# Specimens of Greek Tragedy - Aeschylus and Sophocles

Aeschylus, Sophocles

Aeschylus, Sophocles

# Specimens of Greek Tragedy - Aeschylus and Sophocles

# PUBLISHER NOTES:

✓ **VISIT OUR WEBSITE**:

## LyFreedom.com

PREFACE.

Greek drama, forerunner of ours, had its origin in the festival of Dionysus, god of wine, which was celebrated with dance, song, and recitative. The recitative, being in character, was improved into the Drama, the chief author of the improvement, tradition says, being Thespis. But the dance and song were retained, and became the Chorus, that peculiar feature of the Greek play. This seems to be the general account of the matter, and especially of the combination of the lyric with the dramatic element, so far as we can see through the mist of an unrecorded age.

Thirlwall, still perhaps the soundest and most judicious, though not the most vivid or enthusiastic, historian of Greece, traces the origin of the Drama to "the great choral compositions uniting the attractions of music and action to those of a lofty poetry, which formed the favourite entertainment of the Dorian cities." This, he says, appears to have been the germ out of which, by the introduction of a new element, the recitation of a performer who assumed a character and perhaps from the first shifted his mask, so as to exhibit the outlines of a simple story in a few scenes parted by the intervening song of the Chorus, Thespis and his successors unfolded the Attic Tragedy. Of the further development of the Drama in the age of Pericles, Thirlwall says:—

"The drama was the branch of literature which peculiarly signalised the age of Pericles; and it belongs to the political, no less than to the literary, history of these times, and deserves to be considered in both points of view. The steps by which it was brought through a series of innovations to the form which it presents in its earliest extant remains, are still a subject of controversy among antiquarians; and even the

poetical character of the authors by whom these changes were effected, and of their works, is involved in great uncertainty. We have reason to believe that it was no want of merit, or of absolute worth, which caused them to be neglected and forgotten, but only the superior attraction of the form which the drama finally assumed. Of Phrynichus in particular, the immediate predecessor of Aeschylus, we are led to conceive a very favourable opinion, both by the manner in which he is mentioned by the ancients who were acquainted with his poems, and by the effect which it is recorded to have produced upon his audience. It is clear that Aeschylus, who found him in undisputed possession of the public favour, regarded him as a worthy rival, and was in part stimulated by emulation to unfold the capacities of their common art by a variety of new inventions. These, however, were so important as to entitle their author to be considered as the father of Attic tragedy. This title he would have deserved, if he had only introduced the dialogue, which distinguished his drama from that of the preceding poets, who had told the story of each piece in a series of monologues. So long as this was the case, the lyrical part must have created the chief interest; and the difference between the Attic tragedy and the choral songs which were exhibited in a similar manner in the Dorian cities was perhaps not so striking as their agreement. The innovation made by Aeschylus altered the whole character of the poem; raised the purely dramatic portion from a subordinate to the principal rank, and expanded it into a richly varied and well organised composition. With him, it would seem, and as a natural consequence of this great change, arose the usage, which to us appears so singular, of exhibiting what was sometimes called a trilogy, which comprised three distinct tragedies at the same time."

Grote says:—

"The tragic drama belonged essentially to the festivals in honour of the god Dionysus; being originally a chorus sung in his honour, to which were successively superadded: First, an iambic monologue; next, a dialogue with two actors; lastly, a regular plot with three actors, and a chorus itself interwoven into the scene. Its subjects were from the beginning, and always continued to be, persons either divine or heroic above the level of historical life, and borrowed from what was called the mythical past. 'The Persae' of Aeschylus, indeed, forms a splendid exception; but the two analogous dramas of his contemporary, Phrynichus, 'The Phoenissae,' and 'The Capture of Miletus,' were not successful enough to invite subsequent tragedians to meddle with

