THE

BACCHÆ OF EURIPIDES,

TRANSLATED INTO

ENGLISH VERSE;

With a Preface,

BY

JAMES E. THOROILD ROGERS.

OXFORD and LONDON:
JAMES PARKER AND CO.
1872.
PREFACE.

FROM his own time to our day, the poetry of Euripides has been visited with very unfriendly criticism. The earliest among the extant plays of Aristophanes holds the poet's treatment of tragic subjects up to ridicule. One of the latest plays of the same author is a sustained attack on his literary reputation and on his moral character, and was written after the death of Euripides. The author of the "Lysistrate" charges him with immorality, and with choosing grossly sensational topics; the wit who sketched Heracles in the "Birds," Dionysus and Æacus in the "Frogs," assails him for degrading the majesty of gods and heroes, and insinuates that he is an unbeliever. Schlegel and Müller, among moderns, have conceived that these attacks are genuine expressions of that indignation which an eminently single-hearted person might very properly feel against a writer who deliberately
intended to degrade the literature of his country, and sap its morals.

Many among the contemporaries of Euripides held him in very different estimation. The story of the admiring Syracusans, who liberated such prisoners as knew the poems of Euripides, is probably a myth; but it is a myth which certainly would not have been circulated, had there been no countenance for the story. Socrates, we are informed, never went to the theatre, except when the plays of Euripides were being exhibited. The poets and critics of a later age are said to have valued his dramas very highly. This is not remarkable, as apart from his imaginative and dramatic powers, Euripides is essentially a poet of civilized life and culture. There are few authors whose writings supply so many appropriate quotations as those of Euripides do. He has the art of describing in one or two felicitous lines of epigram, a whole class of character.

It is not, I think, difficult to see why Aristophanes attacked him so mercilessly and so persistently. Euripides belonged to what may be called the liberal party at Athens, to the reformed democracy. There was in Athens,
as in every other Greek city, a party of privilege, an old aristocracy, the heads of which sighed for an opportunity which might enable them to recover the power which they wielded before the days of Pericles. At last they did recover the power, and history tells us how they used it, as well during the later years of the Peloponnesian war as after it, when the city fell under the rule of the thirty tyrants. The comic poet belonged to the aristocratical faction.

Aristophanes is one of those rare men, in whom intense professional conservatism is flavoured by wit of the very highest order. Such men were Swift and Canning. These persons do very effectual service to the politicians with whom they are associated. They are seldom born in the ranks of that party to which they attach themselves, but transfer their services to it, either because they have been disappointed in their advances to the leaders of more liberal thought, or because they see a clear prospect of distinction in a career where they will meet with few rivals. We are informed that the pedigree of the great comic poet was open to challenge, and that it was
challenged, though unsuccessfully, by some of those political enemies on whom he lavished his libels.

The manner in which Aristophanes assails Euripides is quite in keeping with what one might expect from a political enemy. He charges Euripides with being a person of low birth. He tries to excite prejudice against him, by hinting that he cherishes sinister designs against morality and religion. He exaggerates tricks of manner or style into monstrous blemishes. But he is especially fond of identifying a man, who argued that all social reformation can be worked out by the moral forces which exist in society, with those fanatics who wish to reduce everything to a chaos, in order that society may be re-constructed on their model. Aristophanes does not attack the true sophist, who was generally an ally of the party in which absolutist principles were looked upon with favour, but he adroitly hints that the sophist whom well-meaning Athenians looked on with horror, was to be searched for in the ranks of the reforming party.

Numerous quotations could be given from the dramas of Euripides, which prove him to
have been an eminently patriotic writer. It was his practice, under the portraiture of the ancient kings and heroes of Attica, to inculcate the maintenance of those national and international obligations\(^a\), which constituted the public law of Greece, and on the maintenance of which every honest Athenian prided himself. With the better part of Athenian conservatism Euripides was as thoroughly imbued as the old party was of which Aristophanes professed himself the champion.

It is by no means improbable that the persistent animosity of the aristocratic party at Athens may have induced Euripides, at or about the year 408, to accept the invitation of Archelaus, and to take up his residence in Macedonia. The Temenid kings of Macedonia were men of considerable abilities, and Archelaus was by no means the least capable of the family. Thucydides\(^b\) tells us that he undertook the building of fortifications in Macedonia, and the construction of roads. During the later years of the Peloponnesian war, he occupied an important political position. But he also affected to be a patron of literature and

---

\(^a\) See e.g. Antiope. Frag. 38. \(^b\) Thuc., ii. 100.
the fine arts. Euripides and Agathon accepted his invitations. Socrates declined them. He employed Zeuxis the painter to decorate the walls of his palace. He established a festival in honour of the Muses. In the same manner, a few years after the end of the reign of Archelaus, Dionysius the elder aimed at a similar reputation as a patron of art and letters, and drew many learned Athenians to the Syracusean court. Perhaps, as the fortunes of the great republic declined under the pressure of a protracted and demoralising war, the literary men of Athens were tempted to migrate to these courts. It does not appear, from stories told of them, that their character was improved by the change.

Even among the Temenid kings, Archelaus was conspicuous for his vices. A sketch of his career is given in the "Gorgias" of Plato e.

"A wrong-doer to be sure he was," says Polus by way of triumphant rejoinder to Socrates, who has been arguing that happiness cannot belong to any but the virtuous; "he had no right to the crown which he now possesses. His mother was a slave of Alcetas,

e Gorgias, 471.
the brother of Perdiccas, and by rights he was slave to Alcetas also. Had he been willing to follow your notions of justice, he would have been, if your reasoning is to hold, happy enough. As it is he has become astonishingly miserable. First of all, he invited his master and uncle, (on the pretence that he would surrender the office of which Perdiccas wished to deprive him) entertained him, and made him and his son Alexander, his own cousin, and a man about his own age, drunk. Then he put them into a carriage, took them off by night, murdered, and put them out of the way. After these misdeeds, he was certainly unconscious of being the most miserable of men, and was utterly unrepentant; for a little afterwards, he did not seek to attain happiness by bringing up his own brother, the legitimate son of Perdiccas, and a child of about seven years old, to whom the kingdom rightly belonged, and by transferring his authority to the boy. But he threw him into a tank and drowned him, telling his mother Cleopatra that the child had fallen in and been drowned while he was chasing a goose. Therefore as he is the greatest wrong-doer in Macedonia, he is the most miserable of the
Macedonians, and not the happiest; and perhaps there are Athenians, beginning with you, who would choose to be any Macedonian living rather than Archelaus."

During his residence at the court of Archelaus, Euripides wrote the play which is translated in this volume. It was brought on the Athenian stage, after the poet's death, and in the name of his son, together with two other tragedies, one of which, the "Iphigenia in Aulis," is still extant. These tragedies were written when Euripides was seventy-five years old.

In Attica the Dionysia was a decorous festival, long connected with these literary contests, to the institution of which we owe the drama of ancient Greece. But the festival was a different affair in the highlands of Macedonia, Epirus, and Thrace. The wild blood of these half-savage mountaineers was stirred to the wildest excitement under the energy of religious enthusiasm. It was at a Bacchic festival that Philip of Macedon met and became enamoured of Olympias, the mother of Alexander, and the Brunehaut of ancient Greece. "She," says Plutarch d, "affected the inspiration of these orgies

---

d Alex. II.
more than any other persons did, and exhibited the strangest enthusiasm, for she carried about in the companies huge tame snakes, which used to slide out of the mystic baskets carried by the Bacchants, and wind round the thyrsi and wreaths of the women, so as to frighten the men."

It is easy to see how so strange and wild a ritual would have appealed to the imagination of Euripides, and have suggested the circumstances under which he tells the tragical story of Pentheus and his mother Agave.

The orgie of the Bacchants is expressly stated by Euripides to have been free from any licentiousness. It was, however, constantly within the risk which attends every extravagance of religious excitement. This risk was of course greater in the nature-worship of the Greeks, but is not peculiar to it. Unless they are grievously maligned, the Flagellants and the Anabaptists fell into notable excesses.

We learn from Livy (book xxxix.), that the introduction of the worship of the Greek Bacchus into Rome (for the Romans had a home-bred worship of Liber, which was harmless enough) was followed by the most flagitious
conducted. According to Livy, whose story is probably taken from the public archives, the cultus was introduced into Etruria, and thence conveyed to Rome by a Greek priest and soothsayer. The original copy of the senatorial resolution, by which this worship was forbidden, and penalties were imposed on those who disobeyed the law, is still extant. Either the Roman nobility were peculiarly prone to vice, or the Dionysiac orgies had greatly degenerated in the second century before our era.

However unfriendly criticism has been to the other dramas of Euripides, all persons have praised or admired the poem which is here presented to the English reader. Even Schlegel has a good word for it, for he considers it as only inferior to the "Hippolytus." There are in my opinion reasons why it should be considered not only as the best play of Euripides, but as the highest effort of ancient dramatic power, as a signal proof that a great poet never grows old. But it possesses a peculiar interest which is independent of its poetical merits.

The play represents a catastrophe which overtakes a man in consequence of his deliberately refusing to admit the cultus of a new god
into the Theban state, and of his attempting to coerce and chastise those who had introduced, acknowledged, and worshipped this new deity. The hero of the play, Pentheus, is not, as in some other Greek plays, held in bondage to some mysterious destiny, as Oedipus is, or the object of Olympian jealousy, like Heracles and Prometheus, or a sacrifice to calumny, like Hippolytus, or the victim of an ancient and savage superstition, as Iphigenia, Polyxena, and Macaira are. The nearest parallel to the tragedy of Pentheus is that of Antigone. But Antigone deliberately disobedies a king’s edict, preferring her sisterly duty, and her respect for the unwritten law of Greek usage to the mandate of a hot-tempered and arbitrary despot, who can find no better excuse for his proclamation than an irrational patriotism.

