day and night,
And faint not! Sweetly and forgetfully
The dim years fall from off me!

TEIRESIAS

As with thee,
With me 'tis likewise. Light am I and young,
And will essay the dancing and the song.

CADMUS

Quick, then, our chariots to the mountain road.

TEIRESIAS

Nay; to take steeds were to mistrust the God.

CADMUS

So be it. Mine old arms shall guide thee there.

TEIRESIAS

The God himself shall guide! Have thou no care.

CADMUS

And in all Thebes shall no man dance but we?

TEIRESIAS

Aye, Thebes is blinded. Thou and I can see.

CADMUS

'Tis weary waiting; hold my hand, friend; so.

TEIRESIAS

Lo, there is mine. So linkèd let us go.

CADMUS

Shall things of dust the Gods' dark ways despise?

TEIRESIAS

Or prove our wit on Heaven's high mysteries?
Not thou and I! That heritage sublime
Our sires have left us, wisdom old as time,
No word of man, how deep soe'er his thought
And won of subtlest toil, may bring to naught.
Aye, men will rail that I forgot my years,
To dance and wreath with ivy these white hairs;
What recks it? Seeing the God no line hath told
To mark what man shall dance, or young or old;
But craves his honours from mortality
All, no man marked apart; and great shall be!

CADMUS (*after looking away toward the Mountain*).

Teiresias, since this light thou canst not read,
I must be seer for thee. Here comes in speed
Pentheus, Echîon's son, whom I have raised

To rule my people in my stead.ô Amazed
He seems. Stand close, and mark what we shall hear.

[The two stand back, partially concealed, while there enters in hot haste PENTHEUS, followed by a bodyguard. He is speaking to the SOLDIER in command.]

PENTHEUS

Scarce had I crossed our borders, when mine ear
Was caught by this strange rumour, that our own
Wives, our own sisters, from their hearths are flown
To wild and secret rites; and cluster there
High on the shadowy hills, with dance and prayer
To adore this new-made God, this Dionyse,
Whate'er he be!ô And in their companies
Deep wine-jars stand, and ever and anon
Away into the loneliness now one
Steals forth, and now a second, maid or dame
Where love lies waiting, not of God! The flame
They say, of Bacchios wraps them. Bacchios! Nay,
'Tis more to Aphrodite that they pray.
Howbeit, all that I have found, my men
Hold bound and shackled in our dungeon den;
The rest, I will go hunt them! Aye, and snare
My birds with nets of iron, to quell their prayer
And mountain song and rites of rascaldom!
They tell me, too, there is a stranger come,
A man of charm and spell, from Lydian seas,
A head all gold and cloudy fragrances,
A wine-red cheek, and eyes that hold the light
Of the very Cyprian. Day and livelong night
He haunts amid the damsels, o'er each lip
Dangling his cup of joyance! Let me grip
Him once, but once, within these walls, right swift
That wand shall cease its music, and that drift
Of tossing curls lie stillô when my rude sword
Falls between neck and trunk! 'Tis all his word,
This tale of Dionysus; how that same
Babe that was blasted by the lightning flame
With his dead mother, for that mother's lie,
Was re-conceived, born perfect from the thigh
Of Zeus, and now is God! What call ye these?
Dreams? Gibes of the unknown wanderer? Blasphemies
That crave the very gibbet?
Stay! God wot,
Here is another marvel! See I not
In motley fawn-skins robed the vision-seer
Teiresias? And my mother's father hereô
O depth of scorn!ô adoring with the wand
Of Bacchios?ô Father!ô Nay, mine eyes are fond;

It is not your white heads so fancy-flown!
It cannot be! Cast off that ivy crown,
O mine own mother's sire! Set free that hand
That cowers about its staff.

'Tis thou hast planned
This work, Teiresias! 'Tis thou must set
Another altar and another yet
Amongst us, watch new birds, and win more hire
Of gold, interpreting new signs of fire!
But for thy silver hairs, I tell thee true,
Thou now wert sitting chained amid thy crew
Of raving damsels, for this evil dream
Thou hast brought us, of new Gods! When once the gleam
Of grapes hath lit a Woman's Festival,
In all their prayers is no more health at all!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS (*the words are not heard by PENTHEUS*)
Injurious King, hast thou no fear of God,
Nor Cadmus, sower of the Giants' Sod,
Life-spring to great Echîon and to thee?

TEIRESIAS

Good words my son, come easily, when he
That speaks is wise, and speaks but for the right.
Else come they never! Swift are thine, and bright
As though with thought, yet have no thought at all
Lo this new God, whom thou dost flout withal,
I cannot speak the greatness wherewith He
In Hellas shall be great! Two spirits there be,
Young Prince, that in man's world are first of worth.
Dêmêtêr one is named; she is the Earthô
Call her which name thou will!ô who feeds man's frame
With sustenance of things dry. And that which came
Her work to perfect, second, is the Power
From Semelê born. He found the liquid show
Hid in the grape. He rests man's spirit dim
From grieving, when the vine exalteth him.
He giveth sleep to sink the fretful day
In cool forgetting. Is there any way
With man's sore heart, save only to forget?
Yea, being God, the blood of him is set
Before the Gods in sacrifice, that we
For his sake may be blest.ô And so, to thee,
That fable shames him, how this God was knit
Into God's flesh? Nay, learn the truth of it
Cleared from the false.ô When from that deadly light
Zeus saved the babe, and up to Olympus' height
Raised him, and Hera's wrath would cast him thence
Then Zeus devised him a divine defence.
A fragment of the world-encircling fire

He rent apart, and wrought to his desire
Of shape and hue, in the image of the child,
And gave to Hera's rage. And so, beguiled
By change and passing time, this tale was born,
How the babe-god was hidden in the torn
Flesh of his sire. He hath no shame thereby.

A prophet is he likewise. Prophecy
Cleaves to all frenzy, but beyond all else
To frenzy of prayer. Then in us verily dwells
The God himself, and speaks the thing to be.
Yea, and of Ares' realm a part hath he.
When mortal armies, mailéd and arrayed,
Have in strange fear, or ever blade met blade,
Fled maddened, 'tis this God hath palsied them.
Aye, over Delphi's rock-built diadem
Thou yet shalt see him leaping with his train
Of fire across the twin-peaked mountain-plain,
Flaming the darkness with his mystic wand,
And great in Hellas.ô List and understand,
King Pentheus! Dream not thou that force is power;
Nor, if thou hast a thought, and that thought sour
And sick, oh, dream not thought is wisdom!ô Up,
Receive this God to Thebes; pour forth the cup
Of sacrifice, and pray, and wreath thy brow.

Thou fearest for the damsels? Think thee now;
How toucheth this the part of Dionyse
To hold maids pure perforce? In them it lies,
And their own hearts; and in the wildest rite
Cometh no stain to her whose heart is white.

Nay, mark me! Thou hast thy joy, when the Gate
Stands thronged, and Pentheus' name is lifted great
And high by Thebes in clamour; shall not He
Rejoice in his due meed of majesty?

Howbeit, this Cadmus whom thou scorn'st and I
Will wear His crown, and tread His dances! Aye,
Our hairs are white, yet shall that dance be trod!
I will not lift mine arm to war with God
For thee nor all thy words. Madness most fell
Is on thee, madness wrought by some dread spell,
But not by spell nor leechcraft to be cured!

CHORUS

Grey prophet, worthy of Phoebus is thy word,
And wise in honouring Bromios, our great God.

CADMUS

My son, right well Teiresias points thy road.
Oh, make thine habitation here with us,
Not lonely, against men's uses. Hazardous
Is this quick bird-like beating of thy thought

Where no thought dwells.ô Grant that this God be naught,
Yet let that Naught be Somewhat in thy mouth;
Lie boldly, and say He is! So north and south
Shall marvel, how there sprang a thing divine
From Semelê's flesh, and honour all our line.

[*Drawing nearer to PENTHEUS.*]

Is there not blood before thine eyes even now?
Our lost Actaeon's blood, whom long ago
His own red hounds through yonder forest dim
Tore unto death, because he vaunted him
Against most holy Artemis? Oh, beware
And let me wreath thy temples. Make thy prayer
With us, and walk thee humbly in God's sight.

[*He makes as if to set the wreath on PENTHEUS head.*]

PENTHEUS

Down with that hand! Aroint thee to thy rite
Nor smear on me thy foul contagion!