contemporary events. To three serious dramas, or a trilogy—at first connected together by a sequence of subject more or less loose, but afterwards unconnected and on distinct subjects, through an innovation introduced by Sophocles, if not before—the tragic poet added a fourth or satyrical drama; the characters of which were satyrs, the companions of the god Dionysus, and other historic or mythical persons exhibited in farce. He thus made up a total of four dramas, or a tetralogy, which he got up and brought forward to contend for the prize at the festival. The expense of training the chorus and actors was chiefly furnished by the choregi,—wealthy citizens, of whom one was named for each of the ten tribes, and whose honour and vanity were greatly interested in obtaining a prize. At first these exhibitions took place on a temporary stage, with nothing but wooden supports and scaffolding; but shortly after the year 500 B.C., on an occasion when the poets Aeschylus and Pratinas were contending for the prize, this stage gave way during the ceremony, and lamentable mischief was the result. After that misfortune, a permanent theatre of stone was provided. To what extent the project was realised before the invasion of Xerxes we do not accurately know; but after his destructive occupation of Athens, the theatre, if any existed previously, would have to be rebuilt or renovated, along with other injured portions of the city."

Curtius says:—

"Thespis was the founder of Attic tragedy. He had introduced a preliminary system of order into the alternation of recitative and song, into the business of the actor, and into the management of dress and stage. Solon was said to have disliked the art of Thespis, regarding as dangerous the violent excitement of feelings by means of phantastic representation; the Tyrants, on the other hand, encouraged this new popular diversion; it suited their policy that the poor should be entertained at the expense of the rich; the competition of rival tragic choirs was introduced; and the stage near the black poplar on the market-place became a centre of the festive merry- makings in Attica."

Curtius thinks that Pisistratus, as a popular usurper and opponent of the aristocracy, encouraged the worship of the popular god Dionysus with the Tragic Chorus, and he gives Pisistratus the credit of this glorious innovation. A similar policy was ascribed to Cleisthenes of Sicyon by Herodotus (v. 67).

The Chorus thus remaining wedded to the Drama, parts the action with lyric pieces more or less connected with it, and expressive of the

feelings which it excites. In Aeschylus and Sophocles the connection is generally close; less close in Euripides. The Chorus also occasionally joins in the dialogue, moralising or sympathising, and sometimes, it must be owned, in a rather commonplace and insipid strain. In "The Eumenides" of Aeschylus, the chorus of Furies takes part as a character in the drama; in "The Suppliants" it plays the principal part.

The Drama came to perfection with Athenian art generally, and with Athens herself in the period which followed the Persian war. The performance of plays at the Dionysiac festival was an important event in Athenian life. The whole city was gathered in the great open-air theatre consecrated to Dionysus, whose priest occupied the seat of honour. All the free men, at least, were gathered there; and when we talk about the intellectual superiority of the Athenian people, we must bear in mind that a condition of Athenian culture was the delegation of industry to the slave. That audience was probably the liveliest, most quick-witted, most appreciative, and most critical that the world ever saw. Prizes were given to the authors of the best pieces. Each tragedian exhibited three pieces, which at first formed a connected series, though afterwards this rule was disregarded. After the three tragic pieces was performed a satyric drama, to relieve the mind from the strain of tragedy, and perhaps also as a conventional tribute to the jollity of the god of wine. In the Elizabethan Drama the tragic and comic are blended as they are in life.

The subjects were taken usually from mythology, especially from the circle of legends relating to the siege of Troy, to the tragic history of the house of Atreus, the equally tragic history of the house of Laius, and the adventures of Hercules. The subject of "The Persae" of Aeschylus is a contemporary event, but this, as Grote says, was an exception. Heroic action and suffering, the awful force of destiny and of the will of heaven, are the general themes of Aeschylus and Sophocles; passion, especially feminine passion, is more frequently the theme of Euripides. Romantic love, the staple of the modern drama and novel, was hardly known to the Greeks, whose romantic affection was friendship, such as that of Orestes and Pylades, or Achilles and Patroclus. The only approach to romantic love in the extant drama is the love of Haemon and Antigone in the "Antigone" of Sophocles; and even here it is subordinate to the conflict between state law and law divine, which is the key-note of the piece; while the lovers do not meet upon the scene. The sterner and fiercer passions, on the whole, predominate, though Euripides has given

us touching pictures of conjugal, fraternal, and sisterly love. In the "Oedipus Coloneus" of Sophocles also, filial love and the gentler feelings play a part in harmony with the closing scene of the old man's unhappy life. In the "Philoctetes," Sophocles introduces, as an element of tragedy, physical pain, though it is combined with moral suffering.

