

<p>A mountain ash that, mourning, bead by bead, Drops her red rosary on a ruined cell.</p> <p>So sang the Saxon Bard. And when he ceased,</p>	<p>The women's cheeks were wet with tears ; but all The broad-blown Barons roared ap- plause, and flowed The jostling tankards prodigal of wine.</p>
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CLYTEMNESTRA.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

<p>AGAMEMNON. ÆGISTHUS. ORESTES. PHOCIAN. HERALD.</p>	<p>CLYTEMNESTRA. ELECTRA. CASSANDRA. CHORUS.</p>
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SCENE.—*Before the Palace of Agamemnon in Argos. Trophies, amongst which the shield of Agamemnon, on the wall.*

TIME.—*Morning. The action continues till Sunset.*

I. CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

<p>MORNING at last ! at last the linger- ing day Creeps o'er the dewy side of yon dark world. O dawning light already on the hills ! O universal earth, and air, and thou, First freshness of the east, which art a breath Breathed from the rapture of the gods, who bless Almost all other prayers on earth but mine ! Wherefore to me is solacing sleep denied ? And honorable rest, the right of all ? So that no medicine of the slumbrous shell, Brimmed with divinest draughts of melody,</p>	<p>Nor silence under dreamful canopy, Nor purple cushions of the lofty couch May lull this fever for a little while. Wherefore to me,—to me, of all mankind, This retribution for a deed undone ? For many men outlive their sum of crimes, And eat, and drink, and lift up thank- ful hands, And take their rest securely in the dark. Am I not innocent,—or more than these ? There is no blot of murder on my brow, Nor any taint of blood upon my robe. —It is the thought ! it is the thought ! . . . and men Judge us by acts ! . . . as though one thunder-clap</p>
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Let all Olympus out. Unquiet heart,
Ill fares it with thee since, ten sad
years past,
In one wild hour of unacquainted
joy,
Thou didst set wide thy lonely bridal
doors
For a forbidden guest to enter in !
Last night, methought pale Helen,
with a frown,
Swept by me, murmuring, "I—such
as thou—
A Queen in Greece—weak-hearted,
(woe is me !)
Allured by love—did, in an evil hour,
Fall off from duty. Sorrow came.
Beware !"
And then, in sleep, there passed a
baleful band,
The ghosts of all the slaughtered
under Troy,
From this side Styx, who cried,
"For such a crime
We fell from our fair palaces on
earth,
And wander, starless, here. For
such a crime
A thousand ships were launched,
and tumbled down
The topless towers of Ilion, though
they rose
To magic music, in the time of
Gods !"
With such fierce thoughts forever-
more at war,
Vext not alone by hankering wild
regrets,
But fears, yet worse, of that which
soon must come,
My heart waits armed, and from the
citadel
Of its high sorrow, sees far off dark
shapes,
And hears the footsteps of Necessity
Tread near, and nearer, hand in
hand with Woe.
Last night the flaming Herald warn-
ing urged
Up all the hills,—small time to
pause and plan ! [to do,
Counsel is weak : and much remains

That Agamemnon, and, if else re-
main
Of that enduring band who sailed
for Troy
Ten years ago (and some sailed
Letheward),
Find us not unprepared for their
return.
But—hark ! I hear the tread of nim-
ble feet
That sounds this way. The rising
town is poured
About the festive altars of the Gods,
And from the heart of the great
Agora,
Lets out its gladness for this last
night's news.
—Ah, so it is ! Insidious, sly Re-
port,
Sounding oblique, like Loxian
oracles,
Tells double-tongued (and with the
selfsame voice !)
To some new gladness, new despair
to some.