There is every excuse for the course of action which Pentheus adopts. Thebes, over which he has lately been made ruler, by his grandfather’s abdication, is the first city in Greece

* The name of the king is derived from πενθεῖν, ‘to mourn,’ lugere, and puns are twice made on it in all gravity and seriousness. Such a trick seems strange to us, but it was natural to the Greeks. So Esau puns on the name of Jacob, even when under the influence of the most passionate feeling.
which is visited by this new enthusiasm. The circumstances of this irregularity are scandalous. The women of Greece were kept in almost oriental seclusion. Public opinion required that they should hardly be seen, and never be talked about. Most Greeks thought that no good came of the latitude which local custom permitted to the Spartan women. But now, under the impulse of Dionysus, and through the direct agency, as was reported, of an emissary of this new religion, who had come to Thebes attended by a mob of foreign females, equipped in the strange manner which these orgies required, all the Theban women had trooped off to the mountains. The mother of Pentheus, Agave, and her two sisters, Ino and Autonoe, had been the most conspicuous leaders of this extraordinary proceeding. The pretensions of this new god are connected with a scandal which had happened in the family of Cadmus. One of his daughters, Semele, had been destroyed by lightning, and as though to prove that she had grievously offended Zeus, the place where she had been smitten was still smouldering with the bolt which fell on her. She had been unchaste, and had laid her offence
on Zeus, who had punished her in this unmistakeable manner for her falsehood. Now, however, it is asserted that her apology was founded on fact, and that these suspicious orgies were the proper worship of a god, whose origin was so equivocal, and whose appearance was so undesirable.

Pentheus is absent from Thebes when these events occur. On his return, he deems it his duty, as chief of the state, to take instant and energetic measures in order to arrest the mischief. His first act is to imprison all the women whom he can find. He resolves on sparing none of the guilty parties, not even his mother and aunts. In particular he is determined to arrest as soon as possible the mountebank who has been the promoter of these scandals, and to do summary execution on him. To his intense astonishment and disgust, as he is stating what his intentions are, he sees Teiresias, the great Theban prophet, and his own grandfather Cadmus, equipped for the orgies, and about to celebrate them. He instantly suspects that Teiresias has practised on his grandfather’s dotage, and that he has sinister motives in acknowledging Dionysus.
The stranger is Dionysus himself. He has led the women from Asia, but they do not suspect who their guide is. He has disguised himself, because he knows that the three sisters have spread the calumny about his mother, and that Pentheus has refused to recognise him. He is therefore resolved on compelling the Thebans to adopt his worship. The audience as usual is in the secret, for the god speaks the prologue. Dionysus, however, keeps his disguise till the death of Pentheus is at hand. It is a feature in this play, that the issue of the story is left uncertain in the prologue.

After an altercation with Teiresias, whose suspected collusion the king punishes by ordering the destruction of his augural seat, Pentheus sends one of his guard to capture the stranger. This is soon effected, for Dionysus makes no resistance. The man is, however, evidently alarmed at the mystery which surrounds his prisoner. The women whom Pentheus had imprisoned, have, he says, been miraculously released, and have rushed off to the mountains. Then comes a dialogue in single lines, between the king and the captive. Pentheus does not carry out his threat of ordering the stranger
to instant execution, though he is very much irritated at the freedom with which the disguised Dionysus talks with him. He determines at last to imprison him in the stable, and goes off to superintend the process of chaining him or, as we learn afterwards, to do the work himself.

After an interval, an earthquake, which shatters and sets fire to the house of Pentheus, occurs. Dionysus reappears to the chorus of foreign Bacchants and narrates how he has baffled his captor, and has begun the business of maddening him. Pentheus returns, indignant at the escape of the stranger, and recommences his altercation with him. He is interrupted by the appearance of a herdsman, who gives an account of the doings of the Bacchæ in the hills. After this narrative is concluded, Pentheus is more than ever resolved, though with increasing wildness of manner and language, to chastise the women.

By this time, however, the influence of the god begins to work on him. Dionysus, though with an air of haughtiness and indifference as to whether his advice will be taken, offers to conduct Pentheus to the spot where the Bacchæ
are lurking, in order that he may, if he pleases, take measures to wreak his vengeance on them. Gradually he induces him to contemplate the disguise in which, as he insists, Pentheus must needs spy them out. He is not only to don the Bacchant's garb, but to disguise himself as a woman. After reiterated statements that he cannot and will not do it, though he returns to the subject as if fascinated by it, Pentheus leaves the stage with a feeble declaration that he shall take counsel with himself as to the plan proposed, though one can see that he is wearied and puzzled. Dionysus declares that he has him in his net, and that his destruction is now assured.

When the two return, Dionysus has assumed some of the attributes of his divinity, and Pentheus is utterly distraught. He is entirely under the Dionysiac impulse, and though he still harbours his purpose of punishing the women, he feels no shame at the extravagance of his costume, and is even anxious to march in his disguise through the most frequented streets of Thebes. Dionysus plays with his victim, and ironically assures him of the distinction which his exploit will confer on him.
This portion of the play is to our taste an offensive feature. To the Greek, who consoled himself for the misfortunes of life, by ascribing them to the anger or caprice of some offended deity, the dialogue was perfectly natural.

Pentheus is accompanied by an attendant, a slave of the family, who returns in great distress, and tells the story of his master's death. He is at first indignant at the satisfaction with which the Chorus receives the news, but excuses them as being foreigners. As he is concluding his story, he hears the voice and step of Agave, who is coming back with the head of her son in her hands. She is under the impression that she has slain a lion, and is holding the head of the beast, over whose slaughter she exults. After a dialogue with the Chorus, she invites Thebes to rejoice with her, and praise her for her prowess, and bids those about her summon her son Pentheus, in order that he may witness the feat by which she has distinguished herself.

Cadmus enters on the other side of the stage, bringing with him such fragments of the body of his grandson as he can find. Agave has probably quitted the stage; but she returns
at the end of his speech, and a dialogue occurs between the father and daughter. For some time she persists that she has slain a wild beast, but suddenly her mind returns, and she becomes conscious of the deed which she has done. Agave seems stupified with grief, and Cadmus, after explaining why this calamity has come on them, gives way to a bitter wail over the misery which his grandson's death is to him.

Here a considerable portion of the play is lost. It appears from notices given by those who read the perfect play, that Agave dwelt with intense grief and tenderness over the mangled remains of her son. It has been suggested that a whole page of the original manuscript has been torn away. Porson supposed that two lines which are contained in a Cento from the Greek tragedians, and which, like the evangelical Virgil of Alexander Ross, constructed a Passion of Christ out of the selected verses, are part of Agave's lamentation over her son's corpse. It has even been suggested, but very superfluously, that the monk who made the compilation, mutilated the original, in order to conceal his theft. The plagiarists of the middle ages were probably not so cau-
tious, for they entertained no great alarm that their thefts would be detected.

The play is resumed in a speech of Dionysus, the commencement of which is also lost. The god explains the reason of his wrath, and of the punishment of Pentheus, coupling his statement with a prediction of the wanderings which Cadmus has yet to endure. After further lamentations and endearments between Agave and her father, the play concludes with a short reflection, which is found word for word in four other dramas of Euripides. Hermann has given an odd explanation of this repetition, that when the play came to an end, as the audience got up and made a noise, the poet appended a conclusion which nobody need care to hear.

There is no play of Euripides, not even the "Hecuba" or the "Troades," which is more painfully real than the "Bacchæ" is, none which more thoroughly bears out Aristotle's criticism, that Euripides is the most tragic of poets. Again, no play better illustrates the criticism of Sophocles, that "I exhibit persons as they ought to be, but Euripides as they are." Horrible as the story is, the language

---

\(^{f}\) Poetics, 13, 10.  
\(^{g}\) Ibid., 25, 11.
of Agave and Cadmus is exceedingly natural, and profoundly pathetic. The passage referred to above as lost from the play, was beyond question very touching.

On the whole, however, the "Bacchæ" is not a tragedy of character, but of action. Pentheus is a young monarch, full of a sense of public duty, quick-tempered and resolute. Had not Dionysus thwarted him, he would have done his best to have put an end to the scene which scandalised him so much. But he is not unjust in his anger; he listens to Dionysus, and to his cost. When the herdsman is about to tell the doings of the Bacchæ in the mountains, he dreads the king's displeasure, but is instantly assured that no indignation can be felt against any one but the real culprits, and those who have abetted them. Pentheus is excessively angry, but then the provocation is excessive.

Teiresias is the familiar wise man or prophet of Greek tragedy, who gives good advice, but is not listened to. He is suspected of having some sordid or professional end in the advice which he gives. Nor is this treatment of the prophet a sneer of Euripides. The same personage is treated in precisely the same way by
the "Œdipus King" of Sophocles, who plainly asserts that the prophet has been suborned by Creon. In the "Antigone," Creon makes a similar charge against Teiresias, and hints broadly that prophets are apt to be corrupt. Aristophanes has no great respect for dealers in predictions, and there is other evidence to the effect that in the fifth century before our era, the reputation of those who foretold the future was not in very high estimation at Athens. Even the Pythia was not insensible to a bribe, as the Athenians knew to their cost.

The part played by Cadmus is slight. Euripides intended, it appears, to suggest that his faculties had been weakened by age. This is the tone of what he says to Teiresias and Pentheus. He rises to a higher pitch in his lamentation over his grandson's body, and in his sorrow at the exile into which he is driven by the prediction of Dionysus. But even these passages are senile.

The two narratives, one in which the doings of the Bacchæ, the other in which the journey and death of Pentheus are told, are singularly vigorous. Greek poetry rarely describes a scene, but nearly every line in these two speeches is
a picture. These peculiarities of the play have often been commented on.