A popular entertainment was of course adapted to the tastes of the people. Debate, both political and forensic, was almost the daily bread of the people of Athens. The Athenian loved smart repartee and display of the power of fencing with words. The thrust and parry of wit in the single-line dialogues (*stichomythia*) pleased them more than it pleases us. Rhetoric had a practical interest when not only the victory of a man's opinions in the political assembly, but his life and property before the popular tribunal, might depend on his tongue. The Drama was also used in the absence of a press for political or social teaching, and for the insinuation of political or social opinions. In reading these passages we must throw ourselves back twenty-three centuries, into an age when political and social observation was new, like politics and civilised society themselves, and ideas familiar to us now were fresh and struggling for expression. The remark may be extended to the political philosophy which struggles for expression in the speeches of Thucydides.

The trio of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides has been compared with that of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and with that of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire. The parallel will hardly hold good except as an illustration of the course of youth, perfection, and decay through which every art or product of imagination seems to run, unlike science, which continually advances. The epoch of the Athenian three, like that of the Elizabethan three, like that of the great Spanish dramatists, was one of national achievement, and their drama was thoroughly national; whereas the French drama was the highly artificial entertainment of an exclusive Court.

Aeschylus (B.C. 525-456) was the heroic poet of Athens. He had fought certainly at Marathon, and, we may be pretty sure, at Salamis, so that the narrative of the battle of Salamis in "The Persae" is probably that of an eye-witness; and that he had fought at Marathon, not that he had won the prize in drama, was the inscription which he desired for his tomb. He is of the old school of thought and sentiment, full of reverence for religion and for eternal law. The growing scepticism had not touched him. His morality is lofty and austere. In politics he was a conservative,

of the party of Cimon, opposed to the radically democratic party of Pericles; and his drama, especially the Oresteian trilogy, teems with conservative sentiment and allusion. His characters are of heroic cast. He deals superbly with the moral forces and destiny; though it may be that more philosophy has been found in him, especially by his German commentators, than is there, and that obscurity arising from his imperfect command of language has sometimes been mistaken for depth. His "Agamemnon" is generally deemed the masterpiece of Greek tragedy. His language is stately and swelling, in keeping with the heroic part of his characters; sometimes it is too swelling, and even bombastic. Though he is the greatest of all, art in him had not arrived at technical perfection. He reminds us sometimes of the Aeginetan marbles, rather than the frieze of the Parthenon.

In Sophocles (B.C. 495-405) the dramatic art has arrived at technical perfection. His drama is regarded as the literary counterpart of the Parthenon. Its calm and statuesque excellence exactly met the requirements of the taste which we call classic, and seems to correspond with the character of the dramatist, which was notably gentle, and with his form, which was typically beautiful. His characters are less heroic, and nearer to common humanity than those of Aeschylus. He appeals more to pity. His art is more subtle, especially in the treatment, for which he is famous, of the irony of fate. In politics, social sentiment, and religion, while he is more of the generation of Pericles than Aeschylus, he is still conservative and orthodox. If he belongs to democracy, it is a democracy still kept within moral bounds, and owning a master in its great chief, with whom he seems to have been personally connected. Nor does he ever court popularity by bringing the personages of the heroic age down to the common level. He, as well as Aeschylus, is dear to Aristophanes, the satiric poet of conservatism, while Euripides is hateful.

