

And memory more than hope, and
to dim eyes
The gorgeous tapestry of existence
shows
Mothed, fingered, frayed, and bare,
'twere not so hard
To fling away this ravelled skein of
life,
Which else, a little later, Fate had
cut.
And who would sorrow for the o'er-
blown rose
Sharp winter strews about its own
bleak thorns?
But, cropped before the time, to fall
so young!
And wither in the gloomy crown of
Dis!
Never to look upon the blessed sun—

CHORUS.

Ai! ai! alinon! woe is me, this
grief
Strikes pity paralyzed. All words
are weak!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And I had dreamed such splendid
dreams for her!
Who would not so for Agamemnon's
child?
For we had hoped that she, too, in
her time
Would be the mother of heroic
men!

CHORUS.

There rises in my heart an awful
fear,
Lest from these evils darker evils
come;
For heaven exacts, for wrong, the
uttermost tear,
And death hath language after life
is dumb!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It works! it works!

CHORUS.

Look, some one comes this way.

HERALD.

O Honor of the House of Tantalus!
The king's wheels echo in the
brazen gates.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Our heart is half-way there, to wel-
come him.
How looks he? Well? And all
our long-lost friends—
Their faces grow before me. Lead
the way
Where we may meet them. All our
haste seems slow.

CHORUS.

Would that he brought his dead
child back with him!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now let him come. The mischief
works apace!

X. CHORUS.

CHORUS.

The winds were lulled in Aulis;
and the day,
Down-sloped, was loitering to the
lazy west.
There was no motion of the glassy
bay,
But all things by a heavy light
oppress.
Windless, cut off from the destined
way,—
Dark shrouds, distinct against the
lurid lull,—
Dark ropes hung useless, loose, from
mast to hull,—
The black ships lay abreast.
Not any cloud would cross the
brooding skies.
The distant sea boomed faintly.
Nothing more.
They walked about upon the yellow
shore;

Or, lying listless, huddled groups
supine,
With faces turned toward the flat
sea-spine,
They planned the Phrygian battle
o'er and o'er;
Till each grew sullen, and would
talk no more,
But sat, dumb-dreaming. Then
would some one rise,
And look toward the hollow hulls,
with haggard, hopeless eyes—
Wild eyes—and, crowding round,
yet wilder eyes—
And gaping, languid lips;
And everywhere that men could see,
About the black, black ships,
Was nothing but the deep-red sea;
The deep-red shore;
The deep-red skies;
The deep-red silence, thick with
thirsty sighs;
And daylight, dying slowly. Noth-
ing more.
The tall masts stood upright;
And not a sail above the burnished
prores;
The languid sea, like one outwearied
quite,
Shrank, dying inward into hollow
shores,
And breathless harbors, under sandy
bars;
And, one by one, down tracts of
quivering blue,
The singed and sultry stars
Looked from the inmost heaven,
far, faint, and few,
While, all below, the sick and steam-
ing brine
The spilled-out sunset did incarna-
dine.

At last one broke the silence; and a
word
Was lisped and buzzed about, from
mouth to mouth;
Pale faces grew more pale; wild
whispers stirred;
And men, with moody, murmuring
lips, conferred

In ominous tones, from shaggy
beards uncouth:
As though some wind had broken
from the blurred
And blazing prison of the stagnant
drouth,
And stirred the salt sea in the stifled
south.
The long-robed priests stood round;
and, in the gloom,
Under black brows, their bright and
greedy eyes,
Shone deathfully; there was a
sound of sighs,
Thick-sobbed from choking throats
among the crowd,
That, whispering, gathered close,
with dark heads bowed;
But no man lifted up his voice aloud,
For heavy hung o'er all the helpless
sense of doom.