The choral songs are in the best style of Euripides. The Chorus takes the part of an actor, as Horace advises; for the threats of Pentheus are as much directed against them as against their leader, the disguised Dionysus. Hence each of the songs has its own character. The first is the hymn to Dionysus; the next expresses the alarm which the Chorus feels at the king's wrath; in the third they invoke in their despair the god whom they worship; the fourth reflects the hope they feel in the final victory of Dionysus; and the fifth is a loud burst of anticipated revenge, when the god is leading the unhappy man to his doom.

But the "Bacchae" is eminently a character of action, and of one action especially, the interest in this action accumulating as the story passes on. Pentheus is made to fall, after violent efforts against such a catastrophe, unconsciously and hopelessly into the hands of the avenging god. As he talks with Dionysus, although he chafes at the provocation which his foe gives him, the strong will of the god, who is calm even when the king is most in-
furiated, and who finally mocks and plays with his victim, gradually overpowers and fascinates the resistance of the strong-willed man. It first makes him irresolute, then distracts him, then makes him as passive as a mesmerist is said to make his patients. Despite his efforts, the god overmasters him, and leads him, crazed as an idiot, who dresses himself up in awkward finery, to a terrible death. Agave, too, is represented as having the superhuman strength and ferocity of a maniac. Unfortunately we have lost the passage in which, after the revulsion from her frenzy, she becomes a miserable and mourning mother. The action of the play, though intense, is exceedingly simple in its character.

But beyond its dramatic merits, the "Bacchæ" has a singular psychological interest. It is penetrated throughout by a very strong devotional spirit, especially, but not exclusively, in the choral passages. In almost every other play of Euripides, the poet opposes a rational and philosophical theory to the extravagances or anomalies of popular Greek religion. Here, however, the "wisdom," which he dwells on elsewhere as so powerful a corrective to vulgar or gross beliefs, is made subordinate and in-
ferior to a strange, foreign, and dangerous fanaticism. The motives of Pentheus are good and patriotic, his policy seems nothing but the maintenance of public decency, but he is sacrificed under the most revolting circumstances, because he resists what it seems he could not have helped resisting, if he fulfilled his duty as a king. If he is self-willed and obstinate, he has no private or selfish motive in the course which he adopts.

I agree with those critics who see in the "Bacchae" a striking contrast to the occasional free-thinking tendencies which mark the other and earlier plays of Euripides. The strange thing is, that the occasion of this recantation should have been the representation of the Dionysiac orgie, as it was practised by the hill-tribes of Macedonia. It is not wonderful that Euripides heightened every circumstance of the action; he must, to be faithful to his art, have done so; but it is surprising that he should have chosen the deeds of the Theban Bacchæ, and the story of Pentheus, as that portion of the popular creed to which he should signify his allegiance, and of which he should make profession.

Such a recantation does not seem to consist
with the nature of things, and still less with the nature of the man. Euripides is not a writer of a warm, impulsive, impassioned turn. He is skilful in portraying domestic feelings, for his "Alcestis," "Iphigenia," and "Ion," are the best illustrations which the Greek drama affords us of the tenderness and simplicity of domestic life. But his most tragic characters have an almost unpleasant severity and sternness. One might have expected that, on re-accepting the religion of his country, he would have taken refuge in those grander conceptions of the ancient Olympus, which Æschylus presented, and in which he found a spiritual interpretation; or have rested in that placid acquiescence in a beneficent power, whose acts might be inexplicable, but must be good in the end, which characterises the theology of Sophocles.

In point of fact, however, the peculiar habit of free-thought which Euripides represents, is the most unchangeable of mental states, pro-

\[h\] No passage in this poet's writings appears to indicate the character of his mind more clearly than a fragment of the "Tympanistæ" (Dindorf, Soph. Frag. 563) does:—

"Oh! joy of joys! out of the crazy ship
To reach one's home and, half asleep, to hear
The frequent raindrops pattering on the roof,"

"
vided only that the intellect and moral faculties of the man remain unimpaired. It is I believe a rule, to which there is no exception, that when a really great mind frames for itself a religious, a moral or a political system, and lives persistently for the end and the means which it professes, it cannot lose its identity, unless it loses its vigour. That Euripides had strong and clear opinions on a variety of philosophical and social topics, is amply proved. That the vigour of his mind was not impaired when he wrote the play which I have translated, will be I hope equally manifest even to those who make acquaintance with this work from my translation only. I cannot believe that at seventy-five years of age, a man like Euripides was ready to repudiate all those convictions which had influenced him during an active and fruitful life. Space does not allow me to attempt a statement of what these convictions were.

I am obliged, then, to suggest another explanation of the sentiments which are contained in this play. I have already referred to the residence of Euripides at the court of Archelaus, and have written out the account which Plato
has given of this monarch's career and character. I am persuaded that it was not possible for Euripides to have become a courtier, to have looked on the conduct of the king with satisfaction, or to have flattered a successful and profligate tyrant, however generous a patron of art he might have found him.

It is possible, I think, that Euripides may have recognised in the religious rites of the Macedonian Bacchants, one of those correctives to the insolence and wantonness of an autocrat which enthusiasm always supplies. The medicine-man and the caboceer check the tyranny of savage chieftains, the dervish and fakir reprove and denounce the vices of Eastern sovereigns. So Euripides might have believed that the worship of Dionysus, with all its wild excesses, was a protest against the engrossing will of an able and unscrupulous monarch, was a power to which an autocrat is constrained, in some degree at least, to submit. Religious enthusiasm has sometimes been enlisted on the side of human liberty, though the alliance is dangerous, the assistance capricious. So the poet may have argued—"To the power of a vigorous and shrewd despot, there is only one check.
This is the alarm which he may be made to feel that he is fighting against the divine will, and thereupon rousing an hostility which he is unable to coerce, and by which, if he dare to resist it, he will assuredly be overmastered. The coarser the nature is, the more energetic will be the check which a fearless enthusiasm supplies. This Macedonian despot is insensible to the voice of conscience and duty, but he may be accessible to terror. He may be cowed by a bold and strong belief, to which an obstacle is an excitement, which becomes irresistible when it is thwarted. It is therefore expedient, nay we should thankfully acknowledge that it is necessary, to retain this weapon which popular theology supplies, because it is always a defence, and may be made an aggressive arm against his wantonness and ferocity. The wisdom of my youth, and of my maturer years, and my associations with the vigorous conscience of a city where violence is restrained by law, are of no avail when they are opposed to the lawless will of this polished savage."

There is a passage in the "Politics" of Aristotle \(^1\) which, from the other side, illustrates

\(^1\) Pol., v. 11, 25.
the interpretation which I have given of what seems to me to be the purpose of this drama. This publicist is laying down certain rules, by following which an absolute ruler may best retain his power. "He ought to be particularly careful in his respect for the gods, for men are less afraid that they may undergo any outrage from such a person, if they see their ruler religious and careful of divine worship. They are less likely also to plot against his government, because he will seem to have the gods on his side. But his religion must not degenerate into any gross superstition." The exhibition of religious feeling on the part of rulers has then, according to Aristotle, two advantages. In the first place, it checks or seems to check the impulse towards violating those moral laws, which every religion, however deluded it may be in its form, always inculcates and sustains in civilised societies, but which an absolute ruler is perpetually tempted to break. In the next place, it appeals to the conviction, which is universally present where any religion whatever exists, that those persons are the peculiar objects of the divine favour, protection, and help, who acknowledge, how-
ever blindly or erroneously, provided they do not do so grossly, the claim which divine authority imposes on their allegiance or reverence.

Paganism could have had no established religion. The god of some particular city or state was its tutelary deity, but was only one among an infinite host of equal divinities. Foreign faiths were tolerated, were even encouraged, if the introduction of the cultus was no outrage on public morality or decency. A setter forth of strange gods was not necessarily disliked, still less persecuted. It was not always known whether this or that blessing or suffering, advantage or loss, was the work of any among the national gods, or was to be ascribed to some new and unacknowledged power. The altar to the unknown God was a genuine expression of the Greek feeling, which feared to deprive any Olympian of his due. Who could say, since nature was supposed to be peopled with innumerable beings, whether the claims alleged on behalf of some new power were not legitimate demands on public allegiance? It is well known that the Greek or Roman worshipped Causes, Forces, Abstractions, anything, if he could only include in his
religion every agency by which good was done or evil averted. To persecute a creed or a cultus might possibly invoke the vengeance of some undiscovered deity. The priests or prophets of the familiar deities never shewed implacable hostility to a new and rival worship.

But the religious sentiment of the Greeks did not allow them to tolerate any outrage on the popular faith, and would not permit a worship which inculcated flagitious practices. The latter was of course a matter of degree. Corinth and Antioch were very different places from Athens and Ephesus. It is because the Bacchic orgie was so suspicious in its moral bearings, that Pentheus is provoked into his attempt at suppressing it. The action of the Senate against the Roman Bacchants, of which Livy speaks; and that of the Empire against the worship of Isis, to which Josephus and Tacitus bear testimony, were vindications of public morality against a profligate abuse of religious mysteries.

Nor did this ancient civilisation permit an assault on religion itself. Anaxagoras, Diagoras, and Socrates were prosecuted on charges of atheism. Every one knows how the Athe-
nian people was stirred up against Alcibiades for his parody of the Eleusinian mysteries, and for his reputed connection with the mutilation of the Hermæ. It is easy to see why the paganism of the Roman empire, when it began to connect the growing weakness of the State with the spread of Christianity, fastened upon this new religion the two charges which the public could understand, and would, if proved, punish with the greatest severity, those namely of atheism and debauchery. Any person who has read Lucian and Apuleius can find out how generally these attacks were made on early Christianity.

