

**\* A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook \***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please check with an FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **If the book is under copyright in your country, do not download or redistribute this file.**

*Title:* The Persians [Persae]  
*Author:* Aeschylus (ca. 525-456 B.C.)  
*Translator:* Murray, George Gilbert Aimé (1866-1957)  
*Date of first publication [this translation]:* 1939  
*Date of first performance [original play]:* 472 B.C.  
*Date first posted:* 19 March 2011  
*Date last updated:* 26 March 2014  
Faded Page eBook #20110329

This ebook was produced by: Barbara Watson, James Wright & the Online Distributed Proofreading Canada Team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

# THE PERSIANS

---

Uniform with this volume

## EURIPIDES

*Alcestis (24th Thousand)*  
*Bacchæ (29th Thousand)*  
*Electra (50th Thousand)*  
*Hippolytus (38th Thousand)*  
*Iphigenia in Tauris (32nd Thousand)*  
*Medea (33rd Thousand)*  
*Rhesus (9th Thousand)*  
*The Trojan Women (39th Thousand)*

## ARISTOPHANES

*The Frogs (24th Thousand)*

## SOPHOCLES

*Oedipus, King of Thebes (24th Thousand)*

## AESCHYLUS

*Agamemnon (14th Thousand)*  
*The Choëphoræ (5th Thousand)*  
*The Eumenides (4th Thousand)*  
*The Suppliant Women (Supplikes) (4th Thousand)*  
*Prometheus Bound (4th Thousand)*  
*The Seven Against Thebes (4th Thousand)*

*The Oresteia (Collected Edition)*

---

**AESCHYLUS**  
**THE PERSIANS**

[Persae]

Translated into English rhyming verse  
with Preface and Notes

by

**GILBERT MURRAY**

D.C.L., LL.D., LITT.D., F.B.A.

London

**GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD**

Museum Street

---

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1939

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
*in 11-Point Caslon Old Face*  
BY UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED  
WOKING

---

# PREFACE

THE PERSIANS is often described as a historical play, and consequently as the earliest historical play in existence. But the phrase is misleading. No doubt the play is an immensely valuable historical document. It gives a detailed account of one of the great decisive battles of the world fought more than two thousand four hundred years ago; an account by one who was not only an eye-witness but a combatant, not only a combatant but a man of genius. But the truth is, all Greek tragedies were to the Greeks historical. The murder of Agamemnon, the madness of Orestes or Alcmaeon, the sacrifice or non-sacrifice of Iphigenia, were all parts of a great floating mass of tradition kept alive in people's memories by story-tellers, by poets, or by religious rituals. The peculiar fact about THE PERSIANS is not that its subject is historical, but that it is recent, and, although recent, is admitted to the tremendous dignity of the heroic drama. The deliverance from Persia was felt at that time to be something miraculous, superhuman; a thing to make a man kneel and pray rather than boast. "It is not we who have done this," exclaimed Themistocles, the chief engineer of the victory, after his crowning success. It was the gods and heroes striking down the pride and impiety of man. (*Herodotus* VIII. 109.)

This feeling of religious thankfulness found expression in several ways. Notably it entered into the public festivals. At the Great Dionysia a tragedy on the subject by the poet Phrynichus was performed as soon as Athens was restored after the Persian retreat. It was called the *Phoenissae* or *Women of Sidon*—doubtless such women formed the chorus—and its sweet Ionian lyrics lived long in the memories of Athens. Aristophanes describes old admirers of Phrynichus, fifty years afterwards, humming its tunes as they walked up the hill towards the law courts,

Staffs in their hands, old music on their lips,  
Wild honey and the East and loveliness.

Aeschylus' play, some five or six years later, is said to have been a sort of *remaniement* of Phrynichus' theme, with the scene changed, the chorus different, and doubtless many other elements altered. One would not be surprised to learn that there had been a regular celebration of the Great Deliverance at the Dionysia every year from 477 to 472; but if so, the institution was not permanent. Tragedy was not quite the suitable vehicle for such a record of joy and thanksgiving. Tragedy is a *Trauerspiel*, a Lamentation; and of necessity must set its scene among the defeated. There was also a celebration at the Panathenaic Festival, where an epic by Choirilos on the story of the Persian War had for a time the unique privilege of being recited along with the poems of Homer. In the Aianteia, too, an old festival in honour of Ajax the Salaminian hero, the Battle of Salamis seems to have found a place. In sum, if we wish to use a modern analogy, THE PERSIANS is more like a national celebration or thanksgiving service than a historical play of the Shakespearian sort. But such comparisons are all apt to be misleading. THE PERSIANS is a Greek tragedy. Its story seemed, even to those who had taken part in it, to belong to the heroic tradition through its grandeur and mystery; to the religious tradition because it represented the judgment of the gods and heroes on the impious atheists—or monotheists: there was little difference between them—who had sacked their temples and overthrown their altars and images. It is interesting to notice that an earlier attempt by Phrynichus to use contemporary events as a theme for tragedy was resented and punished. He was heavily fined for his *Taking of Miletus*; no doubt other causes may have been at work, but evidently a mere military disaster was not thought suitable for the heroic

stage.

The extreme simplicity of *THE PERSIANS* in staging and construction need hardly surprise us. It puts the play where it chronologically belongs, somewhere between the *Suppliant Women* and the *Seven against Thebes*. Only two characters are ever on the stage at once; only two have names, the rest are simply Messenger, Chorus, Queen—for the name Atossa does not occur in the text. As for the scene, Aeschylus seems to have used the plain round orchestra or dancing ground, with a small structure in the centre which does for an altar or for the tomb of Darius, as may be required, and a *skênê* or house-front at the back, which serves equally for a council-chamber where the Elders sit or for the palace of the Queen. The place of action is of course Persia; but it would be mere modern elaboration to try to fix it in some particular locality in Persia. The Elders speak of themselves as being in Susa, the tomb of Darius was really just outside Persepolis, many hundred miles away, while the reception of Xerxes at the end of the play suggests that he has only just reached his native land.

A more interesting point is the method by which Aeschylus contrives to remove his theme from the atmosphere of the poor prosaic here-and-now into that of the heroic "far away and long ago." In the first place no Greek is ever mentioned by name. To say a word in praise of Themistocles or Aristides would have spoilt everything. We may remember how Pheidias was found guilty of "impiety" for putting alleged likenesses of himself and Pericles in the battle with the Amazons on Athena's shield. Persians on the other hand are mentioned abundantly and with deliberate effect. Artaphernes, Artembares and Hystaichmas seemed remote and awful beings with the fascination of distance about them. Their names too are grand and barbaric. They fit in with the strange oriental interjections—Aristophanes accuses the Chorus of saying "Yow-oy," but that is an exaggeration—the strange forms like "Dariâna" for Darius, and "Ballên" for some Phoenician phrase like "Ba'alênu," "our Baal or Lord", and the many ingenious arrangements of words really Greek so as to sound exotic. To reproduce this effect I have ventured to use the Biblical Javan, or Yâwân, to transliterate Iâôn, or Iôn, the name by which the Persians called the Greeks, and have occasionally knocked off from proper names the final syllable with which they were Hellenized and which to our ears makes them all sound Greek.

But of course mere remoteness is not enough to lift a theme to the height of tragedy. It needs positive dignity as well. And *THE PERSIANS* has that dignity to the full. There is no abuse of the enemy, no ridicule, no mean exultation; no accusations of cowardice or cruelty. Atossa and Darius are noble figures. The princes and satraps who fell in battle make an impression of grandeur. Even Xerxes, in the full flood of his oriental lamentations, accepts generously the whole blame for his country's defeat. Modern vulgarity did not make its appearance till about a century later in the *Persae* of Timotheus, when it roused, one is glad to know, a storm of artistic disapprobation.

Not that Xerxes is for a moment excused. The invasion of Hellas is a crime, the crime of *Hubris*, dark but heroic; the crime of one who claims to be, for some fantastic reason or no reason at all, above human kind and above the law. Such *Hubris* is according to Greek beliefs the sin of sins, the forbidden fruit always tempting proud man to his destruction. For the truth is against him; he is not what he imagines. He is but a man like other men, and above him is the eternal law of God. One can hardly help reflecting how deeply our world of to-day is overshadowed by the presence of that same inhuman *Hubris*, and how it still sits wondering whether it dare believe as the Greeks did.

---



# THE PERSIANS

---

# CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

CHORUS of PERSIAN ELDERS.

ATOSSA, the QUEEN, MOTHER of XERXES.

MESSENGER.

DARIUS, FATHER of XERXES.

XERXES, KING of PERSIA.

---

The play was first acted in the year 472 B.C., eight years after the Battle of Salamis. The first prize was won by Aeschylus, with the *Phineus*, *Persians*, *Glaucus of Potniae*, and *Prometheus*.

---

# THE PERSIANS

[*The stage, or rather Orchêstra, is a large round space with no scenery except a House Front at the back and an altar-like structure in the centre. In the first division of the play (ll. 1-153) we are before the Council Chamber at Susa, in the second (ll. 596-851) at the Tomb of Darius, in the third before the King's Palace.*]

CHORUS.

Faithful to them that sailed o'er sea  
To Grecian lands our name we hold,  
"The Persians' Trust"; true guardians we  
Of many a temple rich in gold  
And holy, whom our Lord and King,  
    Xerxes, Darius-born,  
For age and honour hath extolled  
    To watch his land forlorn.  
And while we wait his homecoming,  
For him and for his golden host  
With fear and dark imagining  
My spirit in a storm is tossed.  
For all the strength of Asia born,  
Like hounds at a young master's horn  
    Baying, away hath flown,  
And now for long no royal post  
Cometh, no rider from the host,  
    Back to great Persia's Throne.  
From Agbatan, from Susa tall,  
From ancient Kissia's guarded wall,  
We saw the horse and chariot go,  
The gliding ships, the footmen slow,  
    In pomp of war far-thrown.  
Among them men of mighty name,  
Amistras, Artaphernes, came,  
Astaspes, Megabâtes, Lords  
Of Persia, kings beneath the Eye  
Of the one King, most great, most high,  
    Ruling their subject hordes,  
With trampling horse, with clanging bow,  
Dread to behold and stern to know,  
    High hearts and faithful swords.  
Then Artembar, glad knight in fray,  
Imaios of the shafts that slay,  
Masistras, Pharandâkes, yea,  
    And charioted Sosthânes  
Rode past us. Many another king  
Did Nile the many-childed bring,  
To war; the Master of the Spring,  
    Egyptian Sousiskânes,  
Arsam the tall, who holdeth guard  
O'er holy Memphis, Ariomard  
From ageless Thebes, with river men  
Who bend the bow and stride the fen,  
    Multitudes dark and fell.