Then, after solemn prayer,
The father bade the attendants, ten-
derly
Lift her upon the lurid altar-stone.
There was no hope in any face;
each eye
Swam tearful, that her own did gaze
upon.
They bound her helpless hands with
mournful care;
And looped up her long hair,
That hung about her, like an amber
shower,
Mixed with the saffron robe, and
falling lower,
Down from her bare and cold white
shoulder flung.
Upon the heaving breast the pale
cheek hung,
Suffused with that wild light that
rolled among
The pausing crowd, out of the crim-
son drouth.
They held hot hands upon her
pleading mouth;
And stifled on faint lips the natural
cry.
Back from the altar-stone,
Slow-moving in his fixed place

A little space,
The speechless father turned. No
word was said,
He wrapped his mantle close about
his face,
In his dumb grief, without a moan.
The lopping axe was lifted overhead.
Then, suddenly,
There sounded a strange motion of
the sea,
Booming far inland ; and above the
east
A ragged cloud rose slowly, and in-
creased.
Not one line in the horoscope of
Time
Is perfect. O, what falling off is
this,
When some grand soul, that else had
been sublime,
Falls unawares amiss,
And stoops its crested strength to
sudden crime !

So gracious a thing is it, and sweet,
In life's clear centre one true man to
see,
That holds strong nature in a wise
control ;
Throbbing out, all round, the heat
Of a large and liberal soul.
No shadow, simulating life,
But pulses warm with human nature,
In a soul of godlike stature ;
Heart and brain, all rich and rife
With noble instincts ; strong to meet
Time calmly, in his purposed place.
Sound through and through, and all
complete ;
Exalting what is low and base ;
Enlarging what is narrow and small ;
He stamps his character on all,
And with his grand identity
Fills up Creation's eye.
He will not dream the aimless years
away
In blank delay,
But makes eternity of to-day,
And reaps the full-earned time. For
him
Nature her affluent horn doth brim,

To strew with fruit and flowers his
way—
Fruits ripe and flowers gay.

The clear soul in his earnest eyes
Looks through and through all
plaited lies,
Time shall not rob him of his youth,
Nor narrow his large sympathies.
He is not true, he is a truth,
And such a truth as never dies.
Who knows his nature, feels his
right,
And, toiling, toils for his delight ;
Not as slaves toil : where'er he goes,
The desert blossoms with the rose.
He trusts himself in scorn of doubt,
And lets orb'd purpose widen out.
The world works with him ; all men
see
Some part of them fulfilled in him ;
His memory never shall grow dim ;
He holds the heaven and earth in
fee,
Not following that, fulfilling this,
He is immortal, for he is !

O weep ! weep ! weep !
Weep for the young that die ;
As it were pale flowers that wither
under
The smiting sun, and fall asunder,
Before the dews on the grass are dry,
Or the tender twilight is out of the
sky,
Or the lilies have fallen asleep ;
Or ships by a wanton wind cut short
Are wrecked in sight of the placid
port
Sinking strangely, and suddenly—
Sadly, and strangely, and suddenly—
Into the black Plutonian deep.
O weep ! weep ! weep !
Weep, and bow the head,
For those whose sun is set at noon ;
Whose night is dark, without a moon ;
Whose aim of life is sped
Beyond pursuing woes,
And the arrow of angry foes,
To the darkness that no man knows—
The darkness among the dead.

Let us mourn, and bow the head,
And lift up the voice, and weep
For the early dead !
For the early dead we may bow the
head,
And strike the breast, and weep ;
But, O, what shall be said
For the living sorrow ?
For the living sorrow our grief—
Dumb grief—draws no relief
From tears, nor yet may borrow
Solace from sound or speech ;—
For the living sorrow
That heaps to-morrow upon to-mor-
row
In piled-up pain, beyond Hope's
reach !
It is well that we mourn for the early
dead,
Strike the breast, and bow the head ;
For the sorrow for these may be sung,
or said,
And the chaplets be woven for the
fallen head,
And the urns to the stately tombs be
led,
And Love from their memory may
be fed,
And song may ennoble the anguish ;
But, O, for the living sorrow,—
For the living sorrow what hopes re-
main ?
For the prisoned, pining, passionate
pain,
That is doomed forever to languish,
And to languish forever in vain,
For the want of the words that may
bested
The hunger that out of loss is bred.
O friends, for the living sorrow—
For the living sorrow—
For the living sorrow what shall be
said ?

XI. A PHOCIAN. CHORUS.
SEMI-CHORUS.

PHOCIAN.
O noble strangers, if indeed you be
Such as you seem, of Argos, and the
land

That the unconquer'd Agamemnon
rules,
Tell me is this the palace, these the
roofs
Of the Atridæ, famed in ancient
song ?

CHORUS.