If the account which I have suggested in explanation of the religious tone which permeates the "Bacchæ" is correct, (and this digression on the religious sentiment of ancient paganism is intended to sketch the characteristics of that belief,) the ethical tendency of the play is strikingly suggestive of Greek habit. Monarchy was, for reasons not easy to be alleged, a peculiarly detestable form of government to Greek prejudice. In the best age of Greek culture, it was universally believed to be supremely mischievous and demoralising.
But the sketch which Aristotle\textsuperscript{k} gives of a "tyrant's" policy is exactly that of the second French empire. If Euripides believed that religious enthusiasm was the only control to which such a form of government could be constrained to submit, he is no mean judge of the forces which form a counterpoise to despotism. The character of the enthusiasm is of course no part of the theory. It is enough that it should not be a religion which allies itself with the power which it is its mission to counteract and modify.

I may close this account of the play with the following anecdote from Plutarch's Life of Crassus\textsuperscript{1}. "When the head of Crassus was brought to the door, the tables had been taken away, and one Jason of Tralles, a tragic actor, was reciting that passage from the 'Bacchæ' of Euripides in which the doings of Agave are narrated [to Pentheus]. While the company was cheering him, Scillaces came to the men's apartment, made his salutation, and cast the head of Crassus into the midst of the audience. And as the Parthians raised a loud and joyous cheer, the attendants, at the king's

\textsuperscript{k} Politics, v. \textit{ii}. \hspace{2cm} \textsuperscript{1} Plut. Crassus, xxxiii.
bidding, made Scillaces lie down with the guests. On this, Jason handed over the dress of Pentheus to one of the Chorus, seized the head of Crassus, and imitating the gestures of a Bacchant, recited these verses with energy, and in high pitch.

'We bring from the hills
A cub newly slain to the house;
A glorious spoil'—

and gave his audience the greatest pleasure. Then, as he recited the dialogue which follows,—

'CHORUS.
Who smote him first?'

AGAVE.
Mine is the glory, mine!'

Pomaxæthres jumped up, for he happened to be at the banquet, and tried to seize the head himself, with 'I have a better right to say those words than that actor has.' The king was delighted, gave Pomaxæthres the rewards which it is the custom of the country to bestow, and presented Jason with a talent.'

I have attempted in the following translation to give as exact a rendering of the original
as I find possible. There is no great difficulty
with the narrative parts of the play and the
dialogue. In 611, where one line at least has
been lost, I have ventured on inserting a hy-
pothetical substitute.

Similar insertions, requisite to complete the
sense, are found at line 990, and line 1341. The
English words are of course in brackets.

The lyrical passages present greater diffi-
culties. English is a language of monosyl-
lables; Greek presents remarkable facilities
for forming polysyllabic compounds. Certain
Greek rhythms are peculiarly unmanageable
and grotesque in English; others are more
easily imitated. For example, the lyrical pas-
sage beginning at line 497 is an attempt to
reproduce a Greek rhythm in an English equiva-
 lent. I hope that I have in some degree suc-
cceeded in suggesting in these unrhymed lines
the peculiarities of Greek lyrical poetry. That
the English language is not wholly incapable
of such a form, is proved in the “Agonistes”
of Milton.

The text of the lyrical passages is occasion-
ally very obscure. I have read διαριθμεῖν for
d’ ἀριθμῶν in line 192. μάρψας for μηρὸς in
line 198. The greatest difficulties occur in the last chorus, lines 960 sqq. Here I have adopted, in line 960,

γνώμαν σώφρονα θνατοῖς ἄπροφασίστως.

In line 962,

βροτείαν τ' ἔχειν ἄλυπος βίος.

And in lines 964-5, I suggest—

φανερὰ τῶν ἄεὶ ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ βίον

ἡμαρ εἰς νύκτα τ' εὖ ἀγώντων σέβω.

A few other slight corrections need not be stated.

It may be observed, that the story of Pentheus was dramatised by Æschylus, and that the narrative of the younger poet, according to Aristophanes the grammarian, followed the story of the elder. Only one line of the former play is preserved.

Oxford,
Feb. 15, 1872.
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Dionysus.
Teiresias.
Cadmus.
Pentheus.
Agave.
One of the King's Guard.
A Herdsman.
The King's Servant.
Chorus of Lydian Bacchants.

The Scene is the space before the Palace of Pentheus.
THE BACCHÆ.

DIONYSUS.

I, Dionysus, am the son of Zeus.
And Semele, the child of Cadmus she,
Whose midwife was the sudden lightning's flash.
And here at Dirce's streams, Ismenus' springs,
I clothe my godhead in a mortal's shape.
See there my thunder-smitten mother's tomb.
Hard by the palace, there the ruined walls,
Still smoking with the fire which Here hurled
In deathless malice at my mother's life.
Cadmus has rightly fenced his daughter's grave
And made it hallowed; I have girt it round
With the green foliage of the clustering vine.

In Lydia's fields, rich with the dust of gold,
In Phrygia, and in Persia's sunburnt plains,
By Bactria's forts, and on the wintry glebe
Of Media, and in fertile Araby,
Over all Asia, where the brackish sea
Washes the beach, and towered cities rise,
Stranger and Greek commingled, I have roamed.
In Hellas light I on this city first.
There have I ranged my dance, and there my rites
Prove me a present deity to men.

Now, in the land of Hellas, Thebes must first
Obey my summons, put the fawn-skin on,
And take the ivied thyrsus in her hands,
Because my mother's sisters, wrongfully,
Say Dionysus is no son of Zeus,—
Say that her father Cadmus in his craft,
To screen his daughter Semele from shame,
Made Zeus the father of a mortal's fault.
Say that the God, in anger at the fraud,
Hurled down his bolt upon her guilty head.
Them have I stung to madness, driven them
In frenzy from their home to mountain-tops,
Forced them to wear the livery of my troop.
Thither each woman from the city hies,
Ranges, distraught, away from home and hearth.
And herding with those faithless sisters, sits
Under the pine-trees on the roofless rocks.
This city needs must learn, however loth,
Whate'er it knows not of my mysteries,
That I, a godhead, and a son of Zeus,
Have righted well my mother Semele.
Cadmus resigns his rank and royalty
To Pentheus, gives it to his daughter's son;
And he blasphemes me, he denies my due,
He scorns to hold my name amid his vows.
But I will shew him and his Thebans all
That I am truly God. This done, this proved,
My mission wanders to another land.
But should the Thebans dare to force the throng
Which worships me from out yon mountain-tops,
I will do battle for the Mænades.
Thus have I doffed the glories of a god,
And seem a man to them who look on me.
But come, ye women, come, companion troop,—
Who, leaving Tmolus, Lydia's citadel,
Are here, the comrades of my wanderings,—
Lift up the cymbals of your Phrygian home,
Dame Rhea's cymbals, and my own device.
Come, clash them loudly at the palace gates;
Let Pentheus, and let Cadmus' city hear;
I wend my way into Cithæron's dells,
That with the Bacchæ I may share the dance.
CHORUS.

From my Asian home,
Leaving Tmolus the sacred, to Bromius glad service
I bring;
For joyous and easy the toil when I carol to Bacchus
the god.

In the way, in the way,
Who is there? but, begone, and let reverence keep
silent all lips;
For the song, which is ever his due, to great Dionysus
I sing.

Blessed he, who, knowing well
How to lead a holy life,
Gives due honour to the gods,
Joins him to the sacred land
Of the Bacchants in the hills,
Cleansed by these holy rites;
Who the mighty mother worships, Cybele, with
orgies meet;
He who brandishes the thyrsus, he who wears the
ivy crown,
He who Dionysus honours.
Come, ye Bacchæ! come, ye Bacchæ! bringing home
the Bromian god;
God by birthright, Dionysus, down from Phrygia's
mountain steeps,
Bromius, to the broadly-spreading streets of Hellas,
hither come.

Erst in direst labour pangs,
As the lightning flash of Zeus
Circled round her from on high,
Him his dying mother dropped,
Smitten by the thunder-bolt,
All untimely from her womb;
Him within his secret chambers, Zeus, the son of
Cronos, put;
Hid him in his thigh, and kept him there concealed
from Here's wrath,
Fastened by a golden buckle.
Thence he bare him when the Mærsæ perfected the
horned god;
Crowned him with a wreath of serpents, such as those
the Mænads wear
When they catch the snakes, and toss them with the
thrysus on their locks.

Thebes, that nurtured Semele,
Deck thee with the ivy crown;
Heap, O! heap the leaf and fruit
Of the bind-weed on thy brow;
Revel 'neath the spreading shade
Of the oak, or of the pine;

Put on the dappled fawn-skin dress,
And fringe it with the tufts of snowy wool;
Then, sacred symbol, seize the wanton wand.
Forthwith the very earth shall join the brawl,
When Bromius leads his companies
From height to height;—for there remains
The gathered crowd of womankind,
Leaving the loom and shuttle still,
By Dionysus' frenzy struck.

Hail, Curetes, to your shrine;
Hail, ye holy sons of Crete;
Zeus himself was nurtured there,
When the thrice-crowned Corybant
Fashioned for us in the cave
This, our circled timbrel's strain;

Then, adding to the Bacchic song
The sweet-voiced, plaintive wail of Phrygian flutes,
Gave them to the great mother, Rhea's hands,
And ordered these our shouts to melody.
Then from the goddess mother's gift
Wild satyrs seized and smote it, in
This Bacchic dance, this revelry,
Which, as each third year circles round,
Glads Dionysus evermore.

Dear is the god in the mountains
When he quits the hurrying throng,
And rests on the ground in the fawn-skin,
The sign of our rites: he is dear
When, hunting, he slays the wild goat, the fresh banquet,
Away in the Phrygian, the Lydian hills.
For our leader is Bromius. Hallo!
The plain flows with milk, flows with wine, flows with honey,
The nectar of bees, as the reek of the Syrian incense.
See! the Bacchant is rushing;
From the top of his wand he is holding
The far-flaming torch of the pine;
And running he stirs up his wandering bands,
And rouses their hearts by his shout;
Dainty the curls which he shakes in the breeze.
Then high o'er the gladness is heard the dread voice:
THE BACCHÆ.