We saw the armies proud and gay  
Of Lydia, who in thralldom sway  
The tribes of Asia; them the wise  
Arcteus and Mêtrogâthes, Eyes  
Of the Great King, from Sardis sent  
With all her golden armament:  
In fourfold aye and sixfold team  
We saw their myriad chariots gleam,  
    Fearful to see or tell.  
There marched the Tmolian mountaineer  
Who vowed on Hellas' neck to cast  
The bond slave's yoke. There Mardon passed  
And Tharybis, anvils of the spear;  
There, rank by rank, the Mysian lance  
Flashed; and with trailing wide advance  
There swept the golden Babylon  
Her motley nations on and on;  
Men of the river, men who know  
The magic of the fearless bow,  
And all the long-knived multitude  
Of Asia's hidden valleys, rude  
But faithful, followed, row on row,  
    King's men untameable.

—So hath the flower of Persia's youth  
    Departed, whom in strong desire  
    This Asian soil that nursed their growth  
    Lamenteth; and without avail  
    Full many a sire,  
    Full many a wife and mother stay  
    Waiting as day still followeth day,  
    And dread the lengthening tale.

[*Strophe 1*]

—They are gone, the great armies battle-proven,  
    City-quellers; they have reached the further side;  
They have builded them a causeway flax-enwoven  
    O'er the strait where maiden Helle sank and died.  
    For they sought a path and found it,  
    And with many fetters bound it  
    For a yoke upon the shoulders of the tide.

[*Antistrophe 1*]

And the dread King, his multitudes he guideth  
    As a flock God hath given to his hand.  
In his stern true captains he confideth  
    To be masters of the water and the land.  
    From the shower of heavenly gold  
    Were his fathers sprung of old,  
    And god-like among mortals doth he stand.

[*Strophe 2*]

In his dark eye is the glare of a serpent, flashing fear;

Many-handed, many-navied, he hath spurred his Syrian car;  
He descendeth on the nations; he has baffled the strong spear  
With the bow-shaft that slayeth from afar.

[*Antistrophe 2*]

In whom, then, confide ye, to withstand the armèd flood,  
Put his gyves upon the storm and enchain the rushing tide?  
For the armies of the Persian none living hath withstood,  
And the land's heart laugheth in its pride.

[*Strophe 3*]

So it hath been from of old; the o'erthrowing of strong towers  
Is the birthright of the Persian, god-appointed to his trust;  
And the thunder of the horsemen and their gladness, it is ours,  
And the trampling of cities in the dust.

[*Antistrophe 3*]

We have turned us to the sea, and no fear is in our mind;  
With our bridges cable-woven we have climbed from steep to steep;  
We have seen the waves whiten in the fury of the wind,  
We have faced the holy places of the deep.

—But the deep craft of God, who shall 'scape from it or hide him?  
Can the runner run so swift, can the leaper leap so high?  
Man seeeth but a smile, and lo, Atê is beside him,  
With the net none outclimbeth till he die.

[*Strophe 4*]

—Therefore doth my spirit mourn,  
Robed in darkness, stabbed with fear,  
Lest a cry the people hear,  
"Woe, woe;  
Woe for Persia's host forlorn,"  
Ringing through the wide unmanned  
Streets of Susa's lonely land.

[*Antistrophe 4*]

And the ancient Kissian hold  
Shall reply with manifold  
Lamentation, murmuring,  
"Woe, woe,  
Woe for people and for King,"  
Till the women weep, and tear  
The fine linen robes they wear.

All the hands that chariots drive,  
All the feet of armèd tread,  
Gone, like bees that leave the hive,  
Round their one lord marshallèd:  
Out beyond the bridgèd tide  
That doth world from world divide.

And at home, whence these are gone

There be pillows wet with tears,  
Where some woman, delicately  
Proud, as Persian women be,  
Yearning for her man, her own  
Battle-fiery warrior, gone  
Forth amid the flashing spears,  
Bears the yoke alone.

LEADER.

—Peace! And before this ancient pile,  
Lords of the land true-counselling,  
Repose ye, and take thought the while  
What need is come, how fares our King:  
Is it the bow's victorious sway  
Or iron spear-head wins the day?

—But hither, like a star of heaven  
One cometh, Mother to the King  
And Queen to me. I bow the knee.  
Persians, to her be reverence given  
By all, and words of welcoming.

*[As the ELDERS move right and left to sit upon the steps the QUEEN enters in her chariot of state with many followers.]*

LEADER.

O Queen most high, above all Persia's deep-girt daughters glorified,  
Thou Xerxes' reverend Mother, Hail! All hail to thee, Darius' bride.  
A god of Persia gave thee love, a god of Persia hast thou born,  
Unless that star that shone of old hath faded from this land forlorn.

ATOSSA.

For that I came. For that I left my chambers canopied with gold,  
Darius' chamber, where he slept, where in his arms I lay of old;  
And care is plucking at my heart. O friends and faithful, to your ears  
I trust a tale, not mine alone; the tale of one beset with fears  
Lest Fate, our master, overturn, on-sweeping with relentless stride,  
The splendours that Darius reared when, sure, some god was at his side.  
For that there murmureth in my heart a thought two-edged and hard to tell:  
"Put not thy trust in store of wealth, save men be there to guard it well:  
Nor if the poor man's fame is dim, forget what strength is in his hand."  
Wealth, arms, and ships enough are ours. Yet for the Eye of all the land  
I tremble. Is not Persia's Eye her King? Therefore I ask of you  
Your counsel in this fear, my Persians, ye the aged and the true,  
In whom for faithful words and wise my trust is and has ever been.

LEADER.

Thou art the mistress of the land, and ne'er shalt summon twice, O Queen,  
Our aid in counsel or in act, where'er we have the power to guide;  
Servants true-hearted in thy need are these thou callest to thy side.

ATOSSA.

Long have I dwelt with visions through the hours  
Of darkness, ever since, with all his powers  
Marshalled, my son departed for the shore  
Of Hellas, conquering. But ne'er before  
Flashed there so clear a vision on my sight—  
I tell thee the whole tale—as yester night.  
Meseemed there came two women in fair guise,  
Robed, one in Persian garb, one Dorian-wise,  
Clear to my dreaming sight: in stature far  
Grander they seemed than earthly women are,  
Of flawless beauty, sisters of one race.  
Each had her home in its appointed place,  
In Hellas one, and one in Barbary.  
Then rose between them, so I seemed to see,  
Some discord; and my son saw, and would fain  
Calm them, and make them gentle to the rein  
Beneath his chariot, and his yoke would bind  
On both their necks; and one with head inclined  
Was glad and plumed her in that harness proud,  
Meek to the curb. The other, all uncowed,  
Struggled, and with both hands asunder tore  
The harness, and away unbridled bore  
The chariot, and at mid-yoke snapt the wood;  
And my son fell. And there beside him stood  
His father, King Darius, pityingly.  
And Xerxes, when he saw him, gave a cry  
And rent his robes. So much I saw in dream.

I rose and quickly in a flowing stream  
Cleansed me, and with an incense-bearing train  
Approached our altar-stair, to pour amain  
To Them that avert Evil their full meed  
Of offering. They it is whom now we need.  
When, lo, an eagle in the air, which fled  
To Apollo's temple! Dumb I stood with dread:  
And looked, and there, pursuing in full flight,  
A hawk wide-winged, with talons stretched to smite  
The eagle's head. And he did naught but cower  
And yield his body to the victor's power.

Terrors be these for me to look upon,  
For you to hear. Howbeit, be sure, my son,  
Victorious, shall be alway among men  
A wonder; if he fail . . . Nay, even then,  
Once saved, he abideth no man's reckoning,  
But reigneth still unchallenged, Persia's King.

LEADER.

O Mother of the Land, we fain would neither turn thee to despair,  
Nor yet embolden overmuch. Go thou and seek the gods in prayer:  
Is aught among thy dreams amiss, beseech that it be turned to naught;

Is aught good, to thy house and thee be it to blessed fullness brought,  
Yea, and to all the land and all who love us. Next, drink offerings pour  
To great Earth and her buried dead; but chiefly with thy love implore  
Thy lord Darius—sayest thou not himself was with thee yester night?—  
To send for thee and for his son good things from darkness up to light;  
Whate'er is other, let Earth hold it down, let Darkness make it blind!  
No prophet I; only in love I speak, with seercraft of the mind,  
Thy dream so reading that, whate'er it bode, the end may griefless be.

ATOSSA.

So be it! First reader of my dreams, a loving seer I find in thee;  
And strong thy word of omen hast thou made, for me and for my sons.  
That which is good may Heaven fulfil! These issues, as thy counsel runs,  
I lay upon the gods above and the beloved who lie below;  
So saying I go within.—Yet stay. There is a thing I fain would know;  
Say where, in all this peopled world, a city men call Athens lies?

LEADER.

Far distant, where our Lord the Sun sinks and his last effulgence dies.

ATOSSA.

And this far western land it is my son so craved to make his prey?

LEADER.

Aye, for if Athens once were his, all Hellas must his word obey.

ATOSSA.

Has Athens then such multitudes, such hosts of mighty men, to lead?

LEADER.

A faithful army, which of old hath wrought much havoc on the Mede.

ATOSSA.

An army; have they likewise wealth, enough to keep the land from dearth?

LEADER.

A silver fountain-spring is theirs, a secret treasure-house of Earth.

ATOSSA.

What weapon flashes in their hands? Have they the bow that smites afar?

LEADER.

Not so; the spear that stabbeth close, the shield that goes not back in war.

ATOSSA.

What master holds them in the fray, what shepherd's rod to drive the herd?

LEADER.

To no man living are they slaves, nor bow them before no man's word.

ATOSSA.

Unmastered, how can they endure the onset of an angry foe?

LEADER.

Methinks Darius knoweth, and his great and goodly armies know.

ATOSSA.

Thy words bring evil thoughts to them whose children are beyond the sea.

LEADER.

But stay; methinks thou soon shalt hear the full tale, yea, the certainty.  
I see out yonder one that runs as runs the Persian couriers; Oh,  
For sure some certain news at last he beareth, be it weal or woe!

*[Enter the MESSENGER.]*

MESSENGER.

O walls of all the East, O towers of might,  
Persia, my home, thou haven of delight,  
How in one blow our garnered bliss is fled,  
All, and the flower of Persia fallen and dead!  
God's mercy, though 'tis bitter to the soul  
To bear ill tidings, I must needs unroll  
The full tale of our sorrow. The whole host  
Of Barbary, O my countrymen, is lost!

*[He breaks down in tears, and in the following scene only recovers himself for a moment at a time.]*

CHORUS.      *[Strophe 1]*

O pain, burden of pain  
Fierce-hearted, strange:  
Ye Persians, weep amain  
For sorrow, for times that change.

MESSENGER.