II. CHORUS AND CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS.

O dearest Lady, daughter of Tyn-
darus !
With purple flowers we come, and
offerings—
Oil, and wine ; and cakes of honey,
Soothing, unadulterate ; tapestries
Woven by white Argive maidens,
God-descended (woven only
For the homeward feet of Heroes)
To celebrate this glad intelligence
Which last night the fiery courier
Brought us, posting up from Ilion,
Wheeled above the dusky circle
Of the hills from lighted Ida.
For now (Troy lying extinguishd
Underneath a mighty Woe)
Our King and chief of men,
Agamemnon, returning
(And with him the hope of Argos)

Shall worship at the Tutelary Altars
Of their dear native land :
In the fane of ancient Herē,
Or the great Lycæan God ;
Immortally crowned with reverend
honor !
But tell us wherefore, O godlike
woman,
Having a lofty trouble in your eye,
You walk alone with loosened
tresses ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall the ship toss, and yet the helm
not heave ?
Shall they drowse sitting at the
lower oars,
When those that hold the middle
benches wake ?
He that is yet sole eye of all our
state
Shining not here, shall ours be shut
in dreams ?
But haply you (thrice happy !) prove
not this,
The curse of Queens, and worse
than widowed wives—
To wake, and hear, all night, the
wandering gnat
Sing through the silent chambers,
while Alarm,
In place of Slumber, by the haunted
couch
Stands sentinel ; or when from
coast to coast
Wails the night-wandering wind, or
when o'er heaven
Boötes hath unleashed his fiery
hounds,
And Night her glittering camps hath
set, and lit
Her watch-fires through the silence
of the skies,
—To count ill chances in the dark,
and feel
Deserted pillows wet with tears, not
kisses,
Where kisses once fell.
But now Expectation
Stirs up such restless motions of the
blood

As suffer not my lids to harbor
sleep.
Wherefore, O beloved companions,
I wake betimes, and wander up and
down,
Looking toward the distant hill-
tops.
From whence shall issue fair fulfil-
ment
Of all our ten-years' hoping. For,
behold !
Troy being captived, we shall see
once more
Those whom we loved in days of
old.
Yet some will come not from the
Phrygian shore,
But there lie weltering to the surf
and wind ;
Exiled from day, in darkness blind,
Or having crost unhappy Styx.
And some who left us full of vigor-
ous youth
Shall greet us now gray-headed
men.
But if our eyes behold again
Our long-expected chief, in truth,
Fortune for us hath thrown the
Treble Six.

CHORUS.

By us, indeed, these things are also
wisht.
Wherefore, if now to this great son
of Atreus
(Having survived the woeful walls
of Troy),
With us, once more, the Gods permit
to stand
A glad man by the pillars of his
hearth,
Let his dear life henceforth be such
wherein
The Third Libation often shall be
poured.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And let his place be numbered with
the Gods, [walls,
Who overlook the world's eternal
Out of all reach of sad calamities.

CHORUS.

It is not well, I think, that men
should set
Too near the Gods any of mortal
kind :
But brave men are as Gods upon the
earth.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And whom Death daunts not, these
are truly brave.

CHORUS.

But more than all I reckon that man
blest,
Who, having sought Death nobly,
finds it not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Except he find it where he does not
seek.

CHORUS.

You speak in riddles.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

For so Wisdom speaks.
But now do you with garlands
wreath the altars,
While I, within, the House prepare.
That so our King, at his returning,
With his golden armament,
Find us not unaware
Of the greatness of the event.

CHORUS.

Soon shall we see the faces that we
loved.
Brother once more clasping brother,
As in the unforgotten days :
And heroes, meeting one another,
(Men by glorious toils approved)
Where once they roved,
Shall rove again the old familiar
ways.
And they that from the distance
come
Shall feed their hearts with tales of
home ;