Ho! hither! ye Bacchæ!
Ho! hither! ye Bacchæ!
Ye darlings of Tmolus, the giver of gold.
Come, laud Dionysus
With deep-sounding cymbals;
Come, pour forth your hearts to the Evian god,
In the song and the shout of your Phrygian home;
Where'er the sweet-voiced flute shall summon you,
Holy, to holy sport, for ye are now
Wanderers along the endless range of hills.
Joyously come, as the filly in spring-time,
Close by her dam as she feeds on the meadow,
Wantonly skipping; come, Bacchæ, to me!

TEIRESIAS.

Ho! at the gates, to summon Cadmus forth,
Agenor's son, who quitted Sidon's homes,
And walled with towers this arsenal of Thebes.
Go, some one; tell him that Teiresias calls;
He knows my purpose, how we both agreed,—
An old man I, he hoarier still with age,—
To grasp the thyrsus, and the fawn-skin wear,
And crown our temples with the ivy's shoots.

CADMUS.

Dear friend! I heard thee from inside the house;
Wise is the voice, wise too the speaker is.
Here am I ready, with the livery on;
Needs must that we exalt, with all our might,
This present deity, my daughter's son.
Where shall we dance? where shall we plant our feet?
Where shake our hoary temples? Tell me straight,
Old Cadmus, old Teiresias; thou art wise:
All day, all night, unwearied will I strike
The thyrsus on the ground, for we old men
Gladly forget ourselves.

TEIRESIAS.
   I am one with thee.
My youth comes back; I will essay the dance.

CADMUS.
Hie to the mountains in our chariots then.

TEIRESIAS.
Nay! The god's honour will not be so great.

CADMUS.
Old though I be, my hand shall guide thy age.

TEIRESIAS.
The god himself will guide us easily.

CADMUS.
Must we attempt the Bacchic dance alone?
THE BACCHÆ.

TEIRESIAS.

Alone: for we are wise, the rest are fools.

CADMUS.

Delay is wearisome: come, grasp my hand.

TEIRESIAS.

There, clasp it, and together let us go.

CADMUS.

A mortal man, I dare not scorn the gods.

TEIRESIAS.

Best make no question with divinity:
Ancient traditions, customs old as time,
Reason can never combat, even though
The keenest wit devise its subtlest saws.
And if I dance, if I be ivy-crowned,
Men can but say—Age makes him feel no shame.
The god has not declared this rite the due
Of youth, nor laid it upon age alone.
He would have common honour from us all,
Nor cares to reckon up his worshippers.

CADMUS.

Teiresias, since the light is dark to thee,
I will forewarn thee. Pentheus hither comes,
Echion's son, to whom I gave my crown,
Hastening with eager step towards the house.
How wild he looks! what is there on his tongue?

PENTHEUS.
I have been absent from my fatherland:
I hear strange news of mischief in the State;
Our women have deserted from their homes,
Pretending Bacchic rites, and now they lurk
In the shady hill-tops, reverencing forsooth
This Dionysus, this new deity.
Full bowls of wine are served out to the throng;
And scattered here and there throughout the glades,
The wantons hurry to licentious love.
They call themselves the priestess Mænades;
Bacchus invoke, but Aphrodite serve.
Some have I caught, and these my servants keep,
Handcuffed, imprisoned, in the common jail;
Those who are roaming, from their mountain dens
I will hunt out: Ino; Agave, too,
Who to Echion bare me; and besides,
Actæon's mother, hight Autonoe;
These, bound in iron fetters, soon shall cease
From the vile practice of their revelry.
I hear, too, that a stranger has come here,
Some juggling cheat from Lydia's distant land,—
Fair-haired, and curled, and dapper, ruddy faced
As wine, love's graces beaming in his eyes,— 220
Who, night and day consorting with the troop
Of damsels, makes pretence of Evian rites:
If I can catch him underneath this roof,
Soon shall his thyrsus cease to beat the ground,
His locks to shake upon his comely head,
For head and neck shall straight part company.
He says that Dionysus is a god,
Says he was sewn up in the thigh of Zeus;
Whereas both son and mother were scorched up,
And blasted by heaven's thunder; for she lied,
Declaring that she was the spouse of Zeus.
Is not this stranger, whosoe'er he be,
Worthy, right worthy of the hangman's cord,
Who vents these strange, these monstrous blasphemies?
But here's another marvel; what! the seer,
Teiresias, in the dappled fawn-skin clad?
And oh! ridiculous, my mother's sire,
Posturing upon a wand. Can I endure
To see your age thus turned to silliness?
Dash down the ivy wreath; and, grandsire, throw
The foolish thyrsus from thy aged hand.
Is this thy work, Teiresias? Dost thou wish
To find us mortals a new deity,
And find thy gain in novel auguries?
Did not thy hoary hairs protect thy head,
The Bacchants' prison thou shouldst surely share,
Since thou hast counselled these unholy rites.
When women drain the wine-cup at the feast,
Foul is the orgie, dangerous the disease.

CHORUS.

What wild impiety! Dost not respect
The gods and Cadmus; him who sowed the race
Of earth-born men? Thou sham'st Echion's stock.

TEIRESIAS.

When wise men reason from sound principles,
They find it no hard task to reason well.
Thy tongue's as fluent as the wisest man's,
And yet thy argument is void of sense.
However skilled a man may be in speech,
If he be rash and reckless, he becomes
A bane to others, for his mind is void.
This latest of the gods, whom thou hast scorned,
Will, throughout Hellas, be more great than aught
My words can well describe. Two names, vain youth,
Rank first among mankind: Demeter one,
And Ge the other; give which name thou willest.
She nurtures man, but quenches not his thirst;
The son of Semele has helped this want:
He finds and grants to men the grape's rich draught;
He takes away the woe of wearied souls,
Filling sad hearts with the vine's ruddy stream;
And gives them sleep, the cure of daily grief,
The only drug which lightens human ills.
Men know the boon he grants them; for the god
Is made an offering to all deities.
Thou scornest the story, that the child was sewn
In the thigh of Zeus. I'll prove the story true:
When Zeus had snatched him from the lightning's
flash,
And to Olympus had conveyed the babe,
Here would straight have hurled him out of heaven,
But Zeus eluded her, as gods can do;
Broke down a corner of the æther's crust,
Hid Dionysus as a hostage there,
For Here's quarrel; and in time, mankind
Said he was fostered in the thigh of Zeus,
(Mistaking names, and taking words for things,)
Since Zeus gave Here pledges for his sooth.
This god, too, is a prophet; and the men
Whom wine or frenzy teaches, prophesy;
For when he fills them, he constrains the tongue,
Mad with his power, the future to foretell.
He rivals Ares; for when panic flies
Through the array of armed and serried files
Before the spear is poised against the foe,
This madness Dionysus has inspired.
Yet shalt thou see him on the Delphian rocks,
Leaping by torchlight on their twin-peaked ridge,
Shaking and brandishing the Bacchic branch
And great in Hellas. Pentheus, list to me:
Deem not that might is always power in man,
Nor, thinking ought, although thy thought may err,
Think thyself wise: welcome the godhead here,
Pour offerings, join the revel, crown thy head.
And further; Dionysus will not check
The lust of women; nature's self alone
Bestows, preserves the grace of chastity.
Reflect, amid the heat of revelry,
The heart that's chaste will never be corrupted.
See, thou rejoicest when the city's crowd
Extols the name of Pentheus at the gates;
The god, be sure, delights in being honoured.
Thus I and Cadmus, whom thou laugh'st to scorn,
Will pluck the ivy, and will dance amain.
Hoar heads are ours, and yet we needs must dance,
And not blaspheme, persuaded by thy words.
Thy frenzy is most grievous, but no drug
Can cure the poison of thy strange disease.

CHORUS.
Well hast thou used the gift that Phoebus gave;
Thou art wise in honouring Bromius, the great god.

CADMUS.
Dear son, Teiresias hath advised thee well;
Abide with us, live not outside the law.
Now art thou rash, and thoughtless is thy thought.
If he be not a god, as thou hast said,
Do not gainsay; 'twere well, though false it were,
To say that Semele brought forth a god:
This were an honour to us and our race.
Think of Actaeon's miserable fate:
In the glades the bloodhounds, that himself had bred,
Tore him to pieces, for his boast that he
Hunted with keener skill than Artemis.
 Warned by his doom, come, let me crown thy head
With ivy; give the god, like us, his due.

PENTHEUS.
Let not thy hand approach me: go, I say,
Put not thy frantic folly upon me.
The teacher of thy pranks shall expiate
His fault.  Ho! hither! go in haste,
Find out the seat of this man's auguries;
Let bar and pickaxe straightway level it,
Make utter havoc, cast away his wreaths,
Scatter and toss them to the whistling blast;
Nothing, I ween, will vex and plague him more.
And you;—through all the city seek,—and find
The effeminate stranger, for his wiles have struck
These women with their sudden wantonness;
And when ye catch him, bring him here in chains.
My sentence is,—he shall be stoned, and die;
The mischief shall be bitter to his soul.

TEIRESIAS.

Unhappy man! thou know'st not where thou art:
Thou ravest now, thou wast not wise before.
Come, Cadmus, let us go, and supplicate
On his behalf,—all reckless though he be,—
And for the city, lest the god be wroth.
Follow, and firmly grasp thy ivied staff,
Let each support his comrade; it were shame
For two old men to stumble—heed it not—
Bacchus we needs must serve, the son of Zeus;
Pentheus, belike, will verify his name
To thee and thine: I speak not as a seer,
But of the facts; fools blurt their folly out.
Chorus.