All yonder, all is death. Alone I come  
And beyond hope, to see the light of home.

CHORUS.      *[Antistrophe 1]*

This life, 'tis a tale long told  
Long borne; to hear  
A-sudden, being so old,

Griefs that surpass our fear.

MESSENGER.

I heard not others' tales. Myself was there  
To read the full-told story of despair.

CHORUS.      [*Strophe 2*

In vain! was it all in vain,  
Those crowding shafts of war  
Flew o'er the Asian main  
To the Hellene's angry shore?

MESSENGER.

Crowded with dead men miserably lost  
Is Salamis, and the bay, and all the coast.

CHORUS.      [*Antistrophe 2*

They whom we loved, Ah me,  
Wave-beaten limbs sea-dyed,  
Dead things awash in the sea,  
The long cloaks flapping wide!

MESSENGER.

Our arrows served us not; the beakèd prow  
Shattered our ships, and laid the bowmen low.

CHORUS.      [*Strophe 3*

Woe to the men of war! Uplift your voice  
In bitter weariness, in long lament.  
Shall all that is evil everywhere rejoice?  
Is that great host forespent?

MESSENGER.

Salamis! Salamis! Oh, name of hate!  
I groan remembering Athens, now too late.

CHORUS.      [*Antistrophe 3*

Hate her, ye men of war! Let her be hated  
For ever. "Athens": see ye forget her not.  
Remember the widows, the childless, the unmated:  
These things hath Athens wrought.

ATOSSA.

Long have I held my peace, as one struck dumb  
With sorrow. When so vast a thing is come  
Upon us, who can tell it, or who dare

To ask the story? . . . Yet, since man must bear  
What the gods send, be still, thou, and unroll—  
Albeit thy tears yet run—thine evil scroll  
To the utter end. Say first, who is not slain  
Of sceptred kings, and who shall ne'er again  
Look on this land, but leave an empty throne?

MESSENGER.

Xerxes himself yet lives, and sees the sun.

ATOSSA.

That word is joy to all my house, a bright  
Gleam, as of morning after starless night.

MESSENGER.

But Artembar lies battered—he the chief  
Of myriad horse—on the Silenian reef.  
The chiliarch Dadokas, in one fell leap,  
Tossed by a lance, went headlong to the deep.  
On Ajax' rock, wave-beaten, tempest-blown,  
Lies Bactria's best and truest, Tenagôn.  
Lilaios, Arsames, Argestes too,  
By that small isle where the wild pigeons flew  
Lay, butting in the reflue of the wave  
The hard ground with their foreheads. Arcteus brave,  
Who dwelt beside the Nile-spring's furthest marge,  
Adeuas, and the wielder of the targe,  
Pharnouchos, fell, three from a single barque.  
Lordly Metallos, Chryse's myriadarch,  
The tangled forest of his beard so red  
Hath dyed a costlier crimson; he lies dead.  
Ahrab the Mede, and Bactrian Artabas,  
Who led three myriad coal-black horse, alas!  
Drowning, upon a cruel shore they found  
Refuge and perished as they touched the ground.  
Amistris and Amphistreus of the dart  
Unresting, Ariomardos true of heart—  
How Sardis loved him!—Mysian Artames,  
And Tharybis, the cleaver of the seas  
With five times fifty ships, of Lyrna's race. .  
I saw him dead, a man once fair of face,  
Alas, in death not happy! And withal  
Syennesis, the highest heart of all,  
Cilicia's lord, none like him in the fray,  
Ringed with dead Greeks, in glory passed away.

ATOSSA.

Alas, thy tale is as a mountain steep  
Of grief; yea, shame and lamentation deep  
In Persia. But go back, and tell me this.  
What were the numbers of the craft of Greece?

How did they dare confront the serried row  
Of Persian ships in onset prow to prow?

MESSENGER.

For multitude, be sure, our eastern men  
Had conquered, for the Greeks had squadrons ten,  
Thirty in each, with ten select for speed  
On special service. Under Xerxes' lead—  
I know the numbers—stood a thousand sail,  
And separate, of speed incomparable,  
Two hundred keels and seven. . Who shall say  
We were too weak to face the foe that day?  
But some dark daemon, with no poised scale,  
Down weighed us, and made strength of no avail.  
Those gods protect their own Athêna's land.

ATOSSA.

How so? Does Athens yet unbroken stand?

MESSENGER.

While her men live, she hath a breechless wall.

ATOSSA.

How first began the battle? Tell me all.  
Was it the Greek who struck, or did the King,  
My son, his great force to the hazard fling?

MESSENGER.

Queen, for the first beginning of these woes,  
Some fiend or madman—whence he came, who knows?—  
Greek-seeming, from the Athenian ranks drew near  
To Xerxes' self, and whispered in his ear  
That, once the veil of hiding night should fall,  
The Greeks would wait no more, but one and all  
Leap to their oars, and, scattering left and right,  
Make off to save their lives in headlong flight.  
Xerxes gave ear, and reckoning not the while  
Of heaven's malignity or Grecian guile,  
His word to all the ship-masters sent round;  
Soon as the sun should leave the parchèd ground  
And darkness take the temples of the sky,  
The main fleet in three columns should stand by,  
Closing the way to Athens, while the rest  
Went round the island, guarding on the west  
The narrow ways and races loud with foam.  
Else, if the Greeks escaped an evil doom  
Finding some secret way of flight, he said,  
Each master of a ship would lose his head.

Such was his word; right full of mirth was he,  
So little guessed he what the end should be!

In order and obedience all the fleet  
Supped and prepared; each oarsman took his seat  
And nimbly to the rowlock strapped his oar.  
Meantime the sunlight melted from the shore  
And night drew on, and in their ships arrayed  
Each man at arms, each bender of the blade,  
Waited. From rank to rank the word was passed  
Down the long line, and on they moved at last,  
Each to his station. All the long night through  
Each captain rowing, rowing, kept his crew;  
And night wore on, and never sound nor sight  
From the Greek fleet gave sign of secret flight;  
Not till the wild white horses of the morn  
Took all the earth with glory; then was borne  
A sound across the sea, a voice, a strong  
Clamour exultant like a leaping song,  
And Echo answering from the island rock  
Cried battle. To our men there came a shock  
Of fear and hopes undone. No note there rang  
Of flight in that high paeon that they sang,  
Only glad courage, hot to do and dare.  
Out burst their trumpets, flaming through the air.  
In splashed their foaming oars, and straining stirred  
The briny furrows at the helmsman's word,  
And all the ships were out and clear to view.  
The right wing led the van, in order due,  
Behind it the whole fleet, prow after prow.  
Then one great shout: "Now, sons of Hellas, now!  
Set Hellas free, set free your wives, your homes,  
Your gods' high altars and your fathers' tombs.  
Now all is on the stake!" At once from us  
A storm of Persian voices clamorous  
Made answer, but no time was left to speak.  
Already ship on ship its brazen beak  
Had driven. The first rammer was a Greek,  
Which sheared away a great Sidonian's crest;  
Then close, one on another, charged the rest.

At first the long-drawn Persian line was strong  
And held; but in those narrows such a throng  
Was crowded, ship to ship could bring no aid.  
Nay, with their own bronze-fangèd beaks they made  
Destruction; a whole length of oars one beak  
Would shatter; and with purposed art the Greek  
Ringed us outside, and pressed, and struck; and we—  
Our oarless hulls went over, till the sea  
Could scarce be seen, with wrecks and corpses spread.  
The reefs and beaches too were filled with dead,  
And every ship in our great fleet away  
Rowed in wild flight. And there, through all the bay,  
As men kill tunnies crowded on the shore,  
Or some great fish, with clubs of broken oar  
And spars of wreck, they beat and broke and killed  
Our men. With crying all the air was filled,  
Out from the narrows to the shoreless main,

Of slain men and men wailing for the slain,  
Till the blind veil of night swept all away.

Not though for ten long days, day after day,  
I spoke, could I express that mass of woe.  
For never yet—this ye may surely know—  
Have on one day so many thousands died.

ATOSSA.

Ah me, a flood of suffering deep and wide  
Hath broke on Persia, yea, and all the east.

MESSENGER.

O Queen, all thou hast heard, twofold increased,  
Were not yet all. Such added coils of woe  
Befell as twice outbalance those ye know.

ATOSSA.

What bitterer fortune can there be? But tell  
Thy tidings to the last. What thing befell  
Darkening our skies to this still deadlier storm?

MESSENGER.

The chosen of the host, of goodliest form,  
Of noblest lineage, of most valiant sword,  
And truest heart at the King's counsel board,  
Are dead, unpitied and unhonoured, all.

ATOSSA.

O ye who love me, 'tis an evil fall.  
But tell thy tale. By what fate perished these?

MESSENGER.

An isle there is, in Salaminian seas,  
Small, of ill anchorage, where none may dwell  
Save Pan the dancer by the soft sea swell.  
Here Xerxes landed them. He hoped that, when  
Flung from their broken vessels, shipwrecked men  
Made for the island, these might watch, and slay  
Our enemies floundering, an easy prey  
Amid those briny streams, or save a friend  
If any came. Ill he foresaw the end!

Soon as God gave them victory on the sea,  
The Greeks, ere fall of eve, their panoply  
Of bronzen arms did on, and leaping out,  
Landed and ringed that island all about.  
Our men had no escape. From left and right  
Stones hand-flung battered them, and flight on flight  
Of arrows from the bow-string raining slew.  
Then in one rush they charged, and overthrew

Our lines and hacked and butchered, till no more  
Breathed any life of man upon that shore.  
And Xerxes groaned, looking upon that deep  
Of misery. For a throne he had, a steep  
And towering crest, hard by the open sea,  
Commanding all the field. Yea, bitterly  
His voice he lifted up, his robes he rent,  
And order swift to the land army sent,  
Then headlong turned and fled. Weep then, for more  
Affliction, beside that I told before.

ATOSSA.

O Doom of Wrath, how hast thou made untrue  
The hope of Persia! Long my son shall rue  
His vengeance on great Athens. . . . Had the plain  
Of Marathon not enough of Persian slain?  
For whom he needs must seek revenge, and lo,  
Heaps on his head this magnitude of woe.

But speak, the ships that 'scaped that evil day,  
Where didst thou leave them? Hast thou power to say?

MESSENGER.

The galleys that escaped, discomfited,  
Blindly before the wind to refuge fled.  
Meantime the army: on Boeotian ground  
One part was left, and thirsted, crowding round  
Some little well, or empty, labouring  
For breath, went searching for some water spring.