Not without truth you name the
neighborhood,
Standing before the threshold, and
the doors
Of Pelops, and upon the Argive soil.
That which you see above the Agora
Is the old fane of the Lycæan God,
And this the house of Agamemnon's
queen.
But whence art thou ? For if thy
dusty locks,
And those soiled sandals show with
aught of truth,
Thou shouldst be come from far.

PHOCIAN.

And am so, friends,
But, by Heaven's favor, here my
journey ends.

CHORUS.

Whence, then, thy way ?

PHOCIAN.

From Phocis ; charged with gifts
For Agamemnon, and with messages
From Strophius, and the sister of
your king.
Our watchmen saw the beacon on
the hills,
And leaped for joy. Say, is the king
yet come ?

CHORUS.

He comes this way ; stand by, I hear
them shout ;
Here shall you meet him, as he
mounts the hill.

PHOCIAN.

Now blest be all the Gods, from
Father Zeus,

Who reigns o'er windy Cæta, far
away,
To King Apollo, with the golden
horns.

CHORUS.

Look how they cling about him !
Far and near
The town breaks loose, and follows
after,
Crowding up the ringing ways.
The boy forgets to watch the steer ;
The grazing steer forgets to graze ;
The shepherd leaves the herd ;
The priest will leave the fane ;
The deep heart of the land is stirred
To sunny tears, and tearful laughter,
To look into his face again.
Burst, burst the brazen gates !
Throw open the hearths, and follow !
Let the shouts of the youths go up
to Apollo,

Lord of the graceful quiver :
Till the tingling sky dilates—
Dilates, and palpitates ;
And, Pæan Pæan ! the virgins
sing ;
Pæan ! Pæan ! the king ! the king !
Laden with spoils from Phrygia !
Io ! Io ! Io ! they sing
Till the pillars of Olympus ring :
Io ! to Queen Ortygia,
Whose double torch shall burn for-
ever ?

But thou, O Lord of the graceful
quiver,

Bid, bid thy Pythian splendor halt,
Where'er he beams, surpassing sight ;
Or on some ocean isthmus bent,
Or wheeled from the dark continent,
Half-way down Heaven's rosy vault,
Toward the dewy cone of night.
Let not the breathless air grow dim,
Until the whole land look at him !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Stand back !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Will he come this way ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

No ; by us.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Gods, what a crowd !

SEMI-CHORUS.

How firm the old men walk !

SEMI-CHORUS.

There goes the king. I know him
by his beard.

SEMI-CHORUS.

And I, too, by the manner of his
gait.
That Godlike spirit lifts him from
the earth.

SEMI-CHORUS.

How gray he looks !

SEMI-CHORUS.

His cheek is seamed with scars.

SEMI-CHORUS.

What a bull's front !

SEMI-CHORUS.

He stands up like a tower.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Ay, like some moving tower of
arméd men,
That carries conquest under city-
walls.

SEMI-CHORUS.

He lifts his sublime head, and in his
port
Bears eminent authority.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Behold,
His spear shows like the spindle of a
Fate !

SEMI-CHORUS.

O, what an arm !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Most fit for such a sword ;
Look at that sword.

SEMI-CHORUS.

What shoulders !

SEMI-CHORUS.

What a throat !

SEMI-CHORUS.

What are these bearing ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Urns.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Alas : alas !

SEMI-CHORUS.

O friends, look here ! how are the
mighty men
Shrunk up into a little vase of earth,
A child might lift. Sheathed each
in brazen plates,
They went so heavy, they come
back so light,
Sheathed, each one, in the brazen
urn of death !

SEMI-CHORUS.

With what a stateliness he moves
along !

SEMI-CHORUS.

See, how they touch his skirt, and
grasp his hand !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Is that the queen ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Ay, how she matches him !
With what grand eyes she looks up,
full in his !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Say, what are these !

SEMI-CHORUS.

O Phrygians ! how they walk !
The only sad man in the crowd, I
think.

SEMI-CHORUS.

But who is this, that with such
scornful brows,
And looks averted, walks among the
rest ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

I know not, but some Phrygian wo-
man, sure.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Her heavy-fallen hair down her
white neck
(A dying sunbeam tangled in each
tress)
All its neglected beauty pours one
way.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Her looks bend ever on the alien
ground,
As though the stones of Troy were
in her path.
And in the pained paleness of her
brow
Sorrow hath made a regal tenement.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Here comes Electra ; young Orestes,
too ;
See how he emulates his father's
stride !

