

# HIPPOLYTUS

of

# EURIPIDES

Translated by

GILBERT MURRAY

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## 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 picturesque 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

*Hippolytus of Euripides*

*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!—I will go my ways.—  
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 dew  
Gleam, and the spring bee sings, and in the glade  
Hath Solitude her mystic garden made.

*Hippolytus of Euripides*

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 Prince—for “Master” name I none but God—  
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 ...

**HIPPOLYTUS.**

Whom? If the name be speakable, speak out!

**HUNTSMAN.**

She stands here at thy gate: the Cyprian Queen!

*Hippolytus of Euripides*

**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 ... 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 re-  
mains.*]

**HUNTSMAN** (*approaching the Statue and kneeling*)

O Cyprian—for a young man in his pride  
I will not follow!—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.**

Nay—know yet not?—this burden hath always 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?—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.—Fair arms they seem!—

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?  
    —Nurse, veil my head again, and blind  
    Mine eyes.—There is a tear behind  
    That lash.—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.—  
Could I but die in one swift flame  
    Unthinking, unknowing!

**NURSE.**

I veil thy face, Child.—Would that so  
Mine own were veiled for evermore,  
So sore I love thee! ... 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.—  
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 wilt, 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-hearted—sayst not so?—  
Hippolytus ...

**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,—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!—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 men ... love?

**NURSE.**

A thing most sweet, my Child, yet dolorous.

**PHAEDRA.**

Only the half, belike, hath fallen on us!

**NURSE** (*starting*).

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

**PHAEDRA.**

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

**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?—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 CYPRIIS, 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 us—who shall say  
How strange?—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 right—for wit hath many a man—  
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  
Musing—a deadly happiness!—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.—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!—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 die—

[*Motion of protest among the Women.*]

—the best, best thought—  
—Gainsay me not—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 cows 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 now—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! ... 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, and—how think you?—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.—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, tell—and praise—  
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 a11 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!—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 lose—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,—such wisdom and such sin  
Are all about thy lips!—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!—'Twere best never to err,  
But, having erred, to take a counsellor  
Is second.—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!—What dost thou dread?

**PHAEDRA.**

Least to his ear some word be whispered.

**NURSE.**

Let be, Child! I will make all well with thee!  
—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 CYPRIIS, 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!

\* \* \*

*Hippolytus of Euripides*

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?—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!—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.—Now canst thou hear?—  
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 ...

**HIPPOLYTUS.**

I have heard horrors! Shall I hold my peace?

**NURSE.**

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

**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 forth—(He knows her best!)—  
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' lips—[*Turning to the NURSE.*]  
    As thine accursèd head  
Braved the high honour of my Father's bed.  
And came to traffic ... Our white torrent's spray  
Shall drench mine ears to wash those words away!  
And couldst thou dream that *I* ...? 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.—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 not—Knew I not thine heart?—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 found—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? ...  
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 all—  
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, sur-  
rounded 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  
—Hear, O my countrymen!—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 HAEDRA.]*

**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 uncon-  
trollable emotion.]*

**THESEUS.**

Oh, horror piled on horror!—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?—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 mysteries—  
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.—"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."—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!—What, wilt thou say  
"Through every woman's nature one blind strand  
Of passion winds, that men scarce understand?"—  
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.—  
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—deny  
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 swear—so hear me both,  
The Earth beneath and Zeus who Guards the Oath—  
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 ... 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 oath—what more?—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!—  
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 ... 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.—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 Cho-*

*rus and some Men of the Chorus of Huntsmen.]*

Well could man live and die!

**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 travail—  
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,

**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 sovranity?

**HENCHMAN.**

Hippolytus is ... 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 there—the long reins round him—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!—O thou false  
Curse of my Father!—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,  
Till—who knows how?—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 vanished—who knows where?—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?—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 one—  
Thou vile King!—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.—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?  
—Soft there, ye thralls! No trembling hands  
As ye lift me, now!—Who is that that stands  
At the right?—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!

*Hippolytus of Euripides*

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, unpunished,

Whose guilt lived in his kin,

And passed, and slept, till after this long day

It lights ... 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!—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? ... 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!

*Hippolytus of Euripides*

My hand shall win its vengeance through and through,  
Piercing with flawless shaft what heart so'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! ... Father, thou art forgiven.

It was Her will. I am not wroth with thee ...  
I have obeyed Her all my days! ...

Ah me,

The dark is drawing down upon mine eyes;  
It hath me! ... Father! ... 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!—O hope and bear while thou hast breath!

**HIPPOLYTUS.**

Lo, I have borne my burden. This is death ...

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.**]