The rest of us, retreating, made our way  
Through Phocis, Locris, and the Melian bay,  
Where old Spercheios, streaming through the flat,  
Brought us his blessed water. After that  
Food failed, as through the Achaean vale we fled,  
And wallèd Thessaly. 'Twas there the dead  
Fell thickest, some from hunger, some from thirst.  
The two were there together. Then we burst  
Through to Magnesia and the mountain coast  
Of Macedon. By Axios' ford we crossed,  
Passed the marsh reeds of Bolbe and the cold  
Ridge of Pangaion, that the Edonians hold.  
That night God sent a storm, and winter came  
Out of all season and froze hard the stream  
Of holy Strymon. Many a man, who ne'er  
Had recked at all before of god or prayer,  
Then lifted up his voice and bowed his knee  
To Earth and Heaven. Aye, long and earnestly  
They prayed, and then across the ice-bound flood  
Set forth. And verily their luck was good  
Who crossed before the light of morning came.  
For soon a bright round sun, with rays like flame,  
Spread heat, and midway pierced the ice beneath.  
In crowds, one on another, down to death

They fell; and him I hold the happiest  
Whose life-breath soonest failed him. For the rest,  
Escaped beyond the river, day by day,  
With toil and sweat through Thrace they forced their way,  
And now, a scant and scattered band, return  
To the old land where still our hearth-fires burn.

Well may this realm of Persia weep in ruth  
For those her best-beloved, her people's youth.  
All I have told is true, but much unsaid  
Remains that God hath hurled on Persia's head.

LEADER.

O Fortune hard to fathom, how on all  
That Persia loved thy heavy hand doth fall!

ATOSSA.

Woe for a mighty army sunk so deep!  
Thou vision of my phantom-haunted sleep  
Most clear thou didst foretell some evil thing!  
And all too light was your interpreting.

Howbeit, as thou hast counselled, first will I  
Give prayer and worship to the gods on high,  
And then to Earth and the Departed bring  
Out of my stores a rich drink-offering—  
Too late, I know, when that 'gainst which I pray  
Is past; yet something peradventure may  
Be left, which prayer can mend. Therefore do you  
With others of true heart take counsel true  
To meet our land's affliction. And my son—  
If he should here return while I am gone,  
Comfort ye him, and guide him to the door,  
Lest to these griefs he add yet one grief more.

*[Exit ATOSSA, with retinue, into the Palace.]*

LEADER.

O Zeus, how hast thou, then, cast down  
All Persia's host, the great, the proud,  
And buried in a weeping cloud  
Agbatana's and Susa's town!  
Now many a silken veil shall fall  
Torn by soft hands, and many a breast  
Be wet with tears through veil and vest  
For grief that is the grief of all.  
And many a gentle Persian bride  
Is yearning for her lord new-wed,  
The tender arms, the silken bed,  
Youth and its joyance and its pride.  
They weep, they weep, unsatisfied;  
And shall not we, the old men, shed  
Tears of remembrance for the dead?

—Now riseth up on either hand  
 A groan from Persia's empty land:  
     Xerxes hath led, Ah, woe is me!  
     Xerxes hath lost, Ah, misery!  
 Xerxes hath wrought his evil thought  
 With galleys on the waste of sea.  
 And where wast thou, the Untouched of Woe,  
 Darius of the conquering Bow,  
 Our Lord, our loved one, long ago?

[*Antistrophe 1*

—Landsmen and seamen, there they lie:  
 O sweeping wing, O darkling eye,  
     Of ships that led, Ah, woe is me!  
     Of ships that lost, Ah, misery!  
 They sank below the beakèd blow  
 And Yâwân smote them down to die;  
 And now along the uncomforted  
 And angry tracks of Thrace, they said,  
 With followers few, the King is fled.

[*Strophe 2*

—But some, by an earlier doom  
     Snared to die,  
 Ah me, where the billows lash  
 The crags that are Cychreus' Tomb,  
 Lie weltering. Wail and gnash  
 Your teeth! Uplift your cry  
 As a dark cloud in the sky!  
     Let your voice drain  
 Its last wild note from pain.

[*Antistrophe 2*

They are torn by the awful sea;  
     They are gnawed, Woe's me,  
 By the voiceless tribes that creep  
 From the womb of the virgin deep:  
 And the desolate houses weep  
 "We are old, we are childless": High  
 It is lifted; it fills the sky.  
     Do these not know  
 The extreme depth of woe?

[*Strophe 3*

—No more o'er the Orient nations  
     The Law of the Persian hath sway.  
 No more do they bring supplications  
     And tribute to Him they Obey,  
 Nor bow them in worship and cower  
 On the earth; for the Great King's power

Is fallen away.

[*Antistrophe 3*

The tongue of mankind is no longer  
In prison; the yoke is undone  
Of greatness; a voice riseth stronger  
From people whose freedom is won.  
The blood-soaked wave-lashed Isle  
Of Ajax hath wrecked by guile  
Persia's great throne.  
[*Re-enter ATOSSA with only two attendants.*

ATOSSA.

He who hath walked the hard ways of the world  
Well knoweth how, when once the storm is hurled  
Upon him, man sees terrors everywhere,  
Even as before, when fate was flowing fair,  
He deemed for ever the same wind would blow.  
Where'er I turn my world is full of woe.  
Against mine eyes shapes of God's anger stare,  
And in mine ears ring voices of despair,  
Such depth of fear hath cast all reason out.  
Therefore without my chariots, and without  
The pride I came with, from the house I bring  
To my son's sire in peace this offering,  
Meet to appease the dim hearts of the dead:  
White milk and sweet from kine unblemishèd,  
Pale honey that the blossom-thieves distil;  
With water blended from a virgin rill;  
And here, true offspring of a mother wild,  
An ancient vine's bright essence undefiled;  
And she whose leaves make spring of all the year,  
The olive, lo, her fragrant fruit is here,  
And Earth's fair children, flowers, engarlanded.

Friends, with such song as worship of the dead  
Beseems, make music, calling from his grave  
Darius, the Great Spirit, to rise and save,  
While I, the Queen, in due procession go  
With draughts earth-slaking to the Gods below.

[*ATOSSA, with her Attendants, offers prayers and libations at the TOMB.*

LEADER.

O Queen, of Persia worshippèd,  
Through earth's deep veins thine offerings send  
While we to Them that guide the Dead  
Make song to hear us and befriend.  
Ye holy Rulers of the Night,  
Hermes and Earth, and King dark-browed,  
Help now and hinder not the proud  
Spirit up-striving to the light;  
Some secret comfort he may know,

He only, that would heal our woe.

CHORUS. [Strophe 1

Doth he hearken, he in glory,  
The great King who is as god,  
To a choked voice, a dumb story  
In words strange yet understood?  
Shall my sorrow force its way until he hear me  
From his realm beneath the sod?

[Antistrophe 1

O ye Lords of the Departed  
And thou Earth, ye shall not stay  
In his goings the proud-hearted  
Spirit, Persia's god alway,  
Such an one as never yet—O guide him to us!—  
In the soil of Persia lay.

[Strophe 2

As ye loved him, love his grave-mound, where the old kind thoughts abide,  
Aïdôneus, thou Upraiser, Aïdôneus, be his guide,  
Where a King stalketh lonely to the light.  
Dâryâsha!

[Antistrophe 2

In the madness of lost battles never wasted he our youth;  
They had named him "God in Counsel," and God counselled him in truth,  
For his hand upon the helm steered aright.  
Dâryâsha!

[Strophe 3

O our Ba'al, ancient Ba'al, be thou near!  
On the crest of this thy grave-mound, Oh, appear!  
Let the crocus-golden sandal give a sign;  
Let the High King's tiara rise and shine;  
Thou our Father, thou undarkened, hear, Oh hear!  
Ba'alênu!

[Antistrophe 3

A thing meet for lamentation and strange woe,  
O thou Master of our Masters, hear and know;  
For a darkness as of death is overhead,  
And the youth of all our people lieth dead,  
Thou our Father, thou undarkened, far below.  
Ba'alênu!

—Long dead, long wept for, why  
Why hath this been,  
King, King, to whom we cry,  
This thing unknown before,  
This two-fold monstrous weeping wage of sin?  
A dead land, and at sea

The ships, the three-bank oarèd ships, Ah me!

Oarèd no more, no more.

Dâryâsha! Ba'alênu!

*[The Ghost of DARIUS rises slowly from out his Tomb. The ELDERS prostrate themselves before him.]*

DARIUS.

O ye among the true supreme in truth,  
Elders of Persia, comrades of my youth,  
What ails my land? Why groans she thus forlorn,  
Her brow sore bruised and her body torn?  
To see my wife but now beside my grave  
I trembled, nor refused the gifts she gave.  
And now ye too in grief, on either hand,  
With necromantic lamentation stand,  
Crying for help. Hard is the road I tread;  
Hard every way, and They that hold the dead  
Have swifter hands to grasp than to let go.  
Yet, seeing I have some power among them, lo,  
I am here. But haste. I may not linger late.  
What strange affliction boweth down my state?

CHORUS.

Oh, we fear to meet thine eye,  
And we fear to make reply,  
For the awe that was about thee from of old.

DARIUS.

'Twas but in answer to your call I clove the darkness and am here.  
What would ye with me? Waste me not this little hour with words of fear,  
But, showing plain what need thou hast, speak on and that old awe forget.

CHORUS.

Oh, we fear to see thy face,  
And we dare not grant thy grace,  
With a tale too bitter to be told.

DARIUS.

So be it. Since that ancient awe beneath your bosoms lingereth yet,  
Thou, aged partner of my bed, thou, Queen of royal lineage, cease  
From lamentation. Let me hear these tidings clearly and in peace.  
Affliction is man's lot, and needs must come to things of mortal birth.  
Evils abundant from the seas are born, and evils from the earth,  
To fall upon mankind, as life draws onward in its lengthening span.

ATOSSA.

O thou exalted on a throne more than the thrones of mortal man,  
In life all Persia held thee blest, a sunlit life of happy breath,

And now, to have died ere eyes have seen our fall, I hold thee blest in death.  
Darius, but a little time sufficeth to make all things known.  
Let the dread word be spoken. All our power is wrecked and overthrown.

DARIUS.

How wrecked? Came there some pestilence from heaven? Or treason in the state?

ATOSSA.

Not so, O King. Our army round the shores of Athens met its fate.

DARIUS.

Athens? And who among my sons hath marched the Persian armies there?

ATOSSA.

The fiery Xerxes. For that march he swept the plains of Asia bare.

DARIUS.

How went he forth, by land or sea—unhappy—on a quest so vain?

ATOSSA.

By land and sea at once he moved, a two-fold front and armies twain.

DARIUS.

So vast an army, and on foot! How could they cross the narrow sea?

ATOSSA.

On Hellê's flood his engines laid a yoke, to make the passage free.

DARIUS.

And this he wrought! With prison bars he curbed the living Bosphorus?

ATOSSA.

'Tis so. Methinks there wrought with him some daemon that he ventured thus.

DARIUS.