SEMI-CHORUS.
Look at Ægisthus, where he walks
apart,
And bites his lip.

SEMI-CHORUS.
I oft have seen him so
When something chafes him in his
bitter moods.

SEMI-CHORUS.
Peace, here they come!

CHORUS.
Io! Io! The King!

XII. AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, ORESTES, CASSANDRA, a Phocian, Chorus, Semi-Chorus, and others in the procession.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
O blazing sun, that in thy skyey
tower,
Pausest to see one kingly as thyself,
Lend all thy brightest beams to light
his head,
And guide our gladness! Friends,
behold the King!
Nor hath Ætolian Jove, the arbiter
Of conquests, well disposed the issues
here;
For every night that brought not
news from Troy
Heaped fear on fear, as waves suc-
ceed to waves,
When Northern blasts blow white
the Cretan main,—
Knowing that thou, far off, from
toil to toil
Climbedst, uncertain. Unto such an
one
His children, and young offspring
of the house

Are as a field, which he, the hus-
bandman,
Owning far off does only look upon
At seedtime once, nor then till
harvest comes;
And his sad wife must wet with
nightly tears
Unsolaced pillows, fearing for his
fate.
To these how welcome, then, his glad
return,
When he, as thou, comes heavy with
the weight
Of great achievements, and the spoils
of time.

AGAMEMNON.
Enough! enough! we weigh you at
full worth,
And hold you dear, whose gladness
equals yours;
But women ever err by over-talk.
Silence to women, as the beard to
men,
Brings honor; and plain truth is
hurt, not helped
By many words. To each his
separate sphere
The Gods allot. To me the sound-
ing camp,
Steeds, and the oaken spear; to you
the hearth,
Children, and household duties of
the loom.
'Tis man's to win an honorable
name;
Woman's to keep it honorable still.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
(O beast! O weakness of this wo-
manhood!
To let these pompous male things
strut in our eyes,
And in their lordship lap themselves
secure,
Because the lots in life are fallen to
them.
Am I less heart and head, less blood
and brain,
Less force and feeling, pulse and
passion—I—

Than this self-worshipper—a lie all
through?)
Forgive if joy too long unloose our
lips,
Silent so long: your words fall on
my soul
As rain on thirsty lands, that feeds
the dearth
With blessed nourishment. My
whole heart hears.
You speaking thus, I would be
silent ever.

AGAMEMNON.

Who is this man?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A Phocian, by his look.

PHOCIAN.

O King, from Strophius, and your
sister's court,
Despatched with this sealed tablet,
and with gifts,
Though both express, so says my
royal Head,
But poorly the rich welcome they
intend.
Will you see this?—and these?

AGAMEMNON.

Anon! anon!
We'll look at them within. O child,
thine eyes
Look warmer welcome than all words
express.
Thou art mine own child by that
royal brow.
Nature hath marked thee mine.

ELECTRA.

O Father!

AGAMEMNON.

Come!
And our Orestes! He is nobly
grown;
He shall do great deeds when our
own are dim.
So shall men come to say "the
father's sword

In the son's hands hath hewn out
nobler fame."
Think of it, little one! where is our
cousin?

ÆGISTHUS.

Here! And the keys of the
Acropolis?

AGAMEMNON.

O well! this dust and heat are over-
much.
And, cousin, you look pale. Anon!
anon!
Speak to us by and by. Let business
wait.
Is our house ordered? we will take
the bath.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Will you within? where all is ordered
fair
Befitting state: cool chambers,
marble-floored
Or piled with blazing carpets, scented
rare
With the sweet spirit of each odor-
ous gum
In dim, delicious, amorous mists
about
The purple-paven, silver-sided bath,
Deep, flashing, pure.

AGAMEMNON.

Look to our captives then.
I charge you chiefly with this woman
here,
Cassandra, the mad prophetess of
Troy.
See that you chafe her not in her
wild moods.

XIII. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGIS-
THUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Linger not!

ÆGISTHUS.

What? you will to-day—

CLYTEMNESTRA.
—This hour.

ÆGISTHUS.
O, if some chance mar all !