[*Turning upon TEIRESIAS.*]

This

Thy folly's head and prompter shall not miss
The justice that he needs!ô Go, half my guard
Forth to the rock-seat where he dwells in ward
O'er birds and wonders; rend the stone with crown
And trident; make one wreck of high and low
And toss his bands to all the winds of air!

Ha, have I found the way to sting thee, there?
The rest, forth through the town! And seek amain
This girl-faced stranger, that hath wrought such bane
To all Thebes, preying on our maids and wives
Seek till ye find; and lead him here in gyves,
Till he be judged and stoned and weep in blood
The day he troubled Pentheus with his God!

[*The guards set forth in two bodies; PENTHEUS goes into the Castle.*]

TEIRESIAS

Hard heart, how little dost thou know what seed
Thou sowest! Blind before, and now indeed
Most mad!ô Come, Cadmus, let us go our way,
And pray for this our persecutor, pray
For this poor city, that the righteous God
Move not in anger.ô Take thine ivy rod
And help my steps, as I help thine. 'Twere ill,
If two old men should fall by the roadway. Still,
Come what come may, our service shall be done
To Bacchios, the All-Father's mystic son
O Pentheus, named of sorrow! Shall he claim
From all thy house fulfilment of his name,
Old Cadmus?ô Nay, I speak not from mine art,

But as I seeô blind words and a blind heart!
[*The two Old Men go off towards the Mountain.*]

CHORUS

Some Maidens

Thou Immaculate on high;
Thou Recording Purity;
Thou that stoopest, Golden Wing,
Earthward, manward, pitying,
Hearest thou this angry King?
Hearest thou the rage and scorn
'Gainst the Lord of Many Voices,
Him of mortal mother born,
Him in whom man's heart rejoices,
Girt with garlands and with glee,
First in Heaven's sovranity?
For his kingdom, it is there,
In the dancing and the prayer,
In the music and the laughter,
In the vanishing of care,
And of all before and after;
In the Gods' high banquet, when
Gleams the graperflood, flashed to heaven;
Yea, and in the feasts of men
Comes his crownèd slumber; then
Pain is dead and hate forgiven!

Others

Loose thy lips from out the rein;
Lift thy wisdom to disdain;
Whatso law thou canst not see,
Scorning; so the end shall be
Uttermost calamity!
'Tis the life of quiet breath,
'Tis the simple and the true,
Storm nor earthquake shattereth,
Nor shall aught the house undo

Where they dwell. For, far away,
Hidden from the eyes of day,
Watchers are there in the skies,
That can see man's life, and prize
Deeds well done by things of clay.
But the world's Wise are not wise,
Claiming more than mortal may.
Life is such a little thing;
Lo, their present is departed,
And the dreams to which they cling

Come not. Mad imagining
Theirs, I ween, and empty-hearted!

Divers Maidens

Where is the Home for me?
O Cyprus, set in the sea,
Aphrodite's home In the soft sea-foam,
Would I could wend to thee;
Where the wings of the Loves are furled,
And faint the heart of the world.

Aye, unto Paphos' isle,
Where the rainless meadows smile
With riches rolled From the hundred-fold
Mouths of the far-off Nile,
Streaming beneath the waves
To the roots of the seaward caves.

But a better land is there
Where Olympus cleaves the air,
The high still dell Where the Muses dwell,
Fairest of all things fair!
O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding Fire!

* * * * *

A God of Heaven is he,
And born in majesty;
Yet hath he mirth
In the joy of the Earth,

And he loveth constantly
Her who brings increase,
The Feeder of Children, Peace.
No grudge hath he of the great;
No scorn of the mean estate;
But to all that liveth His wine he giveth,
Griefless, immaculate;
Only on them that spurn
Joy, may his anger burn.

Love thou the Day and the Night;
Be glad of the Dark and the Light;
And avert thine eyes From the lore of the wise,
That have honour in proud men's sight.
The simple nameless herd of Humanity
Hath deeds and faith that are truth enough for me!

[As the Chorus ceases, a party of the guards return, leading in the midst of them DIONYSUS, bound. The SOLDIER in command stands forth, as PENTHEUS, hearing the tramp of feet, comes out from the Castle.]

SOLDIER

Our quest is finished, and thy prey, O King,
Caught; for the chase was swift, and this wild thing
Most tame; yet never flinched, nor thought to flee,
But held both hands out unresistingly
No change, no blanching of the wine-red cheek.
He waited while we came, and bade us wreak
All thy decree; yea, laughed, and made my best
Easy, till I for very shame confessed
And said: "O stranger, not of mine own will
I bind thee, but his bidding to fulfil
Who sent me."

And those prisoned Maids withal
Whom thou didst seize and bind within the wall
Of thy great dungeon, they are fled, O King.
Free in the woods, a-dance and glorying
To Bromios. Of their own impulse fell
To earth, men say, fetter and manacle,
And bars slid back untouched of mortal hand
Yea, full of many wonders to thy land
Is this man come! . Howbeit, it lies with thee!

PENTHEUS

Ye are mad!ô Unhand him. Howso swift he be,
My toils are round him and he shall not fly.

[The guards loose the arms of DIONYSUS; PENTHEUS studies him for a while in silence then speaks jeeringly. DIONYSUS remains gentle and unafraid.]

Marry, a fair shape for a woman's eye,
Sir stranger! And thou seek'st no more, I ween!
Long curls, withal! That shows thou ne'er hast been
A wrestler!ô down both cheeks so softly tossed
And winsome! And a white skin! It hath cost
Thee pains, to please thy damsels with this white
And red of cheeks that never face the light!

[DIONYSUS is silent.]

Speak, sirrah; tell me first thy name and race.

DIONYSUS

No glory is therein, nor yet disgrace.
Thou hast heard of Tmolus, the bright hill of flowers?

PENTHEUS

Surely, the ridge that winds by Sardis towers.

DIONYSUS

Thence am I; Lydia was my fatherland.

PENTHEUS

And whence these revelations, that thy band
Spreadeth in Hellas?

DIONYSUS

 Their intent and use
Dionysus oped to me, the Child of Zeus.

PENTHEUS (*brutally*)

Is there a Zeus there, that can still beget
Young Gods?

DIONYSUS

 Nay, only He whose seal was set
Here in thy Thebes on Semele.

PENTHEUS

 What way
Descended he upon thee? In full day
Or vision of night?

DIONYSUS

 Most clear he stood, and scanned
My soul, and gave his emblems to mine hand.

PENTHEUS

What like be they, these emblems?

DIONYSUS

 That may none
Reveal, nor know, save his Elect alone.

PENTHEUS

And what good bring they to the worshipper?

DIONYSUS

Good beyond price, but not for thee to hear.

PENTHEUS

Thou trickster? Thou wouldst prick me on the more
To seek them out!

DIONYSUS

 His mysteries abhor
The touch of sin-lovers.

PENTHEUS

And so thine eyes
Saw this God plain; what guise had he?

DIONYSUS

What guise
It liked him. 'Twas not I ordained his shape.

PENTHEUS

Aye, deftly turned again. An idle jape,
And nothing answered!

DIONYSUS

Wise words being brought
To blinded eyes will seem as things of nought.

PENTHEUS

And comest thou first to Thebes, to have thy God
Established?

DIONYSUS

Nay; all Barbary hath trod
His dance ere this.

PENTHEUS

A low blind folk, I ween,
Beside our Hellenes!

DIONYSUS

Higher and more keen
In this thing, though their ways are not thy way.

PENTHEUS

How is thy worship held, by night or day?

DIONYSUS

Most oft by night; 'tis a majestic thing,
The darkness.

PENTHEUS

Ha! with women worshipping?
'Tis craft and rottenness!

DIONYSUS

By day no less,
Whoso will seek may find unholinessô

PENTHEUS

Enough! Thy doom is fixed, for false pretence
Corrupting Thebes.

DIONYSUS

Not mine; but thine, for dense
Blindness of heart, and for blaspheming God!

PENTHEUS

A ready knave it is, and brazen-browed,
This mystery-priest!

DIONYSUS

Come, say what it shall be,
My doom; what dire thing wilt thou do to me?

PENTHEUS

First, shear that delicate curl that dangles there.
[*He beckons to the soldiers, who approach DIONYSUS.*]

DIONYSUS

I have vowed it to my God; 'tis holy hair.
[*The soldiers cut off the tress.*]

PENTHEUS

Next, yield me up thy staff!