And tell the famous story of the
war,
Rumored sometime from afar.
Now shall these again behold
The ancient Argos ; and the grove
Long since trod
By the frenzied child of Inachus ;
And the Forum, famed of old,
Of the wolf-destroying God ;
And the opulent Mycenæ,
Home of the Pelopidæ,
While they rove with those they
love,
Holding pleasant talk with us.
O how gloriously they went,
That avenging armament !
As though Olympus in her womb
No longer did entomb
The greatness of a bygone world—
Gods and godlike men—
But cast them forth again
To frighten Troy : such storm was
hurled
On her devoted towers
By the retributive Deity,
Whosoe'er he be
Of the Immortal Powers—
Or maddening Pan, if he chastise
His Shepherd's Phrygian treach-
eries ;
Or vengeful Loxias ; or Zeus,
Angered for the shame and abuse
Of a great man's hospitality.
As wide as is Olympus' span
Is the power of the high Gods ;
Who, in their golden blest abodes
See all things, looking from the sky ;
And Heaven is hard to pacify
For the wickedness of man.
My heart is filled with vague fore-
bodings,
And oppress by unknown terrors
Lest, in the light of so much glad-
ness,
Rise the shadow of ancient wrong.
A Dæmon of the double lineage
Of Tantalus ; and the Pleisthenidæ,
Inexorable in thy mood,
On the venerable threshold
Of the ancient House of Pelops

Surely is enough of blood !
Wherefore does my heart misgive
me ?
Wherefore comes this doubt to grieve
O, may no Divine Envy
Follow home the Argive army,
Being vexed for things ill-done
In wilful pride of stubborn war,
Long since, in the distant lands !
May no Immortal wrath pursue
Our dear King, the Light of Argos,
For the unhappy sacrifice
Of a daughter ; working evil
In the dark heart of a woman ;
Or some household treachery,
And a curse from kindred hands !

III. CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

[*Re-entering from the house.*]

To-morrow . . . ay, what if to-day ?
. . . Well—then ?
Why, if those tongues of flame, with
which last night
The land was eloquent, spoke cer-
tain truth,
By this perchance through green
Saronic rocks
Those black ships glide . . . per-
chance . . . well, what's to
fear ?
'Twere well to dare the worst—to
know the end—
Die soon, or live secure. What's
left to add
To years of nights like those which
I have known ?
Shall I shrink now to meet one little
hour
Which I have dared to contemplate
for years ?
By all the Gods, not so ! The end
crowns all.
Which if we fail to seize, that's also
lost
Which went before : as who would
lead a host
Through desolate dry places, yet
return

In sight of kingdoms, when the Gods
are roused
To mark the issue ? . . . And yet,
yet—

I think

Three nights ago there must have
been sea-storms.

The wind was wild among the Pal-
ace towers :

Far off upon the hideous Element
I know it huddled up the petulant
waves,

Whose shapeless and bewildering
precipices

Led to the belly of Orcus . . . O, to
slip

Into dark Lethe from a dizzy plank,
When even the Gods are reeling on
the poop !

To drown at night, and have no sep-
ulchre !—

That were too horrible ! . . . yet it
may be

Some easy chance, that comes with
little pain,

Might rid me of the haunting of
those eyes,

And these wild thoughts . . . To
know he roved among

His old companions in the Happy
Fields,

And ranged with heroes—I still in-
nocent !

Sleep would be natural then.
Yet will the old time

Never return ! never those peaceful
hours !

Never that careless heart ! and never
more,

Ah, nevermore that laughter with-
out pain !

But I, that languish for repose, must
fly it,

Nor, save in daring, doing, taste of
rest.

O, to have lost all these ! To have
bartered calm,

And all the irrevocable wealth of
youth,

And gained . . . what ? But this
change had surely come,

Even were all things other than they
are.

I blame myself o'ermuch, who should
blame time,

And life's inevitable loss, and fate,
And days grown lovelier in the retro-
spect.

We change : wherefore look back ?
The path to safety

Lies forward . . . forward ever.

[*In passing toward the house she
recognizes the shield of Agamem-
non, and pauses before it.*]

Ha ! old shield,

Hide up for shame that honest face
of thine.

Stare not so bluntly at us . . . O,
this man !

Why sticks the thought of him so in
my heart ?

If I had loved him once—if for one
hour—

Then were there treason in this fall-
ing off.