CLYTEMNESTRA.
We'll make chance sure.
Doubt is the doomsman of self-judged
disgrace :
But every chance brings safety to
self-help.

ÆGISTHUS.
Ay, but the means—the time—

CLYTEMNESTRA.
—Fulfil themselves.
O most irresolute heart ! is this a
time
When through the awful pause of
life, distinct,
The sounding shears of Fate slope
near, to stand
Meek, like tame wethers, and be
shorn ? How say you,
The blithe wind up, and the broad
sea before him,
Who would crouch all day long be-
side the mast
Counting the surges beat his idle
helm,
Because between him and the golden
isles
The shadow of a passing storm might
hang ?
Danger, being pregnant, doth beget
resolve.

ÆGISTHUS.
Thou wert not born to fail. Give
me thy hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Take it.

ÆGISTHUS.
It does not tremble.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
O be strong !
The future hangs upon the die we
cast :
Fortune plays high for us—

ÆGISTHUS.
Gods grant she win.

XIV. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS
CASSANDRA.

CHORUS.
O thou that dost with globéd glory
Sweep the dark world at noon of
night,
Or among snowy summits, wild and
hoary,
Or through the mighty silences
Of immemorial seas,
With all the stars behind thee flying
white,
O take with thee, where'er
Thou wanderest, ancient Care,
And hide her in some interlunar
haunt ;
Where but the wild bird's chaunt
At night, through rocky ridges gaunt,
Or moanings of some homeless sea
may find her
There, Goddess, bar, and bind her ;
Where she may pine, but wander not ;
Loathe her haunts, but leave them
not ;
Wail and rave to the wind and wave
That hear, yet understand her not ;
And curse her chains, yet cleave
them not ;
And hate her lot, yet help it not.
Or let her rove with Gods undone
Who dwell below the setting sun,
And the sad western hours
That burn in fiery bowers ;
Or in Amphitrité's grot
Where the vexéd tides unite,
And the spent wind, howling, breaks
O'er sullen oceans out of sight
Among sea-snakes, that the white
moon wakes

SEMI-CHORUS.
And yet their motion shapes not any
sound.

SEMI-CHORUS.
Speak to her.

SEMI-CHORUS.
She will heed not.

SEMI-CHORUS.
But yet speak.

SEMI-CHORUS.
Unhappy woman, cease a little while
From mourning. Recognize the
work of Heaven.
Troy smoulders. Think not of it.
Let the past
Be buried in the past. Tears mend
it not.
Fate may be kindlier yet than she
appears.

SEMI-CHORUS.
She does not answer.

SEMI-CHORUS.
Call to her again.

SEMI-CHORUS.
O break this scornful silence ! Hear
us speak.
We would console you.

SEMI-CHORUS.
Look, how she is moved !

SEMI-CHORUS.
O speak ! the heart's hurt oft is
helped by words.

CASSANDRA.
O Itys ! Itys ! Itys !

SEMI-CHORUS.
What a shriek !
She takes the language of the night-
ingale,

Till they shake themselves into
diamond flakes,
Coil and twine in the glittering brine
And swing themselves in the long
moonshine ;
Or by wild shores hoarsely rage,
And moan, and vent her spite,
In some inhospitable harborage
Of Thracian waters, white.
There let her grieve, and grieve, and
hold her breath
Until she hate herself to death.
I seem with rapture lifted higher,
Like one in mystic trance.
O Pan ! Pan ! Pan !
First friend of man,
And founder of Heaven's choir,
Come thou from old Cyllené, and in-
spire
The Gnosian, and Nysæan dance !
Come thou, too, Delian king,
From the blue Ægean sea,
And Mycone's yellow coast :
Give my spirit such a wing
As there the foolish Icarus lost,
That she may soar above the cope
Of this high pinnacle of gladness,
And dizzy height of hope ;
And there, beyond all reach of sad-
ness,
May tune my lips to sing
Great Pæans, full and free,
Till the whole world ring
With such heart-melting madness
As bards are taught by thee !

SEMI-CHORUS.
Look to the sad Cassandra, how she
stands !

SEMI-CHORUS.
She turns not from the wringing of
her hands.

SEMI-CHORUS.
What is she doing ?

SEMI-CHORUS.
Look, her lips are moved.