DIONYSUS

Raise thine own hand
To take it. This is Dionysus' wand.
[*PENTHEUS takes the staff.*]

PENTHEUS

Last, I will hold thee prisoned here.

DIONYSUS

My Lord
God will unloose me, when I speak the word.

PENTHEUS

He may, if e'er again amid his bands
Of saints he hears thy voice!

DIONYSUS

Even now he stands
Close here, and sees all that I suffer.

PENTHEUS

What?
Where is he? For mine eyes discern him not.

DIONYSUS

Where I am! 'Tis thine own impurity
That veils him from thee.

PENTHEUS

The dog jeers at me!
At me and Thebes! Bind him!
[*The soldiers begin to bind him.*]

DIONYSUS

I charge ye, bind
Me not! I having vision and ye blind!

PENTHEUS

And I, with better right, say bind the more!
[*The soldiers obey.*]

DIONYSUS

Thou knowest not what end thou seekest, nor
What deed thou doest, nor what man thou art!

PENTHEUS (*mocking*)

Agâvê's son, and on the father's part
Echion's, hight Pentheus!

DIONYSUS

So let it be,
A name fore-written to calamity!

PENTHEUS

Away, and tie him where the steeds are tied;
Aye, let him lie in the manger!ô There abide
And stare into the darkness!ô And this rout
Of womankind that clusters thee about,
Thy ministers of worship, are my slaves!
It may be I will sell them o'er the waves,
Hither and thither; else they shall be set
To labour at my distaffs, and forget
Their timbrel and their songs of dawning day!

DIONYSUS

I go; for that which may not be, I may
Not suffer! Yet for this thy sin, lo, He
Whom thou deniest cometh after thee
For recompense. Yea, in thy wrong to us,
Thou hast cast Him into thy prison-house!
[DIONYSUS, *without his wand, his hair shorn, and his arms tightly bound, is led off by the guards to his dungeon. PENTHEUS returns into the Palace.*]

CHORUS

Some Maidens
Achelous' roaming daughter,

Holy Dircê, virgin water,
Bathed he not of old in thee,
The Babe of God, the Mystery?
When from out the fire immortal
To himself his God did take him,
To his own flesh, and bespake him:
"Enter now life's second portal,
Motherless Mystery; lo, I break
Mine own body for thy sake,
Thou of the Twofold Door, and seal thee
Mine, O Bromios,"ô thus he spakeô
"And to this thy land reveal thee."

All

Still my prayer toward thee quivers,
Dircê, still to thee I hie me;
Why, O Blessed among Rivers,
Wilt thou fly me and deny me?
By His own joy I vow,
By the grape upon the bough,
Thou shalt seek Him in the midnight, thou shalt love Him, even now!

Other Maidens

Dark and of the dark impassioned
Is this Pentheus' blood; yea, fashioned
Of the Dragon, and his birth
From Echion, child of Earth.
He is no man, but a wonder;
Did the Earth-Child not beget him,
As a red Giant, to set him
Against God, against the Thunder?
He will bind me for his prize,
Me, the Bride of Dionyse;
And my priest, my friend, is taken
Even now, and buried lies;
In the dark he lies forsaken!

All

Lo, we race with death, we perish,
Dionysus, here before thee!
Dost thou mark us not, nor cherish,
Who implore thee, and adore thee?
Hither down Olympus' side,
Come, O Holy One defied,
Be thy golden wand uplifted o'er the tyrant in his pride!

A Maiden

Oh, where art thou? In thine own
Nysa, thou our help alone?
O'er fierce beasts in orient lands

Doth thy thronging thyrsus wave,
By the high Corycian Cave,
Or where stern Olympus stands;
In the elm-woods and the oaken,
There where Orpheus harped of old,
And the trees awoke and knew him,
And the wild things gathered to him,
As he sang amid the broken
Glens his music manifold?
Dionysus loveth thee;
Blessed Land of Piërie,
He will come to thee with dancing,
Come with joy and mystery;
With the Maenads at his hest
Winding, winding to the West;
Cross the flood of swiftly glancing
Axios in majesty;
Cross the Lydias, the giver
Of good gifts and waving green;
Cross that Father-Stream of story,
Through a land of steeds and glory
Rolling, bravest, fairest River
E'er of mortals seen!

A VOICE WITHIN

Io! Io!

Awake, ye damsels; hear my cry,
Calling my Chosen; hearken ye!

A MAIDEN

Who speaketh? Oh, what echoes thus?

ANOTHER

A Voice, a Voice, that calleth us!

THE VOICE

Be of good cheer! Lo, it is I,
The Child of Zeus and Semelê.

A MAIDEN

O Master, Master, it is Thou!

ANOTHER

O Holy Voice, be with us now!

THE VOICE

Spirit of the Chained Earthquake,
Hear my word; awake, awake!

[An Earthquake suddenly shakes the pillars of the Castle.]

A MAIDEN

Ha! what is coming? Shall the hall
Of Pentheus racked in ruin fall?

LEADER

Our God is in the house! Ye maids adore Him!

CHORUS

We adore Him all!

THE VOICE

Unveil the Lightning's eye; arouse
The fire that sleeps, against this house!
[*Fire leaps upon the Tomb of Semelê.*]

A MAIDEN

Ah, saw ye, marked ye there the flame
From Semelê's enhallowed sod
Awakened? Yea, the Death that came
Ablaze from heaven of old, the same
Hot splendour of the shaft of God?

LEADER

Oh cast ye, cast ye, to the earth! The Lord
Cometh against this house! Oh, cast ye down,
Ye trembling damsels; He, our own adored,
God's Child hath come, and all is overthrown!

[*The Maidens cast themselves upon the ground, their eyes earthward.*
DIONYSUS, *alone and unbound, enters from the Castle.*]

DIONYSUS

Ye Damsels of the Morning Hills, why lie ye thus dismayed?
Ye marked him, then, our Master, and the mighty hand he laid
On tower and rock, shaking the house of Pentheus?ô But arise,
And cast the trembling from your flesh, and lift untroubled eyes.

LEADER

O Light in Darkness, is it thou? O Priest, is this thy face?
My heart leaps out to greet thee from the deep of loneliness.

DIONYSUS

Fell ye so quick despairing, when beneath the Gate I passed?
Should the gates of Pentheus quell me, or his darkness make me fast?

LEADER

Oh, what was left if thou wert gone? What could I but despair?
How hast thou 'scaped the man of sin? Who freed thee from the snare?

DIONYSUS

I had no pain nor peril; 'twas mine own hand set me free.

LEADER

Thine arms were gyvèd!

DIONYSUS

Nay, no gyve, no touch, was laid on me!

'Twas there I mocked him, in his gyves, and gave him dreams for food.

For when he laid me down, behold, before the stall there stood

A Bull of Offering. And this King, he bit his lips and straight

Fell on and bound it, hoof and limb, with gasping wrath and sweat.

And I sat watching!ô Then a Voice; and lo, our Lord was come,

And the house shook, and a great flame stood o'er his mother's tomb.

And Pentheus hied this way and that, and called his thralls amain

For water, lest his roof-tree burn; and all toiled, all in vain.

Then deemed a-sudden I was gone; and left his fire, and sped

Back to the prison portals, and his lifted sword shone red.

But there, methinks, the God had wroughtô I speak but as I guessô

Some dream-shape in mine image; for he smote at emptiness,

Stabbed in the air, and strove in wrath, as though 'twere me he slew.

Then 'mid his dreams God smote him yet again! He overthrew

All that high house. And there in wreck for evermore it lies,

That the day of this my bondage may be sore in Pentheus' eyes!

And now his sword is fallen, and he lies outworn and wan

Who dared to rise against his God in wrath, being but man.

And I uprose and left him, and in all peace took my path

Force to my Chosen, recking light of Pentheus and his wrath.

But soft, methinks a footstep sounds even now within the hall;

'Tis he; how think ye he will stand, and what words speak withal?

I will endure him gently, though he come in fury hot.

For still are the ways of Wisdom, and her temper trembleth not!

[Enter PENTHEUS in fury]

PENTHEUS

It is too much! This Eastern knave hath slipped

His prison, whom I held but now, hard gripped

In bondage.ô Ha! 'Tis he!ô What, sirrah, how

Show'st thou before my portals?

[He advances furiously upon him.]