But never did I feel this wretched
heart

Until it leaped beneath Ægisthus'
eyes.

Who could have so forecounted all
from first ?

From that flusht moment when his
hand in mine

Rested a thought too long, a touch
too kind,

To leave its pulse unwarmed . . .
but I remember

I dreamed sweet dreams that night,
and slept till dawn,

And woke with flutterings of a
happy thought,

And felt, not worse, but better . . .
And now . . . now ?

When first a strange and novel ten-
derness

Quivered in these salt eyes, had one
said then

"O bead of dew may drag a deluge
down :"—

In that first pensive pause, through
which I watched

Unwonted sadness on Ægisthus'
brows,

Had some one whispered, " Ay, the
summer-cloud

Comes first: the tempest follows."—
Well, what's past

Is past. Perchance the worst's to
follow yet.

How thou art hackt, and hewn, and
bruised, old shield !

Was the whole edge of the war
against one man ?

But one thrust more upon this dexter
ridge

Had quite cut through the double
inmost hide.

He must have stood to it well ! O, he
was cast

I' the mould of Titans : a magnifi-
cent man,

With head and shoulders like a
God's. He seemed

Too brimful of this merry vigorous
life

To spill it all out at one stab o' the
sword.

Yet that had helped much ill . . . O
Destiny

Makes cowards or makes culprits of
us all !

Ah, had some Trojan weapon . . .
Fool ! fool ! fool !

Surely sometimes the unseen Eume-
nides

Do prompt our musing moods with
wicked hints,

And lash us for our crimes ere we
commit them.

Here, round this silver boss, he cut
my name,

Once—long ago : he cut it as he lay
Tired out with brawling pastimes—
prone—his limbs

At length diffused—his head droopt
in my lap—

His spear flung by : Electra by the
hearth

Sat with the young Orestes on her
knee ;

While he, with an old broken sword,
hacked out

These crooked characters, and
 laughed to see
 (Sprawled from the unused strength
 of his large hands)
 The marks make CLYTEMNESTRA.
 How he laughed !
 Ægisthus' hands are smaller.
 Yet I know
 That matrons envied me my hus-
 band's strength.
 And I remember when he strode
 among
 The Argive crowd he topped them
 by a head,
 And tall men stood wide-eyed to
 look at him,
 Where his great plumes went tossing
 up and down
 The brazen proes drawn out upon
 the sand.
 War on his front was graved, as on
 thy disk,
 Shield ! which he left to keep his
 memory
 Grand in men's mouths : that some
 revered old man
 Winning to this the eyes of our hot
 youth,
 Might say, "'Twas here, and here—
 this dent, and that—
 An such, and such a field (which we
 remember) [time,
 That Agamemnon, in the great old
 Held up the battle."
 Now lie there, and rest !
 Thy uses all have end. Thy master's
 home
 Should harbor none but friends.
 O triple brass,
 Iron, and oak ! the blows of blund-
 ering men
 Clang idly on you : what fool's
 strength is yours !
 For, surely, not the adamantine
 tunic
 Of Ares, nor whole shells of blazing
 plates,
 Nor ashen spear, nor all the cum-
 brous coil
 Of seven bulls' hides may guard the
 strongest king

From one defenceless woman's quiet
 hate.

What noise was that ? Where can
 Ægisthus be ?
 Ægisthus ! — my Ægisthus ! . . .
 There again !
 Louder, and longer — from the
 Agora—
 A mighty shout : and now I see ?
 the air
 A rolling dust the wind blows near.
 Ægisthus !
 O much I fear . . . this wild-willed
 race of ours
 Doth ever, like a young unbroken
 colt,
 Chafe at the straightened bridle of
 our state—
 If they should find him lone, irreso-
 lute,
 As is his wont . . . I know he lacks
 the eye
 And forehead wherewith crowned
 Capacity
 Awes rash Rebellion back.
 Again that shout !
 Gods keep Ægisthus safe ! myself
 will front
 This novel storm. How my heart
 leaps to danger !
 I have been so long a pilot on rough
 seas,
 And almost rudderless !
 O yet 'tis much
 To feel a power, self-centred, self-
 assured,
 Bridling a glorious danger ! as when
 one
 That knows the nature of the
 elements
 Guides some frail plank with sublime
 skill that wins
 Progress from all obstruction ; and,
 erect,
 Looks bold and free down all the
 dripping stars,
 Hearing the hungry storm boom
 baffled by.
 Ægisthus ! . . . hark ! . . . Ægisthus !
 . . . there . . . Ægisthus !