Unhappy bird! that mourns her
perished form,
And leans her breast against a thorn,
all night.

CASSANDRA.

The bull is in the shambles.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Listen, friends!
She mutters something to herself.

CASSANDRA.

Alas!
Did any name Apollo? woe is me!

SEMI-CHORUS.

She calls upon the God.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Unhappy one,
What sorrow strikes thee with be-
wilderness?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Now she is mute again.

CHORUS.

A Stygian cold
Creeps through my limbs, and
loosens every joint.
The hot blood freezes in its arteries,
And stagnates round the region of
the heart.
A cloud comes up from sooty Ache-
ron,
And clothes mine eyelids
With infernal night.
My hair stands up.
What supernatural awe
Shoots, shrivelling through me,
To the marrow and bone?
O dread and wise Prophetic Powers,
Whose strong-compelling law
Doth hold in awe
The laboring hours,
Your intervention I invoke,

My soul from this wild doubt to
save;

Whether you have
Your dwelling in some dark, oracu-
lar cave,
Or solemn, sacred oak;
Or in Dodona's ancient, honored
beech,

Whose mystic boughs above
Sat the wise dove;
Or if the tuneful voice of old
Awake in Delos, to unfold
Dark wisdom in ambiguous speech.
Upon the verge of strange despair
My heart grows dizzy. Now I seem
Like one that dreams some ghastly
dream,

And cannot cast away his care,
But harrows all the haggard air
With his hard breath. Above, be-
neath,

The empty silence seems to team
With apprehension. O declare
What hidden thing doth Fate pre-
pare,

What hidden, horrible thing doth
Fate prepare?

For of some hidden grief my heart
seems half aware.

XV. CLYTEMNESTRA. CAS-
SANDRA. CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

One blow makes all sure. Ay, but
then,—beyond?

I cannot trammel up the future
thus,

And so forecast the time, as with
one blow

To break the hundred Hydra-heads
of Chance.

Beyond—beyond I dare not look, for
who,

If first he scanned the space, would
leap the gulf?

One blow secures the moment. O,
but he . . .

Ay, there it lies! I dread lest my
love, being
So much the stronger, scare his own
to death;
As what they comprehended not,
men abhor.

He has a wavering nature, easily
Unpoised; and trembling ever on
extremes.

O, what if terror outweigh love, and
love,
Having defiled his countenance, take
part

Against himself, self-loathed, a
fallen God?

Ah, his was never yet the loving
soul,

But rather that which lets itself be
loved;

As some loose lily leans upon a
lake,

Letting the lymph reflect it, as it
will,

Still idly swayed, whichever way the
stream

Stirs the green tangles of the water
moss.

The flower of his love never bloomed
upright,

But a sweet parasite, that loved to
lean

On stronger natures, winning
strength from them,—

Not such a flower as whose delirious
cup

Maddens the bee, and never can give
forth

Enough of fragrance, yet is ever
sweet.

Yet which is sweetest,—to receive or
give?

Sweet to receive, and sweet to give,
in love!

When one is never sated that re-
ceives,

Nor ever all exhausted one that
gives.

I think I love him more, that I re-
semble

So little aught that pleases me in
him.

Perchance, if I dared question this
dark heart,

'Tis not for him, but for myself in
him,

For that which is my softer self in
him,—

I have done this, and this,—and
shall do more:

Hoped, wept, dared wildly, and will
overcome!

Does he not need me? It is sweet
to think

That I am all to him, whate'er I be
To others; and to one,—little, I
know!

But to him, all things,—sceptre,
sword, and crown.

For who would live, but to be loved
by some one?

Be fair, but to give beauty to an-
other?

Or wise, but to instruct some sweet
desire?

Or strong, but that thereby love may
rejoice!

Or who for crime's sake would be
criminal?

And yet for love's sake would not
dare wild deeds?