DIONYSUS

And set a quiet carriage to thy rage.

PENTHEUS

How comest thou here? How didst thou break thy cage?

Speak!

DIONYSUS

Said I not, or didst thou mark not me,
There was One living that should set me free?

PENTHEUS

Who? Ever wilder are these tales of thine.

DIONYSUS

He who first made for man the clustered vine.

PENTHEUS

I scorn him and his vines.

DIONYSUS

For Dionyse
'Tis well; for in thy scorn his glory lies.

PENTHEUS (*to his guard*)

Go swift to all the towers, and bar withal
Each gate!

DIONYSUS

What, cannot God o'erleap a wall?

PENTHEUS

Oh, wit thou hast, save where thou needest it!

DIONYSUS

Whereso it most imports, there is my wit!ô
Nay, peace! Abide till he who hasteth from
The mountain side with news for thee, be come.
We will not fly, but wait on thy command.
[*Enter suddenly and in haste a Messenger from the Mountain.*]

MESSENGER

Great Pentheus, Lord of all this Theban land,
I come from high Kithaeron, where the frore
Snow spangles gleam and cease not evermoreí .

PENTHEUS

And what of import may thy coming bring?

MESSENGER

I have seen the Wild White Women there, O King,
Whose fleet limbs darted arrow-like but now
From Thebes away, and come to tell thee how
They work strange deeds and passing marvel. Yet
I first would learn thy pleasure. Shall I set
My whole tale forth, or veil the stranger part?

Yea Lord, I fear the swiftness of thy heart,
Thine edgèd wrath and more than royal soul.

PENTHEUS

Thy tale shall nothing scathe thee.ô Tell the whole.
It skills not to be wroth with honesty.
Nay, if thy news of them be dark, 'tis he
Shall pay it, who bewitched and led them on.

MESSENGER

Our herded kine were moving in the dawn
Up to the peaks, the greyest, coldest time,
When the first rays steal earthward, and the rime
Yields, when I saw three bands of them. The one
Autonoë led, one Ino, one thine own
Mother, Agâvê. There beneath the trees
Sleeping they lay, like wild things flung at ease
In the forest; one half sinking on a bed
Of deep pine greenery; one with careless head
Amid the fallen oak leaves; all most cold
In purityô not as thy tale was told
Of wine-cups and wild music and the chase
For love amid the forest's loneliness.
Then rose the Queen Agâvê suddenly
Amid her band, and gave the God's wild cry,
"Awake, ye Bacchanals! I hear the sound
Of hornèd kine. Awake ye!"ô Then, all round,
Alert, the warm sleep fallen from their eyes,
A marvel of swift ranks I saw them rise,
Dames young and old, and gentle maids unwed
Among them. O'er their shoulders first they shed
Their tresses, and caught up the fallen fold
Of mantles where some clasp had loosened hold,
And girt the dappled fawn-skins in with long
Quick snakes that hissed and writhed with quivering tongue.
And one a young fawn held, and one a wild
Wolf cub, and fed them with white milk, and smiled
In love, young mothers with a mother's breast
And babes at home forgotten! Then they pressed
Wreathed ivy round their brows, and oaken sprays
And flowering bryony. And one would raise
Her wand and smite the rock, and straight a jet
Of quick bright water came. Another set
Her thyrsus in the bosomed earth, and there
Was red wine that the God sent up to her,
A darkling fountain. And if any lips
Sought whiter draughts, with dipping finger-tips
They pressed the sod, and gushing from the ground
Came springs of milk. And reed-wands ivy-crowned
Ran with sweet honey, drop by drop.ô O King,

Hadst thou been there, as I, and seen this thing,
With prayer and most high wonder hadst thou gone
To adore this God whom now thou rail'st upon!

Howbeit, the kine-wardens and shepherds straight
Came to one place, amazed, and held debate;
And one being there who walked the streets and scanned
The ways of speech, took lead of them whose hand
Knew but the slow soil and the solemn hill,
And flattering spoke, and asked: "Is it your will,
Masters, we stay the mother of the King,
Agâvê, from her lawless worshipping,
And win us royal thanks?"ô And this seemed good
To all; and through the branching underwood
We hid us, cowering in the leaves. And there
Through the appointed hour they made their prayer
And worship of the Wand, with one accord
Of heart and cryô "Iacchos, Bromios, Lord,
God of God born!"ô And all the mountain felt,
And worshipped with them; and the wild things knelt
And ramped and gloried, and the wilderness
Was filled with moving voices and dim stress.

Soon, as it chanced, beside my thicket-close
The Queen herself passed dancing, and I rose
And sprang to seize her. But she turned her face
Upon me: "Ho, my rovers of the chase,
My wild White Hounds, we are hunted! Up, each rod
And follow, follow, for our Lord and God!"
Thereat, for fear they tear us, all we fled
Amazed; and on, with hand unweaponèd
They swept toward our herds that browsed the green
Hill grass. Great uddered kine then hadst thou seen
Bellowing in sword-like hands that cleave and tear,
A live steer riven asunder, and the air
Tossed with rent ribs or limbs of cloven tread,
And flesh upon the branches, and a red
Rain from the deep green pines. Yea, bulls of pride,
Horns swift to rage, were fronted and aside
Flung stumbling, by those multitudinous hands
Dragged pitilessly. And swifter were the bands
Of garbèd flesh and bone unbound withal
Than on thy royal eyes the lids may fall.

Then on like birds, by their own speed upborne,
They swept toward the plains of waving corn
That lie beside Asopus' banks, and bring
To Thebes the rich fruit of her harvesting.
On Hysiae and Erythrae that lie nursed
Amid Kithaeron's bowering rocks, they burst
Destroying, as a foeman's army comes.
They caught up little children from their homes,
High on their shoulders, babes unheld, that swayed

And laughed and fell not; all a wreck they made;
Yea, bronze and iron did shatter, and in play
Struck hither and thither, yet no wound had they;
Caught fire from out the hearths, yea, carried hot
Flames in their tresses and were scorched not!

The village folk in wrath took spear and sword,
And turned upon the Bacchae. Then, dread Lord,
The wonder was. For spear nor barbèd brand
Could scathe nor touch the damsels; but the Wand,
The soft and wreathèd wand their white hands sped,
Blasted those men and quelled them, and they fled
Dizzily. Sure some God was in these things!

And the holy women back to those strange springs
Returned, that God had sent them when the day
Dawned, on the upper heights; and washed away
The stain of battle. And those girdling snakes
Hissed out to lap the waterdrops from cheeks
And hair and breast.

Therefore I counsel thee
O King, receive this Spirit, whoe'er he be,
To Thebes in glory. Greatness manifold
Is all about him; and the tale is told
That this is he who first to man did give
The grief-assuaging vine. Oh, let him live;
For if he die, then Love herself is slain,
And nothing joyous in the world again!

LEADER

Albeit I tremble, and scarce may speak my thought
To a king's face, yet will I hide it not.
Dionyse is God, no God more true nor higher!

PENTHEUS

It bursts hard by us, like a smothered fire,
This frenzy of Bacchic women! All my land
Is made their mock.ô This needs an iron hand!

Ho, Captain! Quick to the Electran Gate;
Bid gather all my men-at-arms thereat;
Call all that spur the charger, all who know
To wield the orbèd targe or bend the bow;
We march to warô 'Fore God, shall women dare
Such deeds against us? 'Tis too much to bear!

DIONYSUS

Thou mark'st me not, O King, and holdest light
My solemn words; yet, in thine own despite,
I warn thee still. Lift thou not up thy spear
Against a God, but hold thy peace, and fear
His wrath! He will not brook it, if thou fright
His Chosen from the hills of their delight.

PENTHEUS

Peace, thou! And if for once thou hast slipped chain,
Give thanks!ô Or shall I knot thine arms again?

DIONYSUS

Better to yield him prayer and sacrifice
Than kick against the pricks, since Dionyse
Is God, and thou but mortal.

PENTHEUS

That will I!
Yea, sacrifice of women's blood, to cry
His name through all Kithaeron!

DIONYSUS

Ye shall fly,
All, and abase your shields of bronzen rim
Before their wands.

PENTHEUS

There is no way with him,
This stranger that so dogs us! Well or ill
I may entreat him, he must babble still!

DIONYSUS

Wait, good my friend! These crooked matters may
Even yet be straightened.