Euripides (B.C. 480-406) perhaps slightly resembles Voltaire in this, that he belongs to a different historic zone from his two predecessors, from Sophocles as well as from Aeschylus, in political and social sentiment, though not in date. He belongs to a full-blown democracy, and is evidently the dramatic poet of the people. To please the people he lays dignity and stateliness aside, brings heroic characters down to a common level, and introduces characters which are unheroic. He gives the people plenty of passion, especially of feminine passion, without being nice as to its sources, or rejecting such stories as those of Phaedra

and Medea, which would have been alien to the taste, not only of Aeschylus, but of Sophocles. He gives them plenty of politics, plenty of rhetoric, plenty of discussion, political and moral, plenty of speculation, which in those days was novel, now and then a little scepticism. His "Alcestis" is melodrama verging on sentimental comedy, and heralding the sentimental comedy of Menander known to us in the versions of Terence. The chord of pathos he can touch well. His degradation, as the old school thought it, of the drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and what they deemed his pandering to vulgar taste, brought upon him the bitter satire of Aristophanes. Yet he did not win many prizes. Perhaps the vast theatre and the grand choric accompaniments harmonised ill with his unheroic style. He is clearly connected with the Sophists, and with the generation the morality of which had been unsettled by the violence of faction and the fury of the Peloponnesian war. Still there is no reason for saying that he preached moral scepticism or impiety. Probably he did not intend to preach anything, but to please his popular audience and to win the prize. The line quoted against him, "My lips have sworn, but my mind is unsworn," read in its place, has nothing in it immoral. Perhaps he had his moods: he was religious when he wrote "The Bacchae." As little ground is there for dubbing him a woman-hater. If he has his Phaedra and Medea, he has also his Alcestis and Electra. He seems to have prided himself on his choric odes. Some of them have beauty in themselves, but they are little relevant to the play.

A full and critical account of the plays will not be expected in the Preface to a series of extracts; it will be found in such literary histories as that of Professor Mahaffy. Nor can it be necessary to dilate on the merit of the pieces selected. The sublime agony of Prometheus Bound, the majesty of wickedness in Clytaemnestra, the martial grandeur of the siege of Thebes, or of the battle of Salamis, in Aeschylus; the awful doom of Oedipus, his mysterious end, the heroic despair of Ajax, the martyrdom of Antigone to duty, in Sophocles; the passion of Phaedra and Medea, the conjugal self-sacrifice of Alcestis, the narratives of the deaths of Polyxena and the slaughter of Pentheus by the Bacchae, in Euripides, speak for themselves, if the translation is at all faithful, and find their best comment in the reader's natural appreciation.

The number of those who do not read the originals will be increased by the dropping of Greek from the academical course. To give them something like an equivalent for the original in English is the object of a translation. As prose can never be an equivalent for poetry, and as the

thoughts and diction of poetry are alien to prose, it is necessary to run the risks of a translation in verse. To translate as far as possible line for line, is requisite in the case of the Greek dramatists, if we would not lose the form and balance which are of the essence of Greek art. It is necessary also to preserve as much as possible the simplicity of diction, and to avoid words and phrases suggestive of very modern ideas. After all, it is difficult, with a material so motley and irregular as the English language, to produce anything like the pure marble of the Greek. There are translations of Greek tragedies or parts of them by writers of high poetic reputation, which are no doubt poetry, but are not Greek art.

The lyric portions of the Greek Drama are admired and even enthusiastically praised by literary judges whose verdict we shall not presume to dispute. To translation, however, the choric odes hardly lend themselves. Their dithyrambic character, their high-flown language, strained metaphors, tortuous constructions, and frequent, perhaps studied, obscurity, render it almost impossible to reproduce them in the forms of our poetry. Nor perhaps when they are strictly analysed will much be found, in many of them at least, of the material whereof modern poetry is made. They are, in fact, the libretto of a chant accompanied by dancing, and must have owed much to the melody and movement. In attempting to render the grand choric odes of the "Agamemnon," moreover, the translator is perplexed by corruptions of the text and by the various interpretations of commentators, who, though they all agree as to the moral pregnancy and sublimity of the passage, frequently differ as to its precise meaning. A metrical translation of these odes in English is apt to remind us of the metrical versions of the Hebrew Psalms. A part of one chorus in Aeschylus, which forms a distinct picture, has been given in rhythmical prose; three choruses of Sophocles and two of Euripides have, not without misgiving, been rendered in verse.