A mutual necessity, one fear,
One hope, and the strange posture of
the time

Unite us now;—but this need over-
past,

O, if, 'twixt his embrace and mine,
there rise

The reflex of a murdered head! and
he,

Remembering the crime, remember
not

It was for him that I am criminal,
But rather hate me for the part he
took—

Against his soul, as he will say—in
this?—

I will not think it. Upon this wild
venture,

Freighted with love's last wealthiest
merchandise,

My heart sets forth. To-morrow I
shall wake

A beggar, as it may be, or thrice rich.
 As one who plucks his last gem from his crown
 (Some pearl for which, in youth, he bartered states)
 And, sacrificing with an anxious heart,
 Toward night puts seaward in a little bark
 For lands reported far beyond the sun,
 Trusting to win back kingdoms, or there drown—
 So I—and with like perilous endeavor!
 O, but I think I could implore the Gods
 More fervently than ever, in my youth,
 I prayed that help of Heaven I needed not,
 And lifted innocent hands to their great sky.
 So much to loose . . . so much to gain . . . so much . . .
 I dare not think how . . .
 Ha, the Phrygian slave!
 He dares to bring his mistress to the hearth!
 She looks unhappy. I will speak to her.
 Perchance her hatred may approve my own,
 And help me in the work I am about.
 'Twere well to sound her.
 Be not so cast down,
 Unhappy stranger! Fear no jealous hand.
 In sorrow I, too, am not all untried.
 Our fortunes are not so dissimilar,
 Slaves both—and of one master.
 Nay, approach.
 Is my voice harsh in its appeal to thee?
 If so, believe me, it belies my heart.
 A woman speaks to thee.
 What, silent still?
 O, look not on me with such sullen eyes,

There is no accusation in my own.
 Rather on him that brought thee, than on thee,
 Our scorn is settled. I would help thee. Come!
 Mute still?
 I know that shame is ever dumb,
 And ever weak; but here is no reproach.
 Listen! Thy fate is given to thy hands.
 Art thou a woman, and dost scorn contempt?
 Art thou a captive, and dost loathe these bonds?
 Art thou courageous, as men call thy race?
 Or, helpless art thou, and wouldst overcome?
 If so,—look up! For there is hope for thee.
 Give me thy hand—

CASSANDRA.

Pah! there is blood on it!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What is she raving of?

CASSANDRA.

The place, from old,

Is evil.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay, there is a sickness, here,
 That needs the knife.

CASSANDRA.

O, horrible! blood! blood!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I see you are a Phrygian to the bone!
 Coward and slave! be so forevermore!

CASSANDRA.

Apollo! O Apollo! O blood! blood!
 The whole place swims with it!
 The slippery steps

Steam with the fumes! The rank air smells of blood!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Heed her not! for she knows not what she says.
 This is some falling sickness of the soul.
 Her fever frights itself.

CASSANDRA.

It reeks! it reeks!
 It smokes! it stifles! blood! blood, everywhere!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

See, he hath brought this mad woman from Troy,
 To shame our honor, and insult our care.
 Look to her, friends, my hands have other work!

CHORUS.

Alas! the House of Tantalus is doomed!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The King sleeps—like an infant.
 His huge strength
 Holds slumber thrice as close as other men.
 How well he sleeps! Make garlands for the Gods.
 I go to watch the couch. Cull every flower,
 And honor all the tutelary fanes
 With sacrifice as ample as our joy,
 Lest some one say we reverence not the Gods!

CHORUS.

O dooméd House and race!
 O toilsome, toilsome horsemanship
 Of Pelops; that ill omen brought to us!
 For since the drownéd Myrtilus
 Did from his golden chariot slip

To his last sleep, below the deep,
 Nothing of sad calamitous disgrace
 Hath angry Heaven ceased to heap
 On this unhappy House of Tantalus.

Not only upon sacred leaves of old,
 Preserved in many a guarded, mystic fold,
 But sometimes, too, enrolled
 On tablets fair
 Of stone or brass, with quaint and curious care,
 In characters of gold,
 And many an iron-bound, melancholy book,

The wisdom of the wise is writ;
 And hardly shall a man,
 For all he can,
 By painful, slow degrees,
 And nightly reveries,
 Of long, laborious thought, grow learned in these.
 But who, that reads a woman's wily look,
 Shall say what evil hides, and lurks in it?

Or fathom her false wit?
 For by a woman fell the man
 Who did Nemæa's pest destroy,
 And the brinded Hydra slew,
 And many other wonders wrought.
 By a woman, fated Troy
 Was overset, and fell to naught.
 Royal Amphiarus, too,
 All his wisdom could not free
 From his false Eriphyle,
 Whom a golden necklace bought,—
 So has it been, and so shall it be,
 Ever since the world began!