[PENTHEUS *has started as though to seek his army at the gate.*]

PENTHEUS

Aye, if I obey
Mine own slaves' will; how else?

DIONYSUS

Myself will lead
The damsels hither, without sword or steed.

PENTHEUS

How now?ô This is some plot against me!

DIONYSUS

What
Dost fear? Only to save thee do I plot.

PENTHEUS

It is some compact ye have made, whereby
To dance these hills for ever!

DIONYSUS

Verily,
That is my compact, plighted with my Lord!

PENTHEUS (*turning from him*)
Ho, armourers! Bring forth my shield and sword!ô
And thou, be silent!

DIONYSUS (*after regarding him fixedly, speaks with resignation*)
Ah!ô Have then thy will!
[*He fixes his eyes upon PENTHEUS again, while the armourers bring out his armour; then speaks in a tone of command.*]
Man, thou wouldst fain behold them on the hill
Praying!

PENTHEUS (*who during the rest of this scene, with a few exceptions, simply speaks the thoughts that DIONYSUS puts into him, losing power over his own mind*)
That would I, though it cost me all
The gold of Thebes!

DIONYSUS
So much? Thou art quick to fall
To such great longing.

PENTHEUS (*somewhat bewildered at what he has said*)
Aye; 'twould grieve me much
To see them flown with wine.

DIONYSUS
Yet cravest thou such
A sight as would much grieve thee?

PENTHEUS
Yes; I fain
Would watch, ambushed among the pines.

DIONYSUS
'Twere vain
To hide. They soon will track thee out.

PENTHEUS
Well said!
'Twere best done openly.

DIONYSUS
Wilt thou be led
By me, and try the venture?

PENTHEUS

Aye, indeed!
Lead on. Why should we tarry?

DIONYSUS

First we need
A rich and trailing robe of fine-linen
To gird thee.

PENTHEUS

Nay; am I a woman, then,
And no man more.

DIONYSUS

Wouldst have them slay thee dead?
No man may see their mysteries.

PENTHEUS

Well said'ô
I marked thy subtle temper long ere now.

DIONYSUS

'Tis Dionyse that prompteth me.

PENTHEUS

And how
Mean'st thou the further plan?

DIONYSUS

First take thy way
Within. I will array thee.

PENTHEUS

What array!
The woman's? Nay, I will not.

DIONYSUS

Doth it change
So soon, all thy desire to see this strange
Adoring?

PENTHEUS

Wait! What garb wilt thou bestow
About me?

DIONYSUS

First a long tress dangling low
Beneath thy shoulders.

PENTHEUS

Aye, and next?

DIONYSUS

The same red
Robe, falling to thy feet; and on thine head
A snood.

PENTHEUS

And after? Hast thou aught beyond?

DIONYSUS

Surely; the dappled fawn-skin and the wand.

PENTHEUS (*after a struggle with himself*)

Enough! I cannot wear a robe and snood.

DIONYSUS

Wouldst liefer draw the sword and spill men's blood?

PENTHEUS (*again doubting*)

True, that were evil.ô Aye; 'tis best to go
First to some place of watch.

DIONYSUS

Far wiser so,
Than seek by wrath wrath's bitter recompense.

PENTHEUS

What of the city streets? Canst lead me hence
Unseen of any?

DIONYSUS

Lonely and untried
Thy path from hence shall be, and I thy guide!

PENTHEUS

I care for nothing, so these Bacchanals
Triumph not against me! í Forward to my halls
Within!ô I will ordain what seemeth best.

DIONYSUS

So be it, O King! 'Tis mine to obey thine hest,
Whate'er it be.

PENTHEUS (*after hesitating once more and waiting*)

Well, I will goô perchance
To march and scatter them with serried lance.
Perchance to take thy planí . I know not yet.
[Exit PENTHEUS into the Castle.]

DIONYSUS

Damsels, the lion walketh to the net!
He finds his Bacchae now, and sees and dies,
And pays for all his sin!ô O Dionyse,
This is thine hour and thou not far away.
Grant us our vengeance!ô First, O Master, stay
The course of reason in him, and instil
A foam of madness. Let his seeing will,
Which ne'er had stooped to put thy vesture on,
Be darkened, till the deed is lightly done.
Grant likewise that he find through all his streets
Loud scorn, this man of wrath and bitter threats
That made Thebes tremble, led in woman's guise.

I go to fold that robe of sacrifice
On Pentheus, that shall deck him to the dark.
His mother's gift!ô So shall he learn and mark
God's true Son, Dionyse, in fulness God,
Most fearful, yet to man most soft of mood.

[Exit DIONYSUS, following PENTHEUS into Castle.]

CHORUS

Some Maidens

Will they ever come to me, ever again,
The long long dances,
On through the dark till the dim stars wane?
Shall I feel the dew on my throat, and the stream
Of wind in my hair? Shall our white feet gleam
In the dim expanses?
Oh, feet of a fawn to the greenwood fled,
Alone in the grass and the loveliness;

Leap of the hunted, no more in dread,
Beyond the snares and the deadly press:
Yet a voice still in the distance sounds,
A voice and a fear and a haste of hounds;
O wildly labouring, fiercely fleet,
Onward yet by river and glen í
Is it joy or terror, ye storm-swift feet? í
To the dear lone lands untroubled of men,
Where no voice sounds, and amid the shadowy green
The little things of the woodland live unseen.

What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour
Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great?
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait;
To hold a hand uplifted over Hate;
And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever?

Others

O Strength of God, slow art thou and still,
Yet fairest never!
On them that worship the Ruthless Will,
On them that dream, doth His judgment wait.
Dreams of the proud man, making great
And greater ever,
Things which are not of God. In wide
And devious coverts, hunter-wise,
He coucheth Time's unhasting stride,
Following, following, him whose eyes
Look not to Heaven. For all is vain,
The pulse of the heart, the plot of the brain,
That striveth beyond the laws that live.
And is thy Fate so much to give,
Is it so hard a thing to see,
That the Spirit of God, whate'er it be,
The Law that abides and changes not, ages long,
The Eternal and Nature-bornô these things be strong?

What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour
Or God's high grace so lovely and so great?
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait;
To hold a hand uplifted over Hate;
And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever?

LEADER

Happy he, on the weary sea
Who hath fled the tempest and won the haven.
Happy whoso hath risen, free,
Above his striving. For strangely graven
Is the orb of life, that one and another
In gold and power may outpass his brother,
And men in their millions float and flow
And seethe with a million hopes as leaven;
And they win their Will, or they miss their Will,
And the hopes are dead or are pined for still,
But whoe'er can know,
As the long days go,
That To Live is happy, hath found his Heaven!

[*Re-enter DIONYSUS, from the Castle*]

DIONYSUS

O eye that cravest sights thou must not see,
O heart athirst for that which slakes not! Thee,
Pentheus, I call; forth and be seen, in guise
Of woman, Maenad, saint of Dionyse,
To spy upon His Chosen and thine own
Mother!

[Enter PENTHEUS, clad like a Bacchanal, and strangely excited,
a spirit of Bacchic madness overshadowing him.]

Thy shape, methinks, is like to one
Of Cadmus' royal maids!

PENTHEUS

Yea; and mine eye
Is bright! Yon sun shines twofold in the sky,
Thebes twofold and the Wall of Seven Gates .
And is it a Wild Bull this, that walks and waits
Before me? There are horns upon thy brow!
What art thou, man or beast! For surely now
The Bull is on thee!

DIONYSUS

He who erst was wrath,
Goes with us now in gentleness. He hath
Unsealed thine eyes to see what thou shouldst see.

PENTHEUS

Say; stand I not as Ino stands, or she
Who bore me?

DIONYSUS

When I look on thee, it seems
I see their very selves!ô But stay; why streams
That lock abroad, not where I laid it, crossed
Under the coif?

PENTHEUS

I did it, as I tossed
My head in dancing, to and fro, and cried
His holy music!

DIONYSUS (*tending him*)

It shall soon be tied
Aright. 'Tis mine to tend thee. . . .Nay, but stand
With head straight.

PENTHEUS

In the hollow of thine hand
I lay me. Deck me as thou wilt.

DIONYSUS

Thy zone
Is loosened likewise; and the folded gown
Not evenly falling to the feet.

PENTHEUS

'Tis so,

By the right foot. But here methinks, they flow
In one straight line to the heel.