I would to all the Gods I knew him
 safe !
 Who comes this way, guiding his
 racing feet
 Safe to us, like a nimble charioteer ?
 IV. CLYTEMNESTRA. HERALD.
 CLYTEMNESTRA.
 Now, gloom-bird ! are there prod-
 igies about ?
 What new ill-thing sent thee before ?
 HERALD. O Queen—
 CLYTEMNESTRA.
 Speak, if thou hast a voice ! I
 listen.
 HERALD. O Queen—
 CLYTEMNESTRA.
 Hath an ox trodden on thy tongue ?
 . . . Speak then !
 HERALD.
 O Queen (for haste hath caught away
 my breath),
 The King is coming.
 CLYTEMNESTRA.
 Say again—the King
 Is coming—
 HERALD.
 Even now, the broad sea-fields
 Grow white with flocks of sails, and
 towards the west
 The sloped horizon teems with ris-
 ing beaks.
 CLYTEMNESTRA.
 The people know this ?
 HERALD.
 Heard you not the noise ?
 For soon as this winged news had
 toucht the gate
 The whole land shouted in the sun.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

So soon !
 The thought's outsped by the
 reality,
 And halts agape . . . the King—

HERALD.

How she is moved.
 A noble woman !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wherefore beat so fast,
 Thou foolish heart ? 'tis not thy
 master—

HERALD.

Truly
 She looks all over Agamemnon's
 mate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Destiny, Destiny ! The deed's half
 done.

HERALD.

She will not speak, save by that
 brooding eye
 Whose light is language. Some great
 thought, I see,
 Mounts up the royal chambers of
 her blood,
 As a king mounts his palace ; holds
 high pomp
 In her Olympian bosom ; gains her
 face,
 Possesses all her noble glowing
 cheek
 With sudden state ; and gathers
 grandly up
 Its slow majestic meanings in her
 eyes !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

So quick this sudden joy hath taken
 us,
 I scarce can realize the sum of it.
 You say the King comes here,—the
 King, my husband,
 Whom we have waited for ten years,
 —O joy !

Pardon our seeming roughness at the first.
 Hope, that will often fawn upon despair
 And flatter desperate chances, when the event
 Falls at our feet, soon takes a querulous tone,
 And jealous of that perfect joy she guards
 (Lest the ambrosial fruit by some rude hand
 Be stol'n away from her, and never tasted),
 Barks like a lean watch-dog at all who come.
 But now do you, with what good speed you may,
 Make known this glad intelligence to all.
 Ourselves, within, as best befits a wife
 And woman, will prepare my husband's house.
 Also, I pray you, summon to our side
 Our cousin, Ægisthus. We would speak with him.
 We would that our own lips should be the first
 To break these tidings to him ; so obtaining
 New joy by sharing his. And, for yourself,
 Receive our gratitude. For this great news
 Henceforth you hold our royal love in fee.
 Our fairest fortunes from this day I date,
 And to the House of Tantalus new honor.

HERALD.

She's gone ! With what a majesty she filled
 The whole of space ! The statues of the Gods
 Are not so godlike. She has Herë's eyes,
 And looks immortal !

V. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*as she ascends the steps of the Palace*).