The spelling of proper names is in a state of somewhat chaotic transition which makes it difficult to take a definite course. The precisians themselves are not consistent: they still speak of Troy, Athens, Plato, and Aristotle. In the versions themselves the Greek forms have been preferred, though a pedantic extreme has been avoided. In the Preface and Introduction the forms familiar to the English reader have been used.

For Aeschylus and Euripides, the editions of Paley in the *Bibliotheca Classica* have been used; for Sophocles, that of Mr. Lewis Campbell.

# CONTENTS

## THE CHOËPHOROE.



## THE EUMENIDES (FURIES).



## SOPHOCLES.

## OEDIPUS THE KING.



## OEDIPUS AT COLONUS.

Oedipus and Antigone arrive at Colonus and enter the Consecrated Ground. Lines 1-110

The Chorus chants the Praises of Colonus. Lines 668-719

Length of Days: Choric Hymn. Lines 1211-1238

The End of Oedipus. Lines 1579-1667

## ANTIGONE.

Introduction

Antigone proposes to Ismene to take a Part in paying the Last Rites to their Brother Polynices. Lines 1-99

Antigone is caught by the Guard paying Funeral Rites to the Corpse of Polynices, and is brought before Creon. Lines 384-581

A Colloquy between Creon and his Son Haemon, to whom Antigone is betrothed. Lines 631-780

The Power of Love: Choric Hymn. Lines 781-800

Antigone is sent to her Death by Creon. Lines 882-928

Creon, having been brought to Repentance by the Denunciations of the
Prophet Tiresias, sets out to bury the Corpse of Polynices and release Antigone from the Cave of Death. The Issue is recounted by a Messenger to the Queen, Eurydice. Lines 1155-1243

## AJAX.

Introduction

Tecmessa, a Captive with whom Ajax lives as his Wife, tells the Chorus of Salaminian Mariners what has befallen their Chieftain. Lines 284-330

Ajax bewails his own Fall. Tecmessa tries to comfort him and turn him from Violent Courses. Lines 430-595

Ajax pretends to be softened, and to be going forth only for the Harmless Purpose of Purification in a Running Stream, though he is really going to his Death. Lines 646-692

The Last Speech of Ajax. Lines 815-865

## ELECTRA.

Introduction

The Tutor of Orestes tells Clytaemnestra a Fictitious Story of her Son's Death by a Fall in a Chariot Race. Electra is on the Scene. Lines 660-822

Electra's Sister Chrysothemis, having found the offerings of Orestes on his Father's Tomb, brings what she deems glad Tidings to Electra, who meets her with the Announcement that the Pedagogos has just brought Certain News of their Brother's Death. Electra, now reduced to Despair, proposes to Chrysothemis that they should themselves attempt to slay Aegisthus. Lines 871-1057

Orestes enters with the Urn which, it is pretended, contains his Ashes. His Recognition ensues. Lines 1097-1231

## THE TRACHINIAE

Introduction

Deianira imparts the Secret of her Device for regaining the Love of her Husband, Hercules, and puts the Fatal Robe into the Hands of Lichas, the Herald, that he may carry it to Hercules. Lines 531-632

Deianira recounts to the Chorus an Alarming and Portentous Incident. Then Hyllus, the Son of Hercules, comes and announces the Catastrophe. Lines 663-820

## PHILOCTETES.

Introduction

Ulysses explains the Plan of Action to Neoptolemus, and labours to bend him to his Purpose. Lines 1-134

Neoptolemus having filched the Bow of Philoctetes, Philoctetes prays him to restore it. Lines 927-962