DIONYSUS (*_while tending him*)
And if thou prove
Their madness true, aye, more than true, what love
And thanks hast thou for me?

PENTHEUS (*not listening to him*)
In my right hand
Is it, or thus, that I should bear the wand
To be most like to them?

DIONYSUS
Up let it swing
In the right hand, timed with the right foot's springí .
'Tis well thy heart is changed!

PENTHEUS (*_more wildly*)
What strength is this!
Kithaeron's steeps and all that in them isô
How say'st thou?ô Could my shoulders lift the whole?

DIONYSUS
Surely thou canst, and if thou wilt! Thy soul,
Being once so sick, now stands as it should stand.

PENTHEUS
Shall it be bars of iron? Or this bare hand
And shoulder to the crags, to wrench them down?

DIONYSUS
Wouldst wreck the Nymphs' wild temples, and the brown
Rocks, where Pan pipes at noonday?

PENTHEUS
Nay; not I!
Force is not well with women. I will lie
Hid in the pine-brake.

DIONYSUS
Even as fits a spy
On holy and fearful things, so shalt thou lie!

PENTHEUS (*with a laugh*)
They lie there now, methinksô the wild birds, caught
By love among the leaves, and fluttering not!

DIONYSUS

It may be. That is what thou goest to see,
Aye, and to trap themô so they trap not thee!

PENTHEUS

Forth through the Thebans' town! I am their king,
Aye, their one Man, seeing I dare this thing!

DIONYSUS

Yea, thou shalt bear their burden, thou alone;
Therefore thy trial awaiteth thee!ô But on;
With me into thine ambush shalt thou come
Unscathed; then let another bear thee home!

PENTHEUS

The Queen, my mother.

DIONYSUS

Marked of every eye.

PENTHEUS

For that I go!

DIONYSUS

Thou shalt be borne on high!

PENTHEUS

That were like pride!

DIONYSUS

Thy mother's hands shall share
Thy carrying.

PENTHEUS

Nay; I need not such soft care!

DIONYSUS

So soft?

PENTHEUS

Whate'er it be, I have earned it well!
[*Exit PENTHEUS towards the Mountain.*]

DIONYSUS

Fell, fell art thou; and to a doom so fell
Thou walkest, that thy name from South to North
Shall shine, a sign for ever!ô Reach thou forth
Thine arms, Agâvê, now, and ye dark-browed
Cadmeian sisters! Greet this prince so proud
To the high ordeal, where save God and me,

None walks unscathed!ô The rest this day shall see.
[Exit DIONYSUS following PENTHEUS.]

CHORUS

Some Maidens

O hounds raging and blind,
Up by the mountain road,
Sprites of the maddened mind,
To the wild Maids of God;
Fill with your rage their eyes,
Rage at the rage unblest,
Watching in woman's guise,
The spy upon God's Possessed.

A Bacchanal

Who shall be first, to mark
Eyes in the rock that spy,
Eyes in the pine-tree darkô
Is it his mother?ô and cry:
"Lo, what is this that comes,
Haunting, troubling still,
Even in our heights, our homes,
The wild Maids of the Hill?
What flesh bare this child?
Never on woman's breast
Changeling so evil smiled;
Man is he not, but Beast!
Loin-shape of the wild,
Gorgon-breed of the waste!"

All the Chorus

Hither, for doom and deed!
Hither with lifted sword,
Justice, Wrath of the Lord,
Come in our visible need!
Smite till the throat shall bleed,
Smite till the heart shall bleed,
Him the tyrannous, lawless, Godless, Echôn's earthborn seed!

Other Maidens

Tyrannously hath he trod;
Marched him, in Law's despite,
Against thy Light, O God,
Yea, and thy Mother's Light;
Girded him, falsely bold,
Blinded in craft, to quell
And by man's violence hold,
Things unconquerable

A Bacchanal

A strait pitiless mind
Is death unto godliness;
And to feel in human kind
Life, and a pain the less.
Knowledge, we are not foes!
I seek thee diligently;
But the world with a great wind blows,
Shining, and not from thee;
Blowing to beautiful things,
On, amid dark and light,
Till Life, through the trammellings
Of Laws that are not the Right,
Breaks, clean and pure, and sings
Glorying to God in the height!

All the Chorus

Hither for doom and deed!
Hither with lifted sword,
Justice, Wrath of the Lord,
Come in our visible need!
Smite till the throat shall bleed,
Smite till the heart shall bleed,
Him the tyrannous, lawless, Godless, Echion's earthborn seed!

LEADER

Appear, appear, whatso thy shape or name
O Mountain Bull, Snake of the Hundred Heads,
Lion of Burning Flame!
O God, Beast, Mystery, come! Thy mystic maids
Are hunted!ô Blast their hunter with thy breath,
Cast o'er his head thy snare;
And laugh aloud and drag him to his death,
Who stalks thy herded madness in its lair!
[Enter hastily a MESSENGER from the Mountain, pale and distraught.]

MESSENGER

Woe to the house once blest in Hellas! Woe
To thee, old King Sidonian, who didst sow
The dragon-seed on Ares' bloody lea!
Alas, even thy slaves must weep for thee!

LEADER

News from the mountain?ô Speak! How hath it sped?

MESSENGER

Pentheus, my king, Echion's son, is dead!

LEADER

All hail, God of the Voice,
Manifest ever more!

MESSENGER

What say'st thou?ô And how strange thy tone, as though
In joy at this my master's overthrow!

LEADER

With fierce joy I rejoice,
Child of a savage shore;
For the chains of my prison are broken, and the dread where I cowered of
yore!

MESSENGER

And deem'st thou Thebes so beggared, so forlorn
Of manhood, as to sit beneath thy scorn?

LEADER

Thebes hath o'er me no sway!
None save Him I obey,
Dionysus, Child of the Highest, Him I obey and adore!

MESSENGER

One can forgive thee!ô Yet 'tis no fair thing,
Maids, to rejoice in a man's suffering.

LEADER

Speak of the mountain side!
Tell us the doom he died,
The sinner smitten to death, even where his sin was sore!

MESSENGER

We climbed beyond the utmost habitings
Of Theban shepherds, passed Asopus' springs,
And struck into the land of rock on dim
Kithaeronô Pentheus, and, attending him,
I, and the Stranger who should guide our way,
Then first in a green dell we stopped, and lay,
Lips dumb and feet unmoving, warily
Watching, to be unseen and yet to see.

A narrow glen it was, by crags o'ertowered,
Torn through by tossing waters, and there lowered
A shadow of great pines over it. And there
The Maenad maidens sate; in toil they were,
Busily glad. Some with an ivy chain
Tricked a worn wand to toss its locks again;
Some, wild in joyance, like young steeds set free,
Made answering songs of mystic melody.

But my poor master saw not the great band
Before him. "Stranger," he cried, "where we stand
Mine eyes can reach not these false saints of thine.
Mount we the bank, or some high-shouldered pine,
And I shall see their follies clear!" At that
There came a marvel. For the Stranger straight
Touched a great pine-tree's high and heavenward crown,
And lower, lower, lower, urged it down
To the herbless floor. Round like a bending bow,
Or slow wheel's rim a joiner forces to.
So in those hands that tough and mountain stem
Bowed slow ô oh, strength not mortal dwelt in them! ô
To the very earth. And there he set the King,
And slowly, lest it cast him in its spring.
Let back the young and straining tree, till high
It towered again amid the towering sky;
And Pentheus in the branches! Well, I ween,
He saw the Maenads then, and well was seen!
For scarce was he aloft, when suddenly
There was no stranger any more with me,
But out of Heaven a Voice ô oh, what voice else? ô
'Twas He that called! "Behold, O damosels,
I bring ye him who turneth to despite
Both me and ye, and darkeneth my great Light.
Tis yours to avenge!" So spake he, and there came
'Twixt earth and sky a pillar of high flame.
And silence took the air, and no leaf stirred
In all the forest dell. Thou hadst not heard
In that vast silence any wild things's cry.
And up they sprang; but with bewildered eye,
Agaze and listening, scarce yet hearing true.
Then came the Voice again. And when they knew
Their God's clear call, old Cadmus' royal brood,
Up, like wild pigeons startled in a wood,
On flying feet they came, his mother blind,
Agâvê, and her sisters, and behind
All the wild crowd, more deeply maddened then,
Through the angry rocks and torrent-tossing glen,
Until they spied him in the dark pine-tree:
Then climbed a crag hard by and furiously
Some sought to stone him, some their wands would fling
Lance-wise aloft, in cruel targeting.
But none could strike. The height o'ertopped their rage,
And there he clung, unscathed, as in a cage
Caught. And of all their strife no end was found.
Then, "Hither," cried Agâvê; "stand we round
And grip the stem, my Wild Ones, till we take
This climbing cat-o'-the-mount! He shall not make
A tale of God's high dances!" Out then shone
Arm upon arm, past count, and closed upon

The pine, and gripped; and the ground gave, and down
It reeled. And that high sitter from the crown
Of the green pine-top, with a shrieking cry
Fell, as his mind grew clear, and there hard by
Was horror visible. 'Twas his mother stood
O'er him, first priestess of those rites of blood.
He tore the coif, and from his head away
Flung it, that she might know him, and not slay
To her own misery. He touched the wild
Cheek, crying: "Mother, it is I, thy child,
Thy Pentheus, born thee in Echion's hall!
Have mercy, Mother! Let it not befall
Through sin of mine, that thou shouldst slay thy son!"