So . . . while on the verge
 Of some wild purpose we hang dizzily,
 Weighing the danger of the leap below
 Against the danger of retreating steps,
 Upon a sudden, some forecast event,
 Issuing full-armed from Councils of the Gods,
 Strides to us, plucks us by the hair, and hurls
 Headlong pale conscience to the abyss of crime.
 Well—I shrink not. 'Tis but a leap in life.
 There's fate in this. Why is he here so soon ?
 The sight of whose abhorred eyes will add
 Whatever lacks of strength to this resolve.
 Away with shame ! I have had enough of it.
 What's here for shame ? . . . the weak against the strong ?
 And if the weak be victor ? . . . what of that ?
 Tush ! . . . there,—my soul is set to it. What need
 Of argument to justify an act
 Necessity compels, and must absolve ?
 I have been at play with scruples—like a girl.
 Now they are all flung by. I have talked with Crime
 Too long to play the prude. These thoughts have been
 Wild guests by night. Now I shall dare to do
 That which I did not dare to think . . . O, now
 I know myself : Crime's easier than we dream.

CHORUS.

Upon the everlasting hills
 Thronéd Justice works, and waits.
 Between the shooting of a star,
 That falls unseen on summer nights
 Out of the bosom of the dark,
 And the magnificent march of War,
 Rolled from angry lands afar
 Round some dooméd city-gates.
 Nothing is to her unknown ;

Nothing unseen.

Upon her hills she sits alone,
 And in the balance of Eternity
 Poises against the What-has-been
 The weight of What-shall-be.
 She sums the account of human ills.
 The great world's hoarded wrongs
 and rights

Are in her treasures. She will mark,
 With inward-searching eyes sublime,
 The frauds of Time.
 The empty future years she fills
 Out of the past. All human wills
 Sway to her on her reachless heights.

Wisdom she teaches men, with tears,

In the toilsome school of years :
 Climbing from event to event.
 And, being patient, is content
 To stretch her sightless arms about,
 And find some human instrument,
 From many sorrows to work out
 Her doubtful, far accomplishment.

She the two Atridæ sent
 Upon Ilion : being intent
 The heapt-up wrath of Heaven to move

Against the faithless Phrygian crime.
 Them the Thunder-bird of Jove,
 Swooping sudden from above,
 Summoned to fates sublime.

She, being injured, for the sake
 Of her, the often-wedded wife,
 (Too loved, and too adoring !)
 Many a brazen band did break
 In many a breathless battle-strife ;
 Many a noble life did take ;

Many a headlong agony,
 Frenzied shout, and frantic cry,
 For Greek and Trojan storing.
 When, the spear in the onset being shivered,
 The reeling ranks were rolled together
 Like mad waves mingling in windy weather,
 Dasht fearfully over and over each other.
 And the plumes of Princes were tossed and thrust,
 And dragged about in the shameful dust ;
 And the painful, panting breath
 Came and went in the tug of death :
 And the sinews were loosened, and the strong knees stricken :
 And the eyes began to darken and thicken :
 And the arm of the mighty and terrible quivered.

O Love ! Love ! Love ! How terrible art thou !

How terrible !
 O, what hast thou to do
 With men of mortal years,
 Who toil below,
 And have enough of griefs for tears to flow ?

O, range in higher spheres !
 Hast thou, O hast thou, no diviner hues

To paint thy wings, but must transfuse

An Iris-light from tears ?
 For human hearts are all too weak to hold thee.

And how, O Love, shall human arms infold thee ?

There is a seal of sorrow on thy brow.

There is a deadly fire in thy breath.
 With life thou lurest, yet thou givest death.

O Love, the Gods are weak by reason of thee ;

And many wars have been upon the earth.

Thou art the sweetest source of
 saltest sorrows.
 Thy blest to-days bring such unblest
 to-morrows ;
 Thy softest hope makes saddest
 memory.
 Thou hadst destruction in thee from
 the birth ;
 Incomprehensible !

O Love, thy brightest bridal gar-
 ments
 Are poisoned, like that robe of ag-
 onies
 Which Deianira wove for Hercules,
 And, being put on, turn presently
 to cerements !