Surely, some daemon great in power to shed such darkness o'er his thought!

ATOSSA.

Till now all men may see the end, and know what issue he hath wrought.

DARIUS.

What stroke then hath befallen, that thus ye wail as for a nation lost?

ATOSSA.

The ships defeated fled, and brought destruction on the land-borne host.

DARIUS.

Is all the strength of Persia, all alike, so wasted by the spear?

ATOSSA.

These empty streets of Susa town weep for the men that are not here.

DARIUS.

Alas, ye gods! The faithful band, the help of all in need, undone!

ATOSSA.

And Bactria's armies utterly are perished; none remaineth, none!

DARIUS.

Unhappy son, the youth, the flower of Persia's warriors cast away!

ATOSSA.

And Xerxes, with a faithful few, deserted and alone, they say. . . .

DARIUS.

Came to what end at last, and where? Speak out. Is anything not lost?

ATOSSA.

Came, thanking God, back to the bridge whereby from world to world he crossed.

DARIUS.

And stands again on Persian soil in safety? This is very sooth?

ATOSSA.

It is. 'Mid many rumours this prevaieth. None denies its truth.

DARIUS.

I see all; 'tis the end foretold. How swift the oracle hath sped!  
The word of Zeus, I knew, must be fulfilled; and lo, on Xerxes' head  
It falleth. I had looked for this not until many years were gone,  
But when man hasteth of himself toward sorrow, God will help him on.  
Here is a spring of evils burst on us and ours, which all might know  
Save him who, understanding not, in his hot youth, hath made it flow.  
He thought in fetters, like a slave, the holy Hellespont to bind,  
And Bosphorus, the stream of God, refashion to his mortal mind.  
With hammered bonds of iron he wrought for a great host a far-flung road,  
And, not in wisdom, dreamed a dream that man could match himself with God,  
Subdue Poseidon! What was this but madness of the soul? I fear  
Lest my long garnered treasure fall a prey to the first ravisher.

ATOSSA.

These be the lessons he hath learned, our fiery son, from men of naught,  
Who whispered, clinging to his side, how thou with conquering spear hadst wrought  
Great kingdoms for thy sons, while he, unmanly, never past the gate  
Had moved in arms, nor added one new province to thine ancient state.  
Heard day by day from evil men, such gibings goaded him to seek  
At last some deed of deathless fame, and hurl his armies on the Greek.

DARIUS.

Therefore is done the deed they lusted for,  
Great and undying, such as ne'er before  
Hath fallen, to lay all Susa desolate,  
Not since God first to man this high estate  
Granted, that o'er all realms of Asia one,  
Bearing the staff of law, should rule alone.  
Médos was first to guide his multitude;  
A son of Médos next, whose rule was good,  
For wisdom was the helmsman of his mind.  
Then Cyrus, happiest he of human kind,  
Brought by his rule to all the Faithful peace.  
Lydia and Phrygia did his realm increase,  
Yâwân he drove before him. Yet, I wot,  
Merciful was he, and God loathed him not.  
The fourth to rule the land was Cyrus' son;  
The fifth, false Mardos, shame to the ancient throne  
And soil that bore him; him, with treason true,  
Bold Artaphernes in his castle slew,  
With six good comrades, plighted to the deed.  
And lots were cast, and fell as I had need;  
And many lands with many hosts of war  
I swept withal, but never thus did mar  
My country's fortune. But my son . . . in truth  
A young man's thoughts are but the foam of youth:  
The charge I gave him Xerxes hath forgot.  
O partners of my long life, well ye wot,  
Not all who erst have held this ancient throne  
Such weight of ill have wrought as he alone.

LEADER.

How then, O Lord Darius? Wherein lies  
The burden of thy charge? And in what wise  
May stricken Persia still her welfare seek?

DARIUS.

No more against the regions of the Greek  
Send forth your hosts, whate'er their force and might.  
For Earth herself fights with him in his fight.

LEADER.

The Earth fights with him? How, O Master, say.

DARIUS.

Numbers too great by famine she will slay.

LEADER.

A small and chosen army we can raise.

DARIUS.

Nay, for not even the army that now stays  
In Greece, shall e'er again this country see.

LEADER.

How? Is not all the host of Barbary  
Returned to Asia safe o'er Hellê's strait?

DARIUS.

Few out of many, if God's word of fate  
We trust, as knowing sure from days gone by  
It falleth not here true and there a lie;  
Which thus foretells: By empty hopes made blind  
Xerxes a chosen army leaves behind  
Where old Asôpus, with his rills like rain,  
Boeotia's treasure, waters the wide plain.  
There doth the crown of suffering yet await  
Those godless, those of pride infatuate,  
Who made of Greece their prey, nor held it shame  
To rob her gods and give her shrines to flame.  
Altars lie wrecked, and images of God  
O'erthrown, disbased, and down in rubbish trod.  
For which dire sin dire suffering now is theirs,  
And direr still shall be; nor yet appears  
Dry land beneath the springs: still, still they flow.  
An oozing crust Plataea's field shall know  
Of mire blood-soaked beneath the Dorian lance;  
And piles of dead dumb warning shall advance  
Even to our children's children, that the eye  
Of mortal man lift not his hopes too high.  
Pride in her flower makes full the barren ears  
Of Atê, and no harvest hath but tears.  
Ye, therefore, having seen these deeds this way  
To judgment brought, remember Athens! Yea,  
Remember Hellas! Nor let any man,  
Scorning the lot wherewith his life began,  
For lust of what he hath not, wreck his bliss.  
Zeus sitteth Judge above us. His it is  
To check the uncurbèd dreams of man, and weight  
Is in his arm to bend the crooked straight.

Therefore do ye, being warned of God to move  
In wisdom's way, advise my son, and prove

With grave admonishment, that he may still  
The voice of pride, nor war against God's will.

And thou, mine agèd and belovèd, thou  
Mother of Xerxes, to thy chambers now  
Returning, seek such raiment as is meet  
For princes, and go forth therewith to greet  
Thy son. There be but tatters round his bare  
Breast, of the raiment rent in his despair.  
Go, comfort him. From none but thee, be sure,  
Counsel or comfort will his heart endure.

I to the dark once more shall tread my path;  
And ye, old friends, even in this hour of wrath  
Grant your soul day by day what she may crave  
Of joy. Man takes no riches to the grave.

*[The Ghost of DARIUS sinks beneath the Tomb.]*

LEADER.

'Tis pain to hear the wounds of Barbary,  
Many this day, and many yet to be.

ATOSSA.

Thou Evil Doom, in many a stab thy spite  
Hath pierced my flesh; but this, methinks, doth bite  
Deepest, the shame and loud dishonouring  
Of my son's body. Robes meet for a King  
Shall wait his coming. Never shall my care  
Fail my belovèd in his deep despair.

*[Exit ATOSSA into the Palace.]*

CHORUS.      *[Strophe 1*

Golden and great was the life that the Gods let fall to us,  
    In King Darius' day;  
Griefless, unconquered, divine, he was then all in all to us;  
    And the land loved his sway.  
Straight in that day were our goings; our armies were glorious;  
    Our laws stood firm, like towers;  
Unwounded, unwearied, our men came from battle victorious;  
    Great peace at home was ours.

*[Antistrophe 1*

What far-off peoples he conquered, yet crossed not the Halys,  
    Nor stirred from his own place!  
The brood of the waters, who walk the Strymonian valleys,  
    Heard from the wilds of Thrace;  
The turreted steadings, far up from the Lakeland, unbidden  
    Bowed to his voice as law;  
The proud Hellespontiac cities; Propontis far-hidden;  
    The Euxine's iron jaw.

*[Strophe 2*

Far reacheth the horn of the sea, but the wave-lashed islands,

Close to our shores that ride,  
Lesbos and olive-rich Samos obeyed his hand,  
Myconos, Chios and Paros and Naxos and  
Tênos at Andros' side.

[*Antistrophe 2*

And them in the clasp of the deep, the mid-main highlands  
Of Lemnos, he made strong;  
Rhodos and Cnidos and Icaros' isle were his,  
Cyprian Paphos and Soli and Salamis—  
Whose Mother wrought this wrong!  
In the portion of Yâwân full many a rich Greek town  
His wise thought held in fee;  
Strength unfailing was ever between his hands,  
His mail-clad armies, his aids from a myriad lands.  
O Reversal of God, we are broken, we lie cast down,  
Scourged by the conquering sea.

[*Enter XERXES.*

XERXES.

And am I fallen, O woe is me,  
In this dark coil of misery,  
Pathless? O Fate,  
How hast thou trod beneath thy hate  
The neck of Persia's chivalry!  
What cometh yet of grief to bear?  
My limbs are melted under me.  
O Father Zeus, when I behold  
This remnant of my people there,  
So few, so old,  
May the great darkness veil my head  
With them that battled and are dead!

CHORUS.

—Cry, cry, O King, for the valiant host,  
For the Persian Law and its glory great,  
For the beauty of men, the pride, the state,  
Cut down and lost!

—The land doth groan for her youth, her own,  
The youth of the land whom Xerxes led,  
Crowder of Hades with Persian dead!  
They are gone, they are gone,  
The men very many, the bowmen strong,  
The flower of the land, a myriad throng.

—For the brave, for the true, woe's me, woe's me!  
The land of thy birth, O Lord of the Earth,  
Forlorn, forlorn, is fallen to her knee.

XERXES. [*Strophe 1*

Yea, look upon my face, and cry  
Your fill. A thing of shame am I,  
A thing born to bring misery  
To land and house that cherished me.

CHORUS.

I waft thee on the wind—let it comfort thy return—  
A voice of lost hope, a remembering of fears;  
As the dark Mariandynian uplifteth him to mourn,  
A loud lamentation, that struggleth with tears.

XERXES.      [*Antistrophe 1*]

Cry out, and falter not, though weak  
With weeping, struggling yet to speak.  
All that ye feared might come to be  
Hath come, hath turned and fallen on me.

CHORUS.

Yea, all will I speak, till the whole tale be said,  
The suffering of man, the smiting of the sea,  
The burden of a land whose sons lie dead:  
I will cry, cry my sorrow till the tears run free.

XERXES.      [*Strophe 2*]

Yâwân hath ta'en them  
Yâwân embattled,  
In conquering galleys  
In ship-wallèd war;  
When he clove the dark of the waters  
And the desolate shore.

CHORUS.

—Woe, woe! Cry on till he tell thee all!  
—Where be the rest, thy friends withal,  
The band who fought at the Great King's side?  
Where Pharandâkes, and more beside,  
Sousas, Pelagon, Psammis, Datamas,  
And Sousiskân and Agabatas,  
Agabatana's pride?

XERXES.      [*Antistrophe 2*]

I left them dying;  
Fallen I left them  
From a Tyrian galley,  
Fallen and lost;  
By the headlands of Salamis, battered  
On the rock-riven coast.