But she, with lips a-foam and eyes that run
Like leaping fire, with thoughts that ne'er should be
On earth, possessed by Bacchios utterly,
Stays not nor hears. Round his left arm she put
Both hands, set hard against his side her foot,
Drew í and the shoulder severed!ô not by might
Of arm, but easily, as the God made light
Her hand's essay. And at the other side
Was Ino rending; and the torn flesh cried,
And on Autoño pressed, and all the crowd
Of ravening arms. 'Yea, all the air was loud
With groans that faded into sobbing breath,
Dim shrieks, and joy, and triumph-cries of death.
And here was borne a severed arm, and there
A hunter's booted foot; white bones lay bare
With rending; and swift hands ensanguinèd
Tossed as in sport the flesh of Pentheus dead.
His body lies afar. The precipice

Hath part, and parts in many an interstice
Lurk of the tangled woodlandô no light quest
To find. And, ah, the head! Of all the rest,
His mother hath it, pierced upon a wand,
As one might pierce a lion's, and through the land,
Leaving her sisters in their dancing place,
Bears it on high! Yea, to these walls her face
Was set, exulting in her deed of blood,
Calling upon her Bromios, her God,
Her Comrade, Fellow-Render of the Prey,
Her All-Victorious, to whom this day
She bears in triumph í her own broken heart.

For me, after that sight, I will depart
Before Agave comes.ô Oh, to fulfil
God's laws, and have no thought beyond His will,
Is man's best treasure. Aye, and wisdom true,
Methinks, for things of dust to cleave unto!

[*The MESSENGER departs into the Castle.*]

CHORUS

Some Maidens

Weave ye the dance, and call
Praise to God!
Bless ye the Tyrant's fall!
Down is trod
Pentheus, the Dragon's Seed!
Wore he the woman's weed?
Clasped he his death indeed,
Clasped the rod?

A Bacchanal Yea, the wild ivy lapt him, and the doomed Wild Bull of Sacrifice before
him loomed!

Others

Ye who did Bromios scorn,
Praise Him the more,
Bacchanals, Cadmus-born;
Praise with sore
Agony, yea, with tears!
Great are the gifts he bears!
Hands that a mother rears
Red with gore!

LEADER

But stay, Agâvê cometh! And her eyes
Make fire around her, reeling! Ho, the prize
Cometh! All hail, O Rout of Dionyse!

*[Enter from the Mountain AGAVE, mad, and to all seeming wondrously
happy, bearing the head of PENTHEUS in her hand. The CHORUS MAIDENS
stand horror-struck at the sight; the LEADER, also horror-struck,
strives to accept it and rejoice in it as the God's deed.]*

AGAVE

Ye from the lands of Morn!

LEADER

Call me not; I give praise!

AGAVE

Lo, from the trunk new-shorn
Hither a Mountain Thorn
Bear we! O Asia-born
Bacchanals, bless this chase!

LEADER

I see. Yea; I see.
Have I not welcomed thee?

AGAVE (*very calmly and peacefully*)
He was young in the wildwood
Without nets I caught him!
Nay; look without fear on
The Lion; I have ta'en him!

LEADER
Where in the wildwood?
Whence have ye brought him?

AGAVE
Kithaeron. . . .

LEADER
Kithaeron?

AGAVE
The Mountain hath slain him!

LEADER
Who first came nigh him?

AGAVE

I, I, 'tis confessèd!
And they named me there by him
Agave the Blessèd!

LEADER
Who was next in the band on him?

AGAVE
The daughtersí .

LEADER
The daughters?

AGAVE
Of Cadmus laid hand on him.
But the swift hand that slaughters
Is mine; mine is the praise!
Bless ye this day of days!
[*The LEADER tries to speak, but is not able;*
AGAVE begins gently stroking the head.]

AGAVE
Gather ye now to the feast!

LEADER
Feast!ô O miserable!

AGAVE

See, it falls to his breast,
Curling and gently tressed,
The hair of the Wild Bull's crestô
The young steer of the fell!

LEADER

Most like a beast of the wild
That head, those locks defiled.

AGAVE (*lifting up the head, more excitedly*)

He wakened his Mad Ones,
A Chase-God, a wise God!
He sprang them to seize this!
He preys where his band preys.

LEADER (*brooding, with horror*)

In the trail of thy Mad Ones
Thou tearest thy prize, God!

AGAVE

Dost praise it?

LEADER

I praise this?

AGAVE

Ah, soon shall the land praise!

LEADER

And Pentheus, O Mother,
Thy child?

AGAVE

He shall cry on
My name as none other,
Bless the spoils of the Lion!

LEADER

Aye, strange is thy treasure!

AGAVE

And strange was the taking!

LEADER

Thou art glad?

AGAVE

Beyond measure;
Yea, glad in the breaking

Of dawn upon all this land,
By the prize, the prize of my hand!

LEADER

Show them to all the land, unhappy one,
The trophy of this deed that thou hast done!

AGAVE

Ho, all ye men that round the citadel
And shining towers of ancient Thêbê dwell,
Come! Look upon this prize, this lion's spoil,
That we have takenô yea, with our own toil,
We, Cadmus' daughters! Not with leathern-set
Thessalian javelins, not with hunter's net,
Only white arms and swift hands' bladed fall
Why make ye much ado, and boast withal
Your armourers' engines? See, these palms were bare
That caught the angry beast, and held, and tare
The limbs of him! í Father! í Go, bring to me
My father! í Aye, and Pentheus, where is he,
My son? He shall set up a ladder-stair
Against this house, and in the triglyphs there
Nail me this lion's head, that gloriously
I bring ye, having slain himô I, even I!

[She goes through the crowd towards the Castle, showing the head and looking for a place to hang it. Enter from the Mountain CADMUS, with attendants, bearing the body of PENTHEUS on a bier.]

CADMUS

On, with your awful burden. Follow me,
Thralls, to his house, whose body grievously
With many a weary search at last in dim
Kithaeron's glens I found, torn limb from limb,
And through the intervening forest weed
Scattered.ô Men told me of my daughters' deed,
When I was just returned within these walls,
With grey Teiresias, from the Bacchanals.
And back I hied me to the hills again
To seek my murdered son. There saw I plain
Actaeon's mother, ranging where he died,
Autonoë; and Ino by her side,
Wandering ghastly in the pine-copses.

Agâvê was not there. The rumour is
She cometh fleet-foot hither.ô Ah! 'Tis true;
A sight I scarce can bend mine eyes unto.

AGAVE *(turning from the Palace and seeing him)*

My father, a great boast is thine this hour.
Thou hast begotten daughters, high in power

And valiant above all mankindô yea, all
Valiant, though none like me! I have let fall
The shuttle by the loom, and raised my hand
For higher things, to slay from out thy land
Wild beasts! See, in mine arms I bear the prize,
That nailed above these portals it may rise
To show what things thy daughters did! Do thou
Take it, and call a feast. Proud art thou now
And highly favoured in our valiancy!

CADMUS

O depth of grief, how can I fathom thee
Or look upon thee!ô Poor, poor bloodstained hand!
Poor sisters!ô A fair sacrifice to stand
Before God's altars, daughter; yea, and call
Me and my citizens to feast withal!

Nay, let me weepô for thine affliction most,
Then for mine own. All, all of us are lost,
Not wrongfully, yet is it hard, from one
Who might have lovedô our Bromios, our own!