Piety, enthroned above!
Piety, who o'er the earth
Flittest upon golden wings;
Dost thou list to Pentheus' words?
Dost thou mark his insolence?
Against Bromius he blasphemes,
The son of Semele, the chief among the blessed gods;
Who ever lives midst wreathed joys, who ruleth us,

Who marshalleth his bands.
Made merry by the flute
All cease from care, the gods whene'er the joyous grape is at their feasts,—
And men, what time the bowl throws sleep on ivy-crowned banqueteers.

Lips that never check their speech,
Folly freed from due restraint,
Ever work a final woe;
But the quiet, patient heart,
Guided still by Wisdom's rule,
All unshaken doth remain,
And saves the household; for the gods of heaven afar,
Though dwelling in the glistering sky, behold the deeds of men.
That wisdom is not wise
Which aims beyond man’s power.
Short is our life; to grasp at much is but to lose the present good,—
And this to me seems like the deed of frenzied and of foolish men.

To Cyprus would I wend,
To Aphrodite’s isle;
’Tis there the joyous loves
Give gladness to man’s heart.

To Paphos, where the plenteous streams
Of the strange river run,
Which, without rain, gives large fertility.
Or to that loveliest spot,
Where the Pierian goddess sits

On Olympus’ lofty hill.
Thither, O! lead me, Bromius, lead,
Thou god, the Bacchants’ guide;
There are the Graces, there Desire;
There may the Bacchae revel aye by right.

For he, the son of Zeus,
Delights in revelry;
He loves wealth-bringing Peace,
Fruitful of vigorous boys.
To him whom fortune richly dowers,
And to the luckless too,
He gives the same delight of generous wine.
Him, who by night and day
Cares not to lead this blissful life,
Him the god will justly loathe.
Avoid the schemes and saws of those
Who would be singular;
But what the meaner man
Believes and does, let this, I say, be thine.

ONE OF THE KING'S GUARD.

Pentheus, we come, successful in the chase;
The mission thou commandedst is fulfilled.
The quarry here was gentle, did not fly;
Waited, and willingly resigned himself.
No paleness came upon his ruddy cheek,
He laughed, he bade me bind and hale him off,
And helped to make my task the easier.
Ashamed, I told him,—Sir, I lead thee hence
Against my will; Pentheus commanded me.
As for the Bacchæ, who were caught and bound,
And chained within the common prison-house,
Unbound, unshackled, they have flitted off
To the meadows, carolling the Bromian god.
Self-loosed, the fetters fell from off their feet,
The bolts flew back, drawn by no mortal hand.
Full of weird marvels has this stranger come
To this our Thebes. 'Tis thine to deal with him.

PENTHEUS.
Loosen his bands. I have him in a net.
No sleight of his can serve to baffle me.—

Stranger, thou bring’st to Thebes that comeliness
Which women dote on, and thou tradest in.
Thy locks hang down;—no gymnast hast thou been—
Lie flowing o’er thy cheeks; voluptuous locks;
And thy soft skin is delicately fair,
Not tanned and freckled by the sun’s fierce rays,
But gently nurtured in the dainty shade.
A lovely hunter thou of women’s hearts.
First tell me then. What is thy fatherland?

DIONYSUS.
Short is my story, easy my reply;
The flowery Tmolus thou by hearsay knowest?

PENTHEUS.
Aye, for it girdles Sardis’ citadel.
DIONYSUS.

Thence come I; Lydia is my fatherland.

PENTHEUS.

Whence bringest thou these rites to Hellas then?

DIONYSUS.

'Twas Dionysus brought us, son to Zeus.

PENTHEUS.

Is then some Zeus there, who begets new gods?

DIONYSUS.

No! for 'twas here he wedded Semele.

PENTHEUS.

Asleep, or waking, heard'st thou his commands?

DIONYSUS.

I saw him who saw me, and gives these rites.

PENTHEUS.

What is the fashion of thy orgies then?

DIONYSUS.

None dares to utter them to ears profane.

PENTHEUS.

What profit follows to the worshipper?

DIONYSUS.

Thou mayest not hear, but 'twere well worth to know.

PENTHEUS.

A crafty answer for a curious ear.
DIONYSUS.
But the god's orgies loathe impiety.

PENTHEUS.
Thou hast plainly seen the god? what was he like?

DIONYSUS.
Whate'er he wills; I cannot order him.

PENTHEUS.
A cunning, shifty, and evasive speech.

DIONYSUS.
Boors think a wise man's words devoid of sense.

PENTHEUS.
Dost preach thy god in this place first of all?

DIONYSUS.
These orgies all perform in foreign lands.

PENTHEUS.
Aye, for their sense is not so good as ours.

DIONYSUS.
Customs may vary; but in this they're wise.

PENTHEUS.
Dost thou perform thy rites by day; or night?

DIONYSUS.
Chiefly by night; darkness gives dignity.

PENTHEUS.
Craft rather and seduction it denotes.
DIONYSUS.
Base acts are oft made manifest by day.

PENTHEUS.
Thy vile devices merit punishment.

DIONYSUS.
So do thy folly and impiety.

PENTHEUS.
How bold he is; how skilled in bandying words.

DIONYSUS.
Tell me my doom; what harm will'st do to me?

PENTHEUS.
First I will crop away thy dainty curls.

DIONYSUS.
My locks are votive, for the god they grow.

PENTHEUS.
Now put away the thyrsus from thy hands.

DIONYSUS.
Take it thyself, 'tis Dionysus' boon.

PENTHEUS.
Within the prison we will keep thee safe.

DIONYSUS.
'The god himself will free me when I will.

PENTHEUS.
When, 'midst the Bacchants, thou invitest his aid?
**THE BACCHÆ.**

**DIONYSUS.**
Here is he; he beholds what I endure.

**PENTHEUS.**
Where? by my eyes at least he is not seen.

**DIONYSUS.**
He is by mine; thy sin hath blinded thee.

**PENTHEUS.**
Seize him; for he insults both Thebes and me.

**DIONYSUS.**
Let folly put no chain on wisdom’s limbs.

**PENTHEUS.**
Stronger that thou art, I will chain thee strait.

**DIONYSUS.**
Thy life, thy deed, thyself, thou dost not know.

**PENTHEUS.**
Pentheus; Agave’s child; Echion’s son.

**DIONYSUS.**
Thy name’s unlucky, and thyself as well.

**PENTHEUS.**
Away! In the dungeon near the stables keep
The prisoner; let him there enjoy the dark;
There let him dance. And for this rabble here,
His comrades, we will sell them off as slaves;
Or, quieting their cymbals and their drums,
Will make them work as handmaids at the loom.
DIONYSUS.
I go. What is unjust, it cannot be
Just that I suffer. Dionysus' self,
Who, as thou sayest, is not, will surely wreak
His vengeance on thee for this insolence;
For, wronging me, thou put'st the god in chains.

CHORUS.
Fairest daughter of the far-famed Acheloüs!
Happy maiden, gentle Dirce, in thy streamlets
Thou didst harbour the sweet baby Zeus-begotten,
When he snatched him from heaven's lightning never quenched,
His own father,—shouting loudly, Enter hither!
In thy sire, see, the noble womb is of thy nurture.
Dithyrambus amid Thebes, ever, Bacchus, shall thy name be!
And dost thou then, blessed Dirce, when the garland of our revel
Comes before thee, hither drive me? dost thou scorn me? dost disdain me?
For the gladness of the wine-cup and the grape from Dionysus,
Great Bromius! shall be here.

What a fury doth the earth-born, doth the offspring
Of the serpent raise against us,—doth this Pentheus,—
For Echion, earth-begotten, was his father. 510
Never human is this stern-faced, haughty monarch;
'Tis a giant; with the great gods he is fighting,
Who will bind me in his fetters, spite of Bromius;
Who will hold me, at this instant, in the chambers
of his prison;
Who will keep there the glad revel ever darkling.—
Dost thou see us, 515
Dionysus, son of Zeus, how thy prophets are in
bondage?
Hither, shaking from Olympus the bright thyrsus,
come to rescue,
Check the madness of his pride.

The tall thyrsus art thou wielding in the deserts
of far Nysa?
In the hill-tops of Parnassus, Dionysus, dost thou
wander? 520
In Olympus' leafy chambers art thou hiding?
For there Orpheus by his warblings drew together
The tall forest to the Muses, the wild creatures drew
together.
Happy thou, Pieria!
Thee the Evian ever honours; he comes dancing 525
With his Bacchants: crossing over the swift river, 
O'er the Axius he will gather the wild Mænads, 
O'er the brook Lœdias, which bestows 
Rich wealth on mortal men, 
The sire, who fattens with his streams, 
Fair flowing over richest fields, 
The pasture of the steeds.

DIONYSUS.
Ho! 
List to me! list to my voice! 
Ho! Bacchants; ho! Bacchants!

CHORUS.
Who is this? whence comes this shouting? whence 
the summons of the god?

DIONYSUS.
Ho! ho! again I cry; 
The son of Semele! the son of Zeus!

CHORUS I.
Ho, hither, lord! ho, hither, lord!

CHORUS II.
Come, Bromius! Bromius! come!

CHORUS III.
Haste to our band!

CHORUS IV.
O solid earth!
THE BACCHÆ.

CHORUS V,
Great god! O earth quake!

CHORUS VI.
Soon the house of Pentheus falling shall be shattered to the ground.

CHORUS VII.
Dionysus is there!

CHORUS VIII.
Do him honour!

CHORUS IX.
Him we honour!

CHORUS X.
The foundations
Of the columns, see them shaken!
See them totter! see them falling!

CHORUS XI.
Bromius shouts throughout the house!

DIONYSUS.
Up with the lightning flash, luridly glittering;
Pentheus shall look on his house all ablaze.

CHORUS XII.
Seëst thou the flash how it glistens
From Semele's holy tomb?