CHORUS.

—Why is Pharnouchos not with thee?  
—And Ariomardos, where is he?  
Where is the Lord Seualkes gone?  
Lilaios where, the faithful son?  
Memphis, Tharybis and Mâsistras,  
And Artembar and Hystaichmas?  
I ask these things.

XERXES. [Strophe 3

They looked upon Athens  
The ancient, the loathèd,  
And in one fell music  
They went to their death,  
On the hard land writhing,  
Gaspings for breath.

CHORUS.

Does he too in that ruin lie  
Whom Persia knew for thine own Eye  
Most faithful, Batanôchos' son,  
Counter of myriad myriads, known  
And marshalled? Is Alpistos there  
And Megabâtes, Sêsames,  
And Parthos and Oibâres? Where  
Hast left them?—Left them, and they died  
Held by the foe! We ask for these.  
Wound beyond wound to Persia's pride!

XERXES. [Antistrophe 3

Thou wakest my heart's love  
For the true companions  
With thy tale unforgotten,  
Ill on ill, without rest.  
The heart crieth, crieth,  
From the dark of my breast.

CHORUS.

Others we seek, and more again:  
The myriadarch of Mardian men,  
Xanthês, the Arians' lord, Anchar;  
More, more there are;  
Diaixis, aye, and Arsakas,  
Captains of horse, they are not here!  
Lythimnas tall, and Dadakas,  
And Tolmos of the tireless spear.  
'Tis strange, 'tis strange! Not round thy silken-lined  
Wheel-tent they stand; they follow not behind.

XE. Lost, they are lost,  
 They that were leaders of the host.  
 CH. Lost, alas, without a name!  
 XE. Woe's me, woe's me!  
 CH. Ye gods, how have ye wrought a shame  
 We dreamed not of; her image there  
 Glares as the eyes of Atê glare.

## [Antistrophe 4

XE. Down cast, down cast,  
 Yea, while the span of life shall last!  
 CH. Down to the earth! Is this not plain?  
 XE. New woe, new woe!  
 CH. With sons of Yâwân on the main  
 We met, we fought, we fled afar.  
 Alas, the Persian loves not war!

## [Strophe 5

XE. Down cast indeed; and my great host  
 About me lost!—CH. What is not lost  
 That once was ours, O Thou that hast  
 Led all astray?  
 XE. This that thou see'st of mine array.  
 CH. I see, I see.  
 XE. This holder of the shafts that slay.  
 CH. A quiver . . . this our only stay?  
 XE. Empty of arrows! Woe is me.  
 CH. Little is here.  
 XE. No helpers near.  
 CH. Is Yâwân one that flieth from the spear?

## [Antistrophe 5

XE. Nay, all too valiant. I behold  
 A grief unlooked for.—CH. Thou hast told  
 Of bulwarked Persians backward rolled  
 Seeking to flee.  
 XE. 'Twas that I rent my robe to see.  
 CH. Ah, well-a-day!  
 XE. And more than that of misery!  
 CH. Two-fold and three-fold grievous day!  
 XE. And joyous to our enemy!  
 CH. Our strength undone.  
 XE. My state swept bare.  
 CH. Our friends deep-sunken in the sea's despair.

## [Strophe 6

XE. Wet ye our wounds with tears, and homeward go.  
 CH. Brought low, brought low!  
 XE. Cry as I cry, and beat your bosoms so.  
 CH. Grievous gift from woe to woe!

X<sub>E</sub>. Make music with me.—C<sub>H</sub>. Burdens here  
And burdens yonder, tear on tear!

[*Antistrophe 6*]

X<sub>E</sub>. Lift arms, lift arms, and sorrow as I say.  
C<sub>H</sub>. Ah, well-a-day.  
X<sub>E</sub>. Cry as I cry, and beat your breast this way.  
C<sub>H</sub>. Lord, to hear is to obey.  
X<sub>E</sub>. Lift up your voices.—C<sub>H</sub>. Even so,  
Timed with a black and sobbing blow.

[*Strophe 7*]

X<sub>E</sub>. Now beat your breast, and raise a Mysian song.  
C<sub>H</sub>. Ah, misery!  
X<sub>E</sub>. Tear me your beard's old honour, white and long.  
C<sub>H</sub>. 'Tis torn, 'tis torn right grievously.  
X<sub>E</sub>. And cry, yea, cry!—C<sub>H</sub>. That will I do for thee.

[*Antistrophe 7*]

X<sub>E</sub>. With blade-like hands thy bosom's raiment tear.  
C<sub>H</sub>. Ah, misery.  
X<sub>E</sub>. Think of our soldiers slain, and rend thy hair.  
C<sub>H</sub>. 'Tis torn, 'tis torn right grievously.  
X<sub>E</sub>. Make wet thine eyes.—C<sub>H</sub>. Through tears I cannot see.

X<sub>E</sub>. Each make answer as he hears.  
C<sub>H</sub>. Woe, ah woe!  
X<sub>E</sub>. Then back into the house with tears.  
C<sub>H</sub>. O soil of Persia, hard to tread!  
X<sub>E</sub>. Wailing through the city go.  
C<sub>H</sub>. Through the long streets, even so.  
X<sub>E</sub>. O ye that walked so softly, raise your head,  
Let your grief roam.  
C<sub>H</sub>. O soil of Persia, thou art hard to tread!  
X<sub>E</sub>. O trireme ships, O shoals of Persian dead!  
C<sub>H</sub>. With sobs that scarce find voice I lead thee home.

[*The whole procession has now disappeared into the Palace.*]

---

# NOTES

The ancient Argument tells us that THE PERSIANS was considered to be modelled upon Phrynichus' *Phoenissae* (*Women of Sidon*), and that it was produced in the Archonship of Menon (473-472 B.C.). Since the civil year was calculated from summer to summer, and the Great Dionysia took place in the spring, it follows that THE PERSIANS was performed in the spring of 472. It was part of a tetralogy: *Phineus*, *Persae*, *Glaucus Potnieus*, and *Prometheus*. This last was not our *Prometheus* but a satyr-play called *Prometheus the Fire-kindler*, in which, we are told, a Satyr, seeing fire for the first time and fascinated by its beauty, tried to kiss it and burnt his beard. Of the other plays little is known.

We happen also to have a fragmentary inscription giving lists of the theatrical productions of the time, in which the extract for Menon's year runs: "*Tragedies, Pericles of Cholargê chorêgus. Aeschylus composer.*" We know therefore that the great Pericles was the Chorêgus for THE PERSIANS, that is, he bore the expense and provided the costumes, etc. (See Wilhelm's *Urkunden*, p. 18.)

The historical background of THE PERSIANS may be illustrated by a famous passage in *Herodotus* (VII, 140 ff. abbreviated). "Here I am compelled to express an opinion which will offend most people. I cannot refrain from saying what I believe to be the truth. If the Athenians, in fear of the approaching peril, had deserted their country, or short of that, had stayed and given themselves up to Xerxes, there would have been no attempt to resist the King by sea." . . . (And he could not have been resisted by land, whatever heroism the Spartans might have shown.) "The truth is, the Athenians were the saviours of Hellas. It was they who inspired the rest of Greece to fight, and, next to the Gods, it was they who repulsed the King. The fearful oracles which came from Delphi and spread terror far and wide never succeeded in inducing them to desert Hellas; they stayed and faced the invader.

"They had sent ministers to Delphi and were preparing to consult the oracle, but just as they had entered the sanctuary and sat waiting, the Pythia, whose name was Aristonîkê, uttered this prophecy:

Wretches, why sit ye so still? Begone to the ends  
of the earth,  
From the heights of your ring-walled City begone,  
from the home of your birth;  
For neither the head of her now nor the body abides  
as before,  
Nor ends of the feet nor the hands; nor flesh of the  
trunk any more  
Remaineth, nay, all is destroyed. Red fire and Ares  
in wrath  
Breaketh her down to the dust in his Syrian chariot's  
path.  
Nor wrecketh he Athens alone, but many strong  
cities the same  
Shall suffer, and temples of Gods very many be  
given to flame:  
I see them stand even now, the walls with sweat  
running down;

And shaking with fear are the pillars thereof;  
and over the crown  
Floweth a blackness of blood, for the evil of fate  
they foresee.  
Up, get ye gone from my shrine, and brood on the  
evils to be.

"The Ministers were greatly distressed, but in their despair there came to them a Delphian of the highest reputation, Timon, son of Androbûlus, and advised them to take a suppliant bough and visit the oracle again, appealing as suppliants. The Athenians did as he advised, and said: 'Lord, we pray thee to have mercy on these suppliant boughs, and give us some better oracle about our fatherland. Else we will never leave this shrine, but stay where we are until we die.' The prophetess then gave them a second answer:

Pallas hath prayed the All-Father for mercy, but  
prayeth in vain,  
Urging him long with the words of her lips, the  
thought of her brain.  
Only one word will I speak; it is iron: it yields not  
at all.  
When all things else in the land by the foe are taken  
and fall,  
From haunted Kithairon's steep to Cecrops' boundary  
stone,  
To Tritogeneia is granted a Bulwark of Wood,  
which alone  
Unbroken for ever shall stand, and save thy children  
and thee.  
The horse and the foot are upon thee: await them  
not. Armies I see  
Very great from the plains of the East. Give way  
and seek refuge apace,  
Turning thy back to him now; thou shalt look him  
again in the face.  
O Salamis holy, for thee shall the sons of woman  
be slain,  
Belike when they gather the harvest, belike when  
they scatter the grain."

This second oracle was duly written down and brought back to Athens. There remained the question of its interpretation. Was the "Bulwark of Wood" the old wooden fence round the Acropolis; or again did it mean the ships? But if the ships, why the prophecy of disaster at Salamis? "Now there was in Athens a man who had recently come to the front, by name Themistocles and son of Neocles. This man argued that the prophets had not interpreted the whole of the oracle aright. If the line had really referred to the Athenians it would not have been phrased so mildly. It would have been 'O Salamis cruel,' not 'O Salamis holy,' if she were to be the death of her own people. Rightly understood, the God must have referred to the enemy, not to the Athenians. So he urged them to prepare for a war by sea; that was their 'bulwark of wood.'" (*Herodotus* VII, 140 ff.)

P. 19, ll. 1-2. "Trust":] The Council of Elders were "The King's Trust," as certain officials were The King's Eye, (below l. 980) or the King's Ears.

P. 19, l. 14. Royal Post:] An organized postal service throughout the Persian Empire had been established by Darius (*Herodotus* VIII, 98). It is one of the features which illustrate the great superiority of the Persians to the Greeks in material civilization.