# AESCHYLUS

# PROMETHEUS BOUND.

Prometheus, the good Titan, has been raising mankind from the condition of primeval brutes by teaching them the arts of civilisation. At last he steals fire from heaven for their use. By this he incurs the wrath of Zeus, who, having deposed his father Chronos, has become king of the gods. As a punishment Prometheus is condemned by Zeus to be chained to a rock in the Caucasus, with an eagle always feeding on his breast. But Prometheus knows the secret of a mysterious marriage which is destined in time to take place, and by the offspring of which Zeus in his turn is to be dethroned. Strong in his consciousness of this, he defies Zeus, who by the agency of Hermes tries in vain to wrest the secret from him. The persons of the drama, besides Prometheus, are Hephaestus, better known by his Latin name of Vulcan, Might and Force personified, Hermes the messenger of Heaven, and the wandering Io. The chorus consists of sea- nymphs, who sympathise with the suffering Prometheus. This drama is a sublime enigma. Aeschylus was conservative and deeply religious. How could he write a play the hero of which is a benefactor of man struggling against the tyranny of the king of the gods, and the sequel of which found a fit and congenial composer in Shelley, whose sentiment and manner the "Prometheus Bound" wonderfully anticipates and perhaps helped to form? Again, how could the Athenians, in an age when their piety had not yet given way to scepticism, have endured such dramatic treatment of the chief of the gods? It is almost as if a Mystery Play had been presented in the Middle Ages with Satan for the hero and the First Person of the Trinity in the character of an oppressor. Perhaps the position of Zeus in the drama as a usurper may, in some degree, have softened the religious effect.

* * * * *

Prometheus is brought in by the Spirits of Might and Force, Hephaestus accompanying them.

**LINES 1-113.**

**SCENE:** ***The Caucasus.***

**MIGHT.**

Unto earth's utmost boundary we have come,
To Scythia's realm, th' untrodden wilderness.
Hephaestus, now it is thy part to do
The Almighty Father's bidding, and to bind
This arch-deceiver to yon lowering cliff
With bonds of everlasting adamant.
Thy attribute, all-fabricating fire,
He stole and gave to man. Such is the crime
For which he pays the penalty to Heaven,
That he may learn henceforth meekly to bear
The rule of Zeus and less befriend mankind.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Spirits of Might and Force, by you the word
Of Zeus has been fulfilled; your task is done.
But I—to bind a god, one of my kin,
To a storm-beaten cliff, my heart abhors.
And yet this must I do, for woe is him
That does not what the Almighty Sire commands.
Thou high-aspiring son of Themis sage,
Unwilling is the hand that rivets thee
Indissolubly to this lonely rock,
Where thou shalt see no face and hear no voice
Of man, but, scorched by the sun's burning ray,
Change thy fair hue for dark, and long for night
With starry kirtle to close up the day,
And for the morn to melt the frosts of night,
Still racked with tortures endlessly renewed,
And which to end redeemer none is born.
Such is the guerdon of thy love for man.
A god thyself, thou gav'st, despite the gods,
To mortals more than is a mortal's due.
And therefore must thou keep this dreary rock,

Erect, with frame unbending, reft of sleep,
And many a bootless wail of agony
Shalt utter. Change of mind in Zeus is none,
Ruthless the rule when power is newly won.

**MIGHT.**

To work! A truce to these weak wails of ruth.
Whom the gods hate why dost thou not abhor—
Him that betrayed thy attribute to man?

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Great force have kindred and companionship.

**MIGHT.**

True, but to disobey the Almighty Sire
How canst thou dare? Fearest thou not this more?

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Relentless still and pitiless art thou.

**MIGHT.**

Thy wailings are no medicines for his woes;
Then waste no pains on that which profits naught.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

O thrice accurs'd this master-craft of mine!

**MIGHT.**

Why dost thou curse it? Simple truth to say,
Thy art is no way guilty of these ills.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Would it had fallen to any lot but mine.

**MIGHT.**

The one thing to the gods themselves denied
[Footnote: In this passage I have retained the old reading eprachthae with the interpretation of the Scholiast.]
Is sovereignty, for Zeus alone is free.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Too well I know it, and gainsay it not.

**MIGHT.**

Be quick, then, and make fast this sinner's chain,
Lest the Almighty see thee loitering.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Here are the fetters for his arms; behold them.

**MIGHT.**

Grasp him, and with thy hammer round his arms
Strike and strike hard and clench them to the rock.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

The work goes on apace and tarries not.

**MIGHT.**

Strike harder, clench, leave nothing loose; his craft,
E'en in extremity, can find a way.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

This arm is fixed past any power to loose.