CHORUS XIII.
There the flame of God's great thunder
Hovers from the heavenly bolt.
CHORUS XIV.
Cast yourselves, cast yourselves, down to the ground, Tremblingly, Mænads!

CHORUS XV.
For the king, the son of Zeus, is coming 560 Scattering all in dire confusion.

DIONYSUS.
Stranger maidens, wherefore fall ye, struck with terror, on the ground?
Ye perceive, I ween, that Bacchus hath the shattering earthquake sent;
That the house of Pentheus totters. Rise again; fresh courage take,
Trembling maidens; let the anguish of your terror disappear.

CHORUS.
O thou brightest light, thou leader of our Evian revelry, How I gladly look upon thee in my lonesome solitude.

DIONYSUS.
Did your hearts then sink within you, when ye saw me led away? And when Pentheus thought to bind me in his dreary prison-house?
Surely! Who would guide and guard me, if mischance had fallen on thee?
Tell me rather of thy freedom from this godless man's design.

DIONYSUS.
Easy was the task, and toilless; with my hands I freed myself.

CHORUS.
Bound he not thy hands in fetters? tied he not with cords thy hands?

DIONYSUS.
Nay, I flouted him completely, when he thought he chained my limbs;
He nor touched nor bound me, vainly was he only fancy fed.
At the manger of his prison, where he led me, was a bull;
This he seized and tied with cordage, round its legs and round its hoofs,
Breathing fury at his prisoner; dropping sweat from every pore,
As he bit his lips in anger. But I quietly sat by,
Looking at his wrathful visage. Then the might of Bromius came:
Shook the house to its foundations; lit upon his mother's tomb
A fierce fire. This Pentheus seeing, thought his palace was ablaze;
Hither rushed and thither, shouting, calling loudly to his slaves—
Bring the rushing river hither.—But their toil was all in vain.
Then relinquishing his labour, when he saw me fled away,
Clutching his dark sword, and hurrying through the house he raged amain.
Bromius then, as I conceive it, for I tell you what I think,
Raised a phantom in the palace; and the man with eager haste
Rushed and stabbed the shining æther, fancying he was slaying me.
Furthermore, the might of Bacchus did him other grievous harm,—
Tore the house from its foundations, dashed it into ruined heaps:
Bitter is my prisoning to him. Wearied with his bootless toil,
He has cast his sword away; for being but a man he dared to fight
With a god. And I departing from the house have come to you
Undisturbed by all the clamour, heeding Pentheus not a whit.
But I hear the sound of footsteps—from within the palace walls,
He will soon be here before it. What? I wonder, can he say?
I shall bear his anger lightly, let him bluster if he will,
For a wise man ever knoweth how to keep his passion down.

PENTHEUS.
Ah woe is me! the stranger hath escaped,
Whom lately I had put in closest bonds.
Ha! ha!
Here is the man, What now? How hast thou come
To the front again, before my house, I say?

DIONYSUS.
Halt there: and put good counsel on thy rage.

PENTHEUS.
Whence art thou here escaping from thy bonds?

DIONYSUS.
Didst hear me speak of a deliverer?
THE BACCHÆ.

PENTHEUS.
Whom? thou dost ever utter something strange.

DIONYSUS.
Him who hath given the fruity vine to men.

PENTHEUS.
A pretty fable this of Dionysus.

DIONYSUS.
[Do what thou wilt, the god will rescue me.]

PENTHEUS.
Bar every postern, shut the gates, I say.

DIONYSUS.
What! are the gods imprisoned by a wall?

PENTHEUS.
Wise, wise thou art, save where thou shouldest be wise.

DIONYSUS.
Where wisdom's needed, there be sure I'm wise. But hear this man and learn his message first, Who from the mountains carries thee his news. We will abide here, we will not escape.

HERDSMAN.
Pentheus, thou ruler of this Theban land, Hither I come, from yon Cithæron's heights, Which ever glitter with the falling snow.

PENTHEUS.
Well! what's the matter? what hast thou to tell?
I come to tell thee of the Bacchic dames, Barefooted, frenzied, they have hurried off. Sir, I would tell thee, and the city, how The deeds they do transcend all wonderment. But I would learn, if I may tell the truth Of what I saw, or must I veil my speech? I fear the quickness of thy wrath, for, Sir, Thou art sharp-tempered, and right royal too.

Tell me, my anger cannot light on thee; Wrath must not wreak its vengeance on the truth. The worse thy story of the Bacchants is, The worse for him who taught these frantic freaks. It shall enlarge this villain's punishment.

I let my herded cattle climb the slope, And find their pasture on the table-land, When the hot sun began to parch the ground. Thence the three bands of women I descried; Autonoe led the first, Agave next, Thy mother, and the third was Ino's charge. All slept, as if exhausted, tranquilly. Some leaned their backs against the pine-tree's trunk, Some on the foliage of the oak reclined;
Modestly scattered, not, as thou hast said,
Drunk with the wine-cup, and the flute's shrill brawl,
Nor lewdly seeking shady solitude.
Hearing the lowings of the horned herd,
Thy mother then amid the Bacchants rose,
And roused them from their slumbers with a cry.
Upstarting, throwing off their heavy sleep,
Young, old, and maidens all unwedded yet,
They stood, a miracle of close array.
And first they shed their hair upon their necks,
And fastened up their fawn-skins where the band
Was loosened; and they girt the spotted hide
With snakes which grazed their cheeks with lambent tongues.
Then snatching in their arms a kid or whelp,
Of doe or wolf, they who had left their babes,
And felt their bosom swell with gathering milk,
Nursed the wild creatures, putting on them wreaths
Of ivy, oak, or bind-weed's flowering stem.
One dashed her thyrsus on the solid rock,
Upstarted thence a gush of water; one
Planted her reed upon the level earth,
And the god poured from thence a stream of wine.
But they who longed to drain a draught of milk,
Scratched with their finger-tips upon the ground,
And milk swarmed forth, while from its ivied top
The thyrsus dripped with streams of honey down. 670
Hadst thou been there, the god whom thou hast spurned,
At sight of this, thou needs must have invoked.
There as we tended herd and flock, we met,
Held mutual converse, and prolonged debate
On the strange wonders we were witnessing. 675
Then one man, city-bred and voluble,
Addressed us all:—Ye who are dwelling here
Upon these holy ridges, shall we snatch
Agave, Pentheus' mother, from the crowd
And win the king's good will? To us it seemed 680
That he spoke wisely, so we hide ourselves
Within the ambush of the bosky shrubs.
Then they at the appointed hour sped forth
And shook the thyrsus in the Bacchic song,
Shouting, Iacchus, Bromius, son of Zeus, 685
In unison, the mountain answering them,
All life, all nature hurrying as they ran.
Agave chanced to leap near where I lay
In hiding, and I darted from my lair,
Striving to seize her as she flitted by. 690
But she cried out—Dogs of the chase, come here!
These men would hunt us, follow, follow me!
Armed with the thyrsus each one in her hand.
In hurried flight we hardly could escape
The Bacchants' clutch. And then they wreaked their rage
695
Albeit unarmed, upon the browsing herds.
Here might one see the fatling heifer seized,
And lowing, torn to pieces in their hands,
While others rent the kids to fragments there.
There hurled about, the ribs and cloven hoofs
700
Lay scattered; others cast into the pines
The gory gobbets dripping down with blood.
The wanton bulls, striving in vain to butt,
Were thrust perforce and headlong on the ground,
Driven by the myriad force of girlish hands.
705
More quickly they tore off the flesh than thou
Could'st close thine eyelids on thy royal eyes.
Then like a flock of birds they hurried o'er
The level plains, where by Asopus' stream
The furrows yield the fair and fruitful ears;
710
To Hysiae and Erythrae, nestling low
Beneath Cithæron's ridge; like foes they came,
And falling on the homesteads scattered them
Hither and thither; snatched the children up,
And bare them on their shoulders, where the babes
715
Sat, clinging to no band, nor falling thence.
No brass, no iron held they in their hands.

Around their hair fire played, but harmed them not. Meanwhile the rustics, angry at the raid, Assailed the frantic Bacchæ with their arms. Then, Sir, a strange and wondrous thing occurred; The darts they hurled fell harmless, drew no blood,
The women cast the thyrsus from their hands, Wounded and routed utterly the men. Some god, be sure, the matter ordered thus. Then they trooped back again towards the founts Which the god caused to well from out the earth, Washed off the gore, but let the serpents' tongues Lick at the drops which clotted on their cheeks. Master, I pray thee to admit this god Within thy city: full of might is he, But chiefly since he gives the soothing vine Which stills the sorrow of the human heart; Where wine is absent, love can never be; Where wine is absent, other joys are gone.  

CHORUS.

I fear to speak with freedom to the king,
But yet I will adventure; there is not
A god more strong than Dionysus is.

PENTHEUS.
Nearer and nearer, like devouring fire
This outrage comes, a scandal throughout Greece. 740
No time to dally. To Electra's gate
Hasten, and bid the shielded warriors march.
Harness fleet coursers, every charioteer,
Shake the light buckler, let the bowstring twang
In your strong fingers. We ourselves will march 745
Against the Bacchæ. It were scorn indeed
To bear the floutings of these women still.

DIONYSUS.
Pentheus, belike if thou dost hear my words
Thou wilt not heed them. Wronged although I be
I warn thee; take not arms against the god; 750
Restrain thyself; Bromius will not endure
To see his votaries harried at his rites.

PENTHEUS.
Tutor not me. Thou hast escaped my chains,
Keep what thou hast, my wrath may yet return.

DIONYSUS.
Better do sacrifice, than in thy wrath 755
Rebel and kick the goad, mortal with god.
PENTHEUS.
I mean to sacrifice, with women's blood,
Hunting the culprits in Cithæron's dells.