O woman, woman, of what other earth
 Hath dædal Nature moulded thee?
 Thou art not of our clay compact,
 Not of our common clay;—
 But when the painful world in labor lay—
 Labor long—and agony,
 In her heaving throes distract,
 And vex't with angry Heaven's red ire,

Nature, kneading snow and fire,
In thy mystic being pent
Each contrary element.
Life and death within thee blent :
All despair and all desire :
There to mingle and ferment.
While, mad midwives, at thy birth,
Furies mixt with Sirens bent,
Inter-wreathing snakes and smiles,—
Fairest dreams and falsest guiles.

Such a splendid mischief thou !
With thy light of languid eyes ;
And thy bosom of pure snow :
And thine heart of fire below,
Whose red light doth come and go
Ever o'er thy changeful cheek
When love-whispers tremble weak :
The warm lips and pensive sighs,
That the breathless spirit bow :
And the heavenward life that lies
In the still serenities
Of thy snowy, airy brow,—
Thine ethereal airy brow.
Such a splendid mischief, thou !
What are all thy witcheries ?
All thine evil beauty ? All
Thy soft looks, and subtle smiles ?
Tangled tresses ? Mad caresses ?
Tenderness ? Tears and kisses ?
And the long look, between whites,
That the helpless heart beguiles,
Tranced in such a subtle thrall ?
What are all thy sighs and smiles ?
Fairest dreams and falsest guiles !
Hoofs to horses, teeth to lions,
Horns to bulls, and speed to hares,
To the fish to glide through waters,
To the bird to glide through airs,
Nature gave : to men gave courage,
And the use of brazen spears.
What was left to give to woman,
All her gifts thus given ? Ah,
tears,
Smiles, and kisses, whispers,
glances,
Only these ; and merely beauty
On her archéd brows unfurled.
And with these she shatters lances,
All unarmed binds arméd Duty,
And in triumph drags the world !

XVI. SEMI-CHORUS. CHORUS.
CASSANDRA. AGAMEMNON.
CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGIS
THUS.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Break off, break off ! It seems I
heard a cry.

CHORUS.

Surely one called within the house.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Stand by.

CHORUS.

The Prophetess is troubled. Look,
her eye
Rolls fearfully.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Now all is husht once more.

CHORUS.

I hear the feet of some one at the
door.

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Murderess ! oh, oh !

SEMI-CHORUS.

The house is filled with shrieks.

CHORUS.

The sound deceives or that was the
King's voice.

SEMI-CHORUS.

The voice of Agamemnon !

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Ai ! ai ! ai !

CASSANDRA.

The bull is in the toils.

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

I will not die !

ÆGISTHUS (*within*).

O Zeus ! he will escape.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*within*).

He has it.

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Ai ! ai !

CHORUS.

Some hideous deed is being done
within.

Burst in the doors !

SEMI-CHORUS.

I cannot open them.
Barred, barred within !

CASSANDRA.

The axe is at the bull.

CHORUS.

Call the elders.

SEMI-CHORUS.

And the People. O Argives ! Ar-
gives !
Alinon ! Alinon !

CHORUS.

You to the Agora.

SEMI-CHORUS.

To the temples we.

CHORUS.

Hearken, O maidens !

SEMI-CHORUS.

This way.

CHORUS.

That way.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Quick ! quick !

CASSANDRA.

Seal my sight, O Apollo ! O Apollo !

CHORUS.

To the Agora :

SEMI-CHORUS.

To the temples !

CHORUS.

Haste ! haste !

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Stabbed, oh !

CHORUS.

Too late !

CASSANDRA.

The bull is bellowing.

ÆGISTHUS (*within*).

Thrust there again.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*within*).

One blow has done it all.

ÆGISTHUS (*within*).

Is it quite through ?

CLYTEMNESTRA (*within*).

He will not move again.

SEMI-CHORUS.

O Heaven and Earth ! My heart
stands still with awe !
Where will this murder end ?

CHORUS.

Hold ! some one comes !

XVII. ELECTRA. ORESTES.
CHORUS. A PHOCIAN.

ELECTRA (*leading ORESTES*).

Save us ! save him—Orestes !

CHORUS.

What has fallen ?