AGAVE

How crabbèd and how scowling in the eyes
Is man's old age!ô Would that my son likewise
Were happy of his hunting, in my way
When with his warrior bands he will essay
The wild beast!ô Nay, his valiance is to fight
With God's will! Father, thou shouldst set him right.
Will no one bring him thither, that mine eyes
May look on his, and show him this my prize!

CADMUS

Alas, if ever ye can know again
The truth of what ye did, what pain of pain
That truth shall bring! Or were it best to wait
Darkened for evermore, and deem your state
Not misery, though ye know no happiness?

AGAVE

What seest thou here to chide, or not to bless?

CADMUS (*after hesitation, resolving himself*)
Raise me thine eyes to yon blue dome of air!

AGAVE

'Tis done. What dost thou bid me seek for there?

CADMUS

Is it the same, or changèd in thy sight?

AGAVE

More shining than before, more heavenly bright!

CADMUS

And that wild tremour, is it with thee still?

AGAVE (*troubled*)

I know not what thou sayest; but my will
Clears, and some change cometh, I know not how.

CADMUS

Canst hearken then, being changed, and answer, now!

AGAVE

I have forgotten something; else I could.

CADMUS

What husband led thee of old from mine abode?

AGAVE

Echîon, whom men named the Child of Earth.

CADMUS

And what child in Echîon's house had birth?

AGAVE

Pentheus, of my love and his father's bred.

CADMUS

Thou bearest in thine arms an headô what head?

AGAVE (*beginning to tremble, and not looking at what she carries*)

A lion'sô so they all said in the chase.

CADMUS

Turn to it nowô 'tis no long toilô and gaze.

AGAVE

Ah! But what is it? What am I carrying here?

CADMUS

Look once upon it full, till all be clear!

AGAVE

I seeí most deadly pain! Oh, woe is me!

CADMUS

Wears it the likeness of a lion to thee?

AGAVE

No; 'tis the headô O God!ô of Pentheus, this!

CADMUS

Blood-drenched ere thou wouldst know him! Aye, 'tis his.

AGAVE

Who slew him?ô How came I to hold this thing?

CADMUS

O cruel Truth, is this thine home-coming?

AGAVE

Answer! My heart is hanging on thy breath!

CADMUS

'Twas thou.ô Thou and thy sisters wrought his death.

AGAVE

In what place was it? His own house, or where?

CADMUS

Where the dogs tore Actaeon, even there.

AGAVE

Why went he to Kithaeron? What sought he?

CADMUS

To mock the God and thine own ecstasy.

AGAVE

But how should we be on the hills this day?

CADMUS

Being mad! A spirit drove all the land that way.

AGAVE

'Tis Dionyse hath done it! Now I see.

CADMUS (*earnestly*)

Ye wronged Him! Ye denied his deity!

AGAVE (*turning from him*)

Show me the body of the son I love!

CADMUS (*leading her to the bier*)

'Tis here, my child. Hard was the quest thereof.

AGAVE

Laid in due state?

[As there is no answer, she lifts the veil of the bier, and sees.]

Oh, if I wrought a sin,
'Twas mine! What portion had my child therein!

CADMUS

He made him like to you, adoring not
The God; who therefore to one bane hath brought
You and this body, wrecking all our line,
And me. Aye, no man-child was ever mine;
And now this first-fruit of the flesh of thee,
Sad woman, foully here and frightfully
Lies murdered! Whom the house looked up unto,
[Kneeling by the body.]
O Child, my daughter's child! who heldest true
My castle walls; and to the folk a name
Of fear thou wast; and no man sought to shame
My grey beard, when they knew that thou wast there,
Else had they swift reward!ô And now I fare
Forth in dishonour, outcast, I, the great
Cadmus, who sowed the seed-rows of this state
Of Thebes, and reaped the harvest wonderful.
O my belovèd, though thy heart is dull
In death, O still belovèd, and alway
Beloved! Never more, then, shalt thou lay
Thine hand to this white beard, and speak to me
Thy "Mother's Father"; ask "Who wrongeth thee?
Who stints thine honour, or with malice stirs
Thine heart? Speak, and I smite thine injurers!"
But nowô woe, woe, to me and thee also,
Woe to thy mother and her sisters, woe
Alway! Oh, whoso walketh not in dread
Of Gods, let him but look on this man dead!

LEADER

Lo, I weep with thee. 'Twas but due reward
God sent on Pentheus; but for thee í 'Tis hard.

AGAVE My father, thou canst see the change in me, * * * * * [A page or more has here been torn out of the MS. from which all our copies of "The Bacchae" are derived. It evidently contained a speech of Agâvê (followed presumably by some words of the Chorus), and an appearance of DIONYSUS upon a cloud. He must have pronounced judgment upon the Thebans in general, and especially upon the daughters of CADMUS, have justified his own action, and declared his determination to establish his godhead. Where the MS begins again, we find him addressing CADMUS.] * * * * *

DIONYSUS

* * * * *
* * * * *

And tell of Time, what gifts for thee he bears,
What griefs and wonders in the winding years.

For thou must change and be a Serpent Thing
Strange, and beside thee she whom thou didst bring
Of old to be thy bride from Heaven afar,
Harmonia, daughter of the Lord of War.
Yea, and a chariot of kineô so spake
The word of Zeusô thee and thy Queen shall take
Through many lands, Lord of a wild array
Of orient spears. And many towns shall they
Destroy beneath thee, that vast horde, until
They touch Apollo's dwelling, and fulfil
Their doom, back driven on stormy ways and steep.
Thee only and thy spouse shall Ares keep,
And save alive to the Islands of the Blest.

Thus speaketh Dionysus, Son confessed
Of no man but of Zeus!ô Ah, had ye seen
Truth in the hour ye would not, all had been
Well with ye, and the Child of God your friend!

AGAVE

Dionysus, we beseech thee! We have sinned!

DIONYSUS

Too late! When there was time, ye knew me not!

AGAVE

We have confessed. Yet is thine hand too hot.

DIONYSUS

Ye mocked me, being God; this your wage.

AGAVE

Should God be like a proud man in his rage?

DIONYSUS

'Tis as my sire, Zeus, willed it long ago.

AGAVE (*turning from him almost with disdain*)

Old man, the word is spoken; we must go.

DIONYSUS

And seeing ye must, what is it that ye wait?

CADMUS

Child, we are come into a deadly strait,
All; thou, poor sufferer, and thy sisters twain,
And my sad self. Far off to barbarous men,
A grey-haired wanderer, I must take my road.
And then the oracle, the doom of God,
That I must lead a raging horde far-flown
To prey on Hellas; lead my spouse, mine own

Harmonia. Ares' child, disincorporate
And haunting forms, dragon and dragon-mate,
Against the tombs and altar-stones of Greece,
Lance upon lance behind us; and not cease
From toils, like other men, nor dream, nor past
The foam of Acheron find my peace at last.

AGAVE

Father! And I must wander far from thee!

CADMUS

O Child, why wilt thou reach thine arms to me,
As yearns the milk-white swan, when old swans die?

AGAVE

Where shall I turn me else? No home have I.

CADMUS

I know not; I can help thee not.

AGAVE

Farewell, O home, O ancient tower!
Lo, I am outcast from my bower,
And leave ye for a worsen lot.

CADMUS

Go forth, go forth to misery,
The way Actaeon's father went!

AGAVE

Father, for thee my tears are spent.

CADMUS

Nay, Child, 'tis I must weep for thee;
For thee and for thy sisters twain!

AGAVE

On all this house, in bitter wise,
Our Lord and Master, Dionyse,
Hath poured the utter dregs of pain!

DIONYSUS

In bitter wise, for bitter was the shame
Ye did me, when Thebes honoured not my name.

AGAVE

Then lead me where my sisters be;
Together let our tears be shed,
Our ways be wandered; where no red
Kithaeron waits to gaze on me;

Nor I gaze back; no thyrsus stem,
Nor song, nor memory in the air.
Oh, other Bacchanals be there,
Not I, not I, to dream of them!

[AGAVE *with her group of attendants goes out on the side away from the Mountain. DIONYSUS rises upon the Cloud and disappears.*]

CHORUS

There may be many shapes of mystery,
And many things God makes to be,
Past hope or fear.
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man thought.
So hath it fallen here. [*Exeunt.*]

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