P. 20, l. 16. Agbatana:] (Hangmatâna) the capital of Media; Susa (Shushan, "lily"), capital of Persia.

P. 20, ll. 21 ff. Amistras, Artaphernes, etc.:] Aeschylus makes great play with these grand Persian names. He cites 55 names, all superficially Hellenized. A few seem neither Persian nor Greek (Memphis, Syennesis, Psammis?); a few have been given a completely Greek form (Tolmos, Pelagon) while 42 seem genuine Persian. Aeschylus must have had access to some genuine "army list" or information from prisoners. Like Herodotus, he is impressed by the great variety of nations under Xerxes' rule, from the highly armed Persians and Medes to Ethiopians with painted bodies and stone-headed arrows and Libyans with spears headless but hardened in the fire. (*Herodotus* VII, 61-80.)

P. 22, l. 65. This ode is in the Ionic metre, which is often used in tragedy to produce an Asiatic atmosphere, for example in the *Prometheus* and the *Bacchae*. The base is a four-syllable foot, two short followed by two long ("In the last hour | of the forenoon"), with a common variation, transposing the last long of the first foot with the first short of the second, which makes a more trochaic effect. ("On a misty moisty forenoon.") The last syllable can be dropped.

P. 22, l. 67. A causeway flax-enwoven:] Xerxes' two bridges of boats over the Hellespont made on the popular mind of Greece an impression of inordinate power and arrogance amounting to impiety. (Below, p. 54, ll. 722 ff.) Yet the bridge was made, or at any rate re-made after its destruction, by a Greek engineer, Harpalus. Probably Greece had the engineering skill, but not the capital, necessary for such enterprises. The canal through the Isthmus separating Mt. Athos from the land was an even greater "impiety," but is not mentioned by Aeschylus.

P. 23, l. 108, We have turned us to the sea:] This is felt to be the fatal mistake. See p. 46, l. 560, p. 63, l. 906.

P. 25, l. 135, Delicately proud:] The average Greek admired, while he half despised, the superior refinement and luxury of the Persian civilization. He felt as the Swiss towards the Burgundians, or the Boers towards the British.

P. 25, l. 147, Bow . . . or iron spear-head:] The Persian infantry used bows and wicker shields, making an elastic front quick to advance or retire. The Greeks put their faith in their heavy-armed infantry (*hoplîtai*), armed with spear and shield for close fighting, and admitted a certain prejudice against the archer as a man who did not stand his ground. The Athenians had, as a matter of fact, a very good force of archers.

P. 25, l. 151, Mother to the King:] Atossa, daughter of Cyrus and second wife of Darius Hystaspes, who at this time "held all the power." (*Herodotus* VII, 3.)

P. 26, l. 155, The long trochaic metre, like *Locksley Hall* ("Comfort? Comfort scorned of devils, this is truth the poet sings") is characteristic of early tragedy. It produced, we are told, an effect of speed and excitement, and is used in later tragedy for that purpose (e.g. *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Bacchae*). Curiously enough, the *Locksley Hall* metre has with us a quite different and rather elegiac effect. To avoid this I have added a syllable in front.

P. 26, l. 157, A God of Persia:] Apparently one of Aeschylus' mistakes. The Kings

of Egypt and probably most Asiatic Kings were regarded by their peoples as Gods. It was chiefly the Oriental influence which induced the Roman Emperors to accept divine honours. The Great King may well have been worshipped as a god by his various pagan subject races, but certainly not by his own Zoroastrians.

P. 27, l. 178, The name *Persai* had to the Greeks a peculiarly ominous signification, as in Greek the word meant "to destroy" and is so used in this line. Somewhat similarly the fact that the word *rômê* in Greek means "strength" increased the fear of Rome.

P. 27, l. 180, Atossa's dream:] Compare Io's dreams in the *Prometheus*, and Clytemnestra's in the *Choëphoroe*. Observe that Asia is not represented as "inferior" or "a lesser breed without the law." The two continents are sisters, and equally superhuman in beauty.

P. 28, l. 201, In a flowing stream:] The ordinary methods of Greek superstition after an ominous dream were to wash it away, to show it to the sun, to take it to the altar of some Averter of Evil, and to seek a friendly interpreter. The first interpretation had a special authority—or at least a special effect on the feelings of the dreamer.

P. 29, l. 212, He abideth no man's reckoning:] In the constitutional states of Greece, of course, an official responsible for such disasters would be removed from his post and probably impeached.

P. 29, l. 217, Is aught amid thy dreams amiss:] The Leader virtually says: "I am no expert interpreter of dreams. In yours there are probably both good and bad elements, so pray the gods to fulfil the first and annul the second."

P. 30 f., ll. 231 ff., Discussion of Athens. Herodotus tells us (V, 105) that when the news of the revolt of the Ionians, with Athenian help, was announced to Darius, "he made no account of the Ionians, knowing that they would be easily dealt with, but asked who the Athenians were. When he was informed, he asked for his bow, put an arrow on the string and shot it up into the sky, saying 'Zeus, that it be given me to punish the Athenians!' He also charged one of his servants, when dinner was set before the King, to say three times, 'Master, remember the Athenians.'"

Here, Atossa learns that Athens is very far away; had once defeated a Persian army, at Marathon; possesses the special resource of a silver mine, at Laureion; fights hand to hand with the spear. Then comes a striking point. "If they have no Master over them, surely they will run away?" The answer is given more fully in *Herodotus* VII, 104, where Demarâtus, the exiled Spartan King, answers Xerxes: "They are free, but not free in everything. There is a Master over them called Law, whom they fear more than thy slaves fear thee."

P. 32, l. 247, The Messenger. The man runs like a Persian courier, see l. 14. He appeals first to the strong defences of Persia, then to the life of serene happiness within.—Note the simplicity with which Aeschylus uses his Messenger as contrasted, for instance, with the artistry of the Messenger's entrance in the *Hippolytus*. Contrast also the artistry of the next scene, where the Messenger tries to tell his story but keeps breaking down, while the grief of the Elders finds its expression in lyrics. The technique of choral lyric was mastered earlier in Greece than that of drama.

P. 33, l. 269, Shafts of war:] Metaphorical for the men. Note the first mention of the name Salamis.

P. 34, l. 277, Long cloaks:] So the MSS., but the reading is doubtful.

P. 35, l. 302, Note the gradual recovery of the Messenger. At first he can hardly speak, only cry brokenly that all is lost. Then in this speech he gives a list, but still a rather incoherent and exclamatory list, of all the dead leaders that he can remember—leaders from all countries, and slain in all kinds of different ways. Later on, at l. 353, he will give a clear and detailed account of the battle, though there also his story fails when the defeat turns to sheer disaster.

P. 35, l. 303, The Silêniai were reefs on the coast of Salamis.

P. 35, l. 309, Where the wild pigeons flew:] Many rocks in the Mediterranean are haunted by particular kinds of birds and get such names as Hawks Rock, Pigeon Rock or the like.

P. 37, ll. 337 ff., The numbers. Numbers in military history are notoriously untrustworthy. No sea power, I believe, has ever had as many as twelve hundred ships on the Mediterranean; yet Aeschylus goes out of his way to say "I know the numbers." No doubt he had an official list of the Greek ships, 300 including ten fast "cruisers." He probably had also some official Persian list, either a document captured or a statement drawn up from the examination of prisoners. This was perhaps a list of the whole naval force available to the Great King, not the particular force engaged at Salamis. Even so it seems enormous. It has been suggested that, since the Persian navy had five component fleets, and the Phoenician fleet, which was the best and most famous, consisted of 200 or 207 ships, the thousand total was reached by assuming that all the fleets were the same size as the Phoenician. It may be noticed that Herodotus, in the same way, gives a list of the whole land forces under the command of the King, and seems to imply that they all took part in the invasion of Greece. Persia had, of course, large territories to police and many frontiers to guard. But, when all allowances are made, the Greeks were fighting against very heavy odds.

P. 37, l. 348, Athens still unbroken:] Athens had been occupied by the Persians, the Acropolis taken, and all its temples burnt to the ground. But the Athenians still lived. With their women and children they had evacuated the city and gone across the strait to Salamis, staking all on their "wooden walls." See p. 76.

P. 37, l. 354, Some fiend or madman:] His name was Sikinnos; he was tutor (*paidagôgos*) to Themistocles' sons.

P. 38, l. 366, Three columns:] Perhaps the three divisions correspond to the three channels to be blocked; the first between the mainland and Psyttaleia, the second between Psyttaleia and Salamis, the third on the western side of the island between Salamis and the Megarid. The battle was all in the first two channels.

P. 39, l. 406, A storm of Persian voices:] Obviously a Greek speaking.

P. 40, l. 424, As men kill tunnies:] The shoals of these enormous fish are driven crowding into inlets of the shore where the water gets shallower and shallower and the space less; then they are killed with clubs and harpoons.

P. 41, l. 447, An isle there is:] The small island of Psyttaleia, between the Attic coast and the long promontory of Salamis now called Cape Barbara. Aeschylus magnifies rather strangely this sequel to the great battle. One must remember (1) that the Greeks always attached special honour to hand-to-hand infantry fighting as against sea-fighting or mere archery; (2) they set immense store on picked troops. The loss of 500 true Spartans at Sphacteria brought the Lacedaemonians almost to their knees. It is possible also that Aeschylus wished to give glory to Aristides (see below) as well as to Themistocles.

P. 41, l. 456, Their panoply of bronzen arms:] This body of *hoplitae* (heavy infantry) was led by Aristides, "the Just," who had returned from his ostracism just before the battle.

P. 43, ll. 482 ff., The flight. After Salamis Xerxes lost command of the sea and had difficulties in supplying his land army. One army corps had to be sent back to secure Ionia; another to guard the communications in Thrace; the third was left with Mardonius in Boeotia. This description of a rout in which Xerxes flies with torn garments and empty quiver is symbolical rather than historical. No doubt Xerxes returned to Persia in advance of the main armies with a small attendance. The difficulties of such large forces in obtaining food and drink are hardly exaggerated, and there is no reason to doubt the incident about the crossing of the Strymon.

P. 45, l. 555, Untouched of woe:] The reign of Darius seems to the Elders to have been a sort of Golden Age. In reality, Darius had suffered a severe defeat in Scythia and was the actual originator of the expedition against Greece.

P. 47, l. 584, No more o'er the orient nations:] This final strophe and antistrophe form a change both in metre and feeling from the rest. Instead of the horror of deaths in the sea we are made to feel the liberation of the Ionians from Persia. Through the regret of the Elders one feels the joy of those whose speech is at last "no longer in prison."

P. 48, l. 611, Atossa's sacrifice to the dead is fireless and bloodless. Cf. Iphigenia's sacrifice to Orestes, who is supposed to be dead, *Iph. Taur.* 160 ff. "Unblemished" implies "never put under the yoke."