Thou art unconquered in the fight.
 Thou rangest over land and sea.
 O let the foolish nations be !
 Keep thy divine desire
 To upheave mountains or to kindle
 fire

From the frore frost, and set the
 world alight.

Why make thy red couch in the
 damask cheek ?

Or light thy torch at languid eyes ?
 Or lie entangled in soft sighs
 On pensive lips that will not speak ?
 To sow the seeds of evil things
 In the hearts of headstrong kings ?
 Preparing many a kindred strife
 For the fearful future hour ?

O leave the wretched race of man,
 Whose days are but the dying sea-
 sons' span ;

Vex not his painful life !
 Make thy immortal sport
 In heaven's high court,
 And cope with Gods that are of
 equal power.

VI. ELECTRA. CHORUS. CLY-
 TEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

Now is at hand the hour of retribu-
 tion.

For my father, at last returning,
 In great power, being greatly in-
 jured,
 Will destroy the base adulterer,
 And efface the shameful Past.

CHORUS.

O child of the Godlike Agamemnon !
 Leave vengeance to the power of
 Heaven ;
 Nor forestall with impious footsteps
 The brazen tread of black Erinnys.

ELECTRA.

Is it, besotted with the adulterous
 sin,
 Or, as with flattery pleasing present
 power,
 Or, being intimidate, you speak these
 words ?

CHORUS.

Nay, but desiring justice, like your-
 self.

ELECTRA.

Yet Justice oft times uses mortal
 means.

CHORUS.

But flings aside her tools when work
 is done.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O dearest friends, inform me, went
 this way
 Ægisthus ?

CHORUS.

Even now, hurrying hitherward
 I see him walk, with irritated eyes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A reed may show which way the
 tempest blows.
 That face is pale,—those brows are
 dark . . . ah !

VII. ÆGISTHUS. CLYTEMNES-
 TRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

Agamemnon

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My husband . . . well ?

ÆGISTHUS.

(Whom may the great Gods curse !)
 Is scarce an hour hence.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then that hour's yet saved
 From sorrow. Smile, Ægisthus—

ÆGISTHUS.

Hear me speak.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not as your later wont has been to
 smile—

Quick, fierce, as though you scarce
 could hurry out

The wild thing fast enough ; for
 smiling's sake,

As if to show you could smile, though
 in fear

Of what might follow,—but as first
 you smiled

Years, years ago, when some slow
 loving thought

Stole down your face, and settled on
 your lips,

As though a sunbeam halted on a
 rose,

And mixed with fragrance, light.
 Can you smile still

Just so, Ægisthus ?

ÆGISTHUS.

These are idle words,
 And like the wanderings of some
 fevered brain :
 Extravagant phrases, void of import,
 wild.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, no ! you cannot smile so, more.
 Nor I !

ÆGISTHUS.

Hark ! in an hour the King—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hush ! listen now,—
 I hear, far down yon vale, a shepherd
 piping

Hard by his milk-white flock. The
 lazy things !

How quietly they sleep or feed among
 The dry grass and the acanthus
 there ! . . . and he,

He hath flung his faun-skin by, and
 white-ash stick,

You hear his hymn ? Something of
 Dryope.

Faunus, and Pan . . . an old wood
 tale, no doubt !

It makes me think of songs when I
 was young

I used to sing between the valleys
 there,

Or higher up among the red ash-
 berries,

Where the goats climb, and gaze.
 Do you remember

That evening when we lingered all
 alone,

Below the city, and one yellow star
 Shook o'er yon temple ? . . . ah,

and you said then,
 "Sweet, should this evening never
 change to night,

But pause, and pause, and stay just
 so,—yon star

Still steadfast, and the moon behind
 the hill,

Still rising, never risen,—would this
 seem strange ?

Or should we say, 'why halts the
 day so late ?'

Do you remember ?

ÆGISTHUS.

Woman ! woman ! this
 Surpasses frenzy ! Not a breath of
 time