**MIGHT.**

Clench now the other firmly; let him know
That all his cunning is no match for Zeus.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Fault with my work can no one find save he.

**MIGHT.**

Drive then the ruthless spike of adamant
Right through the sinner's breast and see it holds.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Alas, Prometheus! I bemoan thy pains.

**MIGHT.**

Thou loiterest, moaning for the foe of Zeus;
One day thou mayest be moaning for thyself.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Thou see'st a sight most piteous to behold.

**MIGHT.**

I see yon sinner meeting his desert.
Proceed, make fast the fetters round his sides.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Needs must I do it, press me not too hard.

**MIGHT.**

Press thee I will, and shout into thine ear.
Go down and clench the gyves about his legs.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

That work with little labour has been done.

**MIGHT.**

Now let thy hammer all the bonds make fast;
The overseer of this thy work is stern.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Thy speech is ruthless as thy looks are grim.

**MIGHT.**

Be thou soft-hearted an thou wilt, but spare
To flout my sternness and my strong resolve.

**HEPHAESTUS.**

Let us be gone; the gyves are on his legs.

**MIGHT.**

There revel in thy insolence, there rob
Gods of their attributes to give to man.
Can mortal man in aught thy durance ease?
Ill chosen was the name that thou hast borne.
Foresight it means, but thou dost foresight need
To set thy limbs free from his handiwork.

**PROMETHEUS.**

O glorious firmament; O swift-winged winds,
Ye rivers and ye gleaming ocean waves
Innumerable, and thou great Mother Earth,
Thou, too, O sun, with thy all-seeing eye,
Look how a god is treated by the gods!
See the pains that I must bear,
Even to the thousandth year!
Such the chains that heaven's new king
Forges for my torturing.
Ah me! Ah me! my present woe
Does but the pangs to come foreshow,
Pangs that an end will never know.
Yet hold! The darkness of futurity
Is to my eye not dark, nor can aught come
That I do not foresee. Our destiny
We all must bear as lightly as we may,
Since none may wrestle with necessity.
And yet to speak or not to speak alike
Is miserable. High service done to man—
For this I bear the adamantine chain.
I to its elemental fountain tracked,
In fern-pith stored and bore by stealth away,
Fire, source and teacher of all arts to men.
Such mine offence, whereof the penalty
I pay, thus chained in face of earth and heaven.

* * * * *

***THE SIN OF PROMETHEUS.***

**LINES 444-533.**

**PROMETHEUS.**

Think not it is from pride or wantonness
That I forbear to speak; my heart is wrung
With looking on these ignominious bonds.
Who was it that to these new deities

Their attributes apportioned? Who but I?
Of that no more; to you as well as me
The tale is known; but list while I recount
How vile was man's estate, how void was man
Of reason, till I gave him mind and sense.
Not that I would upbraid the race of men:
I would but show my own benevolence.
Eyesight they had, yet nothing saw aright;
Ears, and yet heard not; but like forms in dreams,
For ages lived a life confused, nor bricks
Nor woodwork had to build them sunny homes,
But dwelt beneath the ground, as do the tribes
Diminutive of ants, in sunless caves.
Nor had they signs to mark the season's change,
Coming of winter or of flowery spring
Or of boon summer; but at random wrought
In all things, till I taught them to discern
The risings and the settings of the stars;
The use of numbers, crown of sciences,
Was my invention; mine were letters too,
The implement of mind in all its works.
First I trained beasts to draw beneath the yoke,
The collar to endure, the rider bear,
And thus relieve man of his heaviest toils.
First taught the steed, obedient to the rein,
To draw the chariot, wealth's proud appanage.
Nor, before me, did any launch the barque
With its white wings to rove the ocean wave.
These blessings, hapless that I am, have I
Devised for man, and yet device have none
Myself to liberate from these fell bonds.

**CHORUS.**

Sad is thy lot, to thy unwisdom due.
Now, like a bad physician that himself
Has into sickness fallen, thou dost despair
And hast no medicine for thine own disease.