P. 49, l. 634, Strange yet understood:] Words in the strange language which Darius understands. Aeschylus contrives to give a curious barbaric colour to this invocation.

P. 50, l. 658, Ba'alênu:] the word used by Aeschylus is perhaps an attempt to render some Phoenician form meaning "Our Lord." Similarly Dariâna (or Daryâsha) is not Greek, but doubtless represents some Asiatic form. The actual Greek words in the text here are made to sound barbaric, an effect which I have tried to obtain by repetitions.

P. 50, l. 660, "Crocus-golden" was the royal colour: the tiara was a head-covering of felt, rather like a fez or tarbouche, which the King alone wore upright. It is sometimes represented as covered with jewels.

P. 50, l. 666, Master of our masters:] Master even of the "King of Kings."

P. 51, l. 681, Ghost of DARIUS. The Ghost knows nothing of what has happened on earth since his death, but he does know of an oracle foretelling in detail certain errors which at some time would be committed by a Persian King and followed by certain punishments. He sees from what Atossa tells him that the oracle is being fulfilled.

P. 51, l. 691, I have some power among them:] He is still a King in the underworld, as Agamemnon is enthroned "beside the Kings of the Dark Land." (*Cho.* 358.)

P. 54, l. 722, On Helle's flood he laid a yoke:] See p. 78, l. 67.

P. 54, l. 728, The ships defeated . . . brought destruction on the land-borne host:] This is an exact summary of the military situation. We do not know whether Susa and Bactria suffered in any special degree.

P. 57, l. 765, Medos:] This elementary sketch of the history of the Persian Empire is evidently meant for the Athenian audience, not for the Persian Elders. It shows how little was known of Persia in Aeschylus' time and what a great advance was made by the writings of Herodotus some forty years afterwards. Herodotus was born a Persian subject and had travelled in Persia. "Medos" is merely a personified Media, of the same type as "Ion" or "Amphictyon." Aeschylus does not know the names of Cyaxares or Astyages, nor does he seem to realize that Cyrus was an Elamite who conquered the Median king Astyages.

P. 57, l. 767, For wisdom was the helmsman:] This line suggests that his name was Artaphrenes (or Artaphernes), a name which would sound to a Greek like "Right-minded." See below.

P. 58, l. 774, Mardos:] Or rather the impostor who claimed to be Mardos or Smerdis, brother of Cambyses, and was overthrown by the conspiracy of the Seven, led by Artaphrenes, or Intaphrenes (Vindafrana), as Herodotus correctly names him. Smerdis is called Bardija in the great Behistun inscription, where the whole story is told by Darius himself.

P. 58, l. 792, Earth herself fights with him:] A true judgment; the Persian forces were too large for the country to support, especially when they had lost command of the sea.

P. 59, l. 800, Few out of many:] Few of the 60,000 men left with Mardonius in Boeotia to complete the conquest of Greece. The battle of Plataea, fought on August 27(?), 479 B.C., clinched the victory of Salamis by driving the Persians out of the Greek mainland. It was specially, as Aeschylus generously mentions, a victory of the Spartans.

P. 59, ll. 810 ff., Altars lie wrecked, and images of God O'erthrown, etc.:] The explanation of these proceedings is to be found in *Herodotus* I, 131: "These are the customs which, to my knowledge, the Persians practise. They do not count it lawful to erect images, temples and altars, and count it sheer folly to do so. This, I understand, is because they do not believe in anthropomorphic gods, as the Greeks do." The Zoroastrian religion condemned idolatry. The impression made by this iconoclasm, like that of Cromwell's troops in English churches, lasted long. Alexander when invading the Persian Empire made a point of treating all sacred objects with respect in order to emphasize the difference between his conduct and that of Xerxes 250 years before. (*Polybius* V, 10.) Line 811 is repeated in *Agamemnon* 527 to show the final unforgiveable Hubris of Agamemnon in Troy.

P. 60, ll. 829-836, The reception of Xerxes:] The Elders are to give him advice and "grave admonishment"; but before that, his mother is to soothe his despair and bring him suitable garments. Evidently she is supposed to have done this before his entrance at l. 908. He does not enter in torn garments and he takes patiently the "admonishments" and even the sarcasm of the Elders. The empty quiver at ll. 1017 ff. is the only material sign of his ruin. The breast-beating and tearing of hair and of raiment (ll. 1054 ff.) are merely symbolic.

(Another possible view is that the lines about Atossa clothing and comforting her son are an addition; originally he entered in torn raiment, with dust on his head and an empty quiver, to symbolize his defeat; the Elders received him with bitter reproaches—as they certainly do—and tore their hair and garments—as they are said to do. This would imply that Aeschylus, or some early producer of the play, had left alternative versions to be used as preferred. Cf. *Eumenides*, ll. 404 ff., where a choice is allowed between two ways of bringing Athena on to the stage, either

driving a chariot or flying through the air on a *méchanê*.)

P. 61, ll. 852 ff., This interesting lyric tells the fall of the Persian Empire in the Aegean and the foundation of the Athenian. In the Golden Age of Darius there was "the Law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not" (Daniel vi. 8), peace at home, victory abroad. Though he never crossed the Halys, the principal river of Asia Minor, and at one time the boundary between the Lydian and Persian Empires, he was obeyed by nations far away: by the Paeonian lake-dwellers in the Strymon valley and by the other Paeonians who lived higher up in fortified villages; by the Greek cities of the Hellespont, Propontis and Euxine; by the islands near the coast and the islands far out to sea, and by the Ionian cities of Anatolia. Athens never held the valley of the Strymon, but most of the islands and the Ionian coast were included in the Confederacy which grew into the Athenian Empire.

The "Mother" or metropolis of these Ionian settlements was, of course, Athens.

P. 63, l. 914, This remnant of my people:] The Elders themselves.

P. 64, l. 939, The Mariandÿni were a tribe on the Black Sea who bewailed in the height of summer a young Vegetation God, like Thammuz, Adonis, Linos, etc., called Bormos. Lamentation in the full sense, including inarticulate cries, tearing of the cheeks, prepared performances, etc., was barbaric, and forbidden in Athens by a law of Solon. In tragedy, where lamentation formed part of the original ritual, it is generally treated as a strange exotic performance in the style of some Asiatic people. Cf. l. 1054, "a Mysian song."

P. 65, l. 955, Cry on, till he tell thee all:] One member of the Chorus encourages another to demand the full account from Xerxes.

P. 66, ll. 979 f., The "King's Eye" was an official:] see on ll. 1-2. The army was organized in units of a myriad under a "myriadarch." Herodotus misunderstands this (VII, 60) but is right in making most of his calculations by myriads.

P. 67, l. 1001, 'Tis strange:] The Elders pretend to be surprised at not finding these great officers with the King. "They are not accompanying his luxurious travelling-carriage; perhaps they are following behind? No!"—There is the same sarcastic tone in l. 1013, "The Persian loves not war!" and l. 1025—The Ionian, whom we call timid, is apparently not so.

P. 70, l. 1072, Ye that walk so softly:] Barefooted peoples think much about their feet. To "walk delicately" was a sign of luxury: it implied either soft ground or smooth streets to walk upon, or else the possession of well-made shoes—both of them aspirations beyond the reach of the average hardy Greek. The "soft-footed Lydian" (*Herodotus* I, 55), the Princess in the *Medea* (1164) and Ganymedes in heaven (*Tro.* 821) all "walked delicately."

This lamentation is not only written with great technical skill, but seems to combine an expression of utter defeat and desolation with a certain nobleness and dignity. The conquered oppressor is not mocked.

---

# OVERLEAF

*particulars of publications  
of similar interest  
issued by*

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD  
LONDON: 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.1

---

## **Liberality and Civilization**

by GILBERT MURRAY

*Cr. 8vo.                      Hibbert Lectures                      2s. 6d.*

"Liberality, in distinction from Liberalism, is the subject of Dr. Murray's lectures, and there is no one in the country who exemplifies its virtues better than himself. . . . Dr. Murray's lectures have the most practical application to the world to-day; and there are few civilized men who would disagree with his ideals."—*Spectator*

## **The Art of the Logos**

by J. A. K. THOMSON

*La. Cr. 8vo.                      7s. 6d.*

"Uncommonly delightful . . . contains the most persuasive and illuminating account I have ever read of the blending influences of art and history at a time when they were just about to be torn asunder."—*Observer*

## **Symbolism and Belief**

by EDWYN BEVAN

*Demy 8vo.                      Gifford Lectures                      15s.*

The questions raised in these lectures are some of the most fundamental in religious controversy to-day. How far do our anthropomorphic conceptions of God correspond with any Reality? Can any line be drawn between symbolism and truth? The Lectures are not concerned with the visible symbolism of objects and gestures in worship, but with the ideas, largely symbolical, by which in religion what lies outside the range of the sensible world is represented.

## **The March of Literature**

by FORD MADOX FORD

*Sm. Royal 8vo.*

16s.

We believe that no book comparable to this has ever been written in the English language on the literature of the world—if only because the combination of rare qualities required for its creation approaches the unique. Those who know Ford Madox Ford as one of the most distinguished of living stylists, or those who know him as one of the most distinguished of living novelists, will be astonished at the fantastic range of his reading and at the organization of his memory; those who come to this book, as many will, simply to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the literature of all countries and all civilizations until our own day, will be no less astonished at the richness and lucidity of understanding which is displayed and made manifest in the arrangement, the correlation, the critical and human commentary on this immense and multitudinous body of fact. We believe that this work will rank among the great histories. Intensely and unremittingly personal as it is, the vast subject with which it deals is yet squarely placed, and is illumined, not obscured, by the author's personality.

## **The Analects of Confucius**

*Translated and annotated by* ARTHUR WALEY

*Demy 8vo.*

10s. 6d.

"The real Confucius and his teaching restored to their original significance by a scholar admirably equipped to undertake the difficult task."—*Time and Tide*

"Undeniably a book essential to every serious library, and a book which no cultivated person can afford to neglect."—*New Statesman*

## **Science and Politics in the Ancient World**

by BENJAMIN FARRINGTON

*Demy 8vo.*

10s. 6d.

Professor Farrington has contributed something fresh to the understanding of ancient thought, and in particular to the understanding of the philosophy of Epicurus and of his Roman disciple, Lucretius. At the same time he writes with that easy charm of style which won his successful little book in the Home University Library so wide a circle of readers. He makes an original and important contribution to his subject, applying a modern outlook and first-rate scholarship to classical study. But the problems are closely analogous to those of to-day. This is by no means only a specialists' book.

*All prices are net*

---

**Transcriber's Notes:-**

The line numbers refer to the lines in the original Greek text, not the lines as translated.

Minor punctuation errors corrected.

[End of *The Persians*, by Aeschylus, translated by Gilbert Murray]