DIONYSUS.
Ye will be routed, and 'twere shame that shields,
Brass-bound, should by the Bacchants' wand be
foiled.

PENTHEUS.
Why what a pest this fellow has become,
Whate'er betides him, still he chatters on.

DIONYSUS.
My friend, thou mayest obtain thy end with ease.

PENTHEUS.
How? must I let my slaves rule over me?

DIONYSUS.
I'll bring them back, taking nor spear nor shield.

PENTHEUS.
Ha! here's some treacherous trick afoot again.

DIONYSUS.
Why treacherous, if my skill can keep thee safe?

PENTHEUS.
A ceaseless orgie with them is thy aim.

DIONYSUS.
Indeed it is, be sure, and with the god.

PENTHEUS.
Bring out my arms, and cease thee from thy talk.
Ha!
Wouldest like to see them gathered on the hills?

PENTHEUS.
Aye, and pay well the man who guides me there.

DIONYSUS.
Why dost thou entertain this earnest wish?

PENTHEUS.
To see their drunken freaks will sorrow cause.

DIONYSUS.
What! wouldst thou gladly see what gives thee pain?

PENTHEUS.
Yes, silently, beneath the pine-tree's shade.

DIONYSUS.
They'll track thee out, should'st thou come privily.

PENTHEUS.
Well said: but I go thither openly.

DIONYSUS.
I guide thee, if thou wilt essay the road.

PENTHEUS.
Lead quickly, and I will not grudge the time.

DIONYSUS.
Upon thy body put the linen robes.

PENTHEUS.
Being a man, shall I unsex myself?
THE BACCHÆ.

DIONYSUS.
'Tis death to thee to go there as a man.

PENTHEUS.
Well hast thou spoken, thou art ever shrewd.

DIONYSUS.
For Dionysus taught me thoroughly.

PENTHEUS.
How canst thou manage what thou dost advise?

DIONYSUS.
I will equip thee in a proper dress.

PENTHEUS.
What dress? a woman's? shame preventeth me.

DIONYSUS.
Thou dost not care to see the Mænads then?

PENTHEUS.
How wouldst thou then array me? in what guise?

DIONYSUS.
Adown thy shoulders I will spread thy hair.

PENTHEUS.
What next must be the fashion of my dress?

DIONYSUS.
Robes to the feet, a bonnet on thy head.

PENTHEUS.
Is there aught else that thou wouldst put on me?
DIONYSUS.
A thyrsus and a dappled fawn-skin too.

PENTHEUS.
I cannot robe me in a woman’s garb.

DIONYSUS.
Blood wilt thou shed when with them thou dost fight.

PENTHEUS.
Right, it were better first to spy them out.

DIONYSUS.
Wiser at least, than seeking ill by ill.

PENTHEUS.
How can I privately pass through the town?

DIONYSUS.
Choose a sequestered path, and I will lead.

PENTHEUS.
Any thing, so the Bacchæ flout me not.

DIONYSUS.
Into the house, there let us counsel take.

PENTHEUS.
Agreed—for any course I am prepared.
Either to arm me in my panoply,
Or to obey thy counsels, let us go.

DIONYSUS.
Maidens, the man is rushing to the net.
To the Bacchæ will he go, and to his death.
THE BACCHÆ.

Now Dionysus, 'tis thy turn, thou'rt near
To thy revenge. First take away his wits,
Plant subtle frenzy; were he sound of mind
He would not put these female garments on,
But driven to madness, thus he'll deck himself.
How Thebes will laugh to see her fiery king
Who was so big before, so full of threats,
Clad like a woman, pacing through the streets.
I go to clothe this Pentheus in a garb,
In which perforce, to Hades he must go
Slain by his mother; there belike to tell
That Dionysus, son to Zeus, is god,
Most terrible, most gracious unto men.

CHORUS.
Then shall it be that all night long
My feet shall hurry through the dance,
Then shall I in new jollity
Toss to the dewy breeze my neck,
As jocund as the tender fawn
Who sports athwart the grassy mead,
But, all affrighted at the chase,
Leaps lightly from the narrow park,
Leaps o'er the closely-twisted nets;
Meanwhile the huntsman rushes on,
Cheering his dogs to utmost speed,
But she, as swift as driving storms,
Courses along the river's brink
Over the mead, o'erjoyed to find
A friendly solitude
'Mid the o'ershadowing forest trees.
What wiser and what nobler gift
Can the good gods bestow on man,
Than when his hands they strengthen, till
He conquers o'er his foeman's head:
That which is noble, ever is dear.

Although he slowly shews his might,
God ever steadfast is and sure.
He doth chastise the sinful soul,
Which dares to honour reckless deeds,
Which in the madness of its will,
Denies the gods their righteous meed.
Craftily oft he hides his doom.
Long time with slow and stealthy foot
He hunts the wicked. Never can
The heart and will avail against
Whate'er religion consecrates.
Small pains it needs to learn the truth
Which never varies in its force,
Whenever god is manifest,
Although he lingereth.
Religion is but nature's law.
What wiser and what nobler gift
Can the good gods bestow on man,
Than when his hands they strengthen, till
He conquers o'er his foeman's head:
That which is noble, ever is dear.

Happy he, who from the storm,
Has the breaker escaped, and the harbour has reached;
Happy he who after toil
Is the victor, for many the ways in which man
Wins him power, and wins him wealth.
Thousand-fold ever to thousands of men,
Hope follows upon hope,
With some it grows unceasingly,
With some it wastes to nothingness.
But he whose life is ever fresh,
Lives in unbroken happiness.

DIONYSUS.
Thou who wouldest see the things thou oughtest not,
And do what thou shouldest not, Pentheus, I say,
Come out before thy house and shew thyself,
Clad in a Mænad Bacchant's bravery,
A spy upon thy mother and her troop, 880
Like one of Cadmus' daughters thou appearest.

PENTHEUS.
Aye, and it seems as though I saw two suns,
And that seven-gated Thebes were double too.
Thou too in visage lookest like a bull.
Two horns besides have sprouted from thy head. 885
Wast a wild beast? a bull thou hast become.

DIONYSUS.
The god is with us, once he was thy foe,
But now in truce; thou seëst what thou shouldest.

PENTHEUS.
Whom am I like? to one of Ino's band?
Or of Agave's, mother mine, I mean?

DIONYSUS.
Seeing thee, I think I see the Mænades.
But here a curl has straggled from its rank,
Where I had ranged it 'neath the bonnet's rim.

PENTHEUS.
In doors I shook it up, and shook it down,
And dancing, I have moved it from its place. 895

DIONYSUS.
Well, we whose duty 'tis to deck thee out,
Will put it straight again. Raise up thy head.
THE BACCHÆ.

PENTHEUS.
Well,—as thou wilt, I follow thy behest.

DIONYSUS.
Thy girdle too is loose, nor do the folds
Of thy long gown extend beyond thy feet.

PENTHEUS.
Aye, on the right foot so it seems to me,
Here by my ancle trails the flowing robe.

DIONYSUS.
The chief of friends wilt thou repute me, when
I shew the Bacchants strangely quiet to thee.

PENTHEUS.
To be quite like the Bacchants, must I grasp
The thyrsus in my right hand, or my left?

DIONYSUS.
In the right, and let thy right foot step in time.
'Tis well that thou hast changed thy humour thus.

PENTHEUS.
Can I not even lift Cithæron's dells
Upon my shoulders, Bacchæ, hill, and all?

DIONYSUS.
of course if thou shouldest wish: thy former thoughts
Were crazed, but now they are what they should be.
PENTHEUS.
Shall I take bar, or heave it with my hands?
Or shake the peaks with back and brawny arm?

DIONYSUS.
Better not: do not ruin the Nymph's home,
Or wreck Pan's seat, whereon he sits and pipes.

PENTHEUS.
Well said: against a woman who would fight?
I'll hide myself upon some shady pine.

DIONYSUS.
And it shall hide thee as thou shouldst be hid,
A cunning spy upon the Mænads' haunts.

PENTHEUS.
I seem to see them in the thickets crouch,
Nestling like birds within their loved retreats.

DIONYSUS.
Towards that very spot the watchman goes,
Thou'lt catch them, if thou art not caught before.

PENTHEUS.
Straight through the streets of Thebes I would be led,
For I alone have dared to do this deed.

DIONYSUS.
Alone thou labourest for the state, alone,
And toils await thee, as 'tis fit they should.
Follow. Thy guide and thy preserver, I,
Another brings thee back—

**PENTHEUS.**

My mother? say.

**DIONYSUS.**

'Conspicuous to all men.

**PENTHEUS.**

Such is my aim.

**DIONYSUS.**

Thou shalt be carried home—

**PENTHEUS.**

What luxury—

**DIONYSUS.**

In thy mother's arms.

**PENTHEUS.**

Thou dost constrain me to!

**DIONYSUS.**

Aye! luxury indeed.

**PENTHEUS.**

'Tis my desert.

**DIONYSUS.**

Wondrous thou art and wondrous is thy fate.

Thy fame shall reach as high as heaven itself.
Agave, stretch thy hands forth, and do ye,
Her sisters, Cadmus' children, for I lead
This youth to a great struggle. I shall win,
And Bromius too: all else the future shews.

CHORUS.
Let the dogs of frenzy hasten, in the mountains let
them loose,
Where the band of Bacchants gathers, led by Cad-
mus' daughters, there;
Set the bloodhounds eagerly
After him who in his madness comes to spy the
Mænads out,
In a woman's garb disguised.
First, his mother shall descry him, gazing from some
table-land,
Or some tall tree pryingly.
Then the Mænads she shall summon—
'What Cadmeian cometh here
Watching us along the hill-tops, running here and
running there?
Tell me, Bacchants, of his mother—
Never from the blood of woman sprang he, but some
lioness
Was his dam, or else some Gorgon dwelling on the
Libyan sands.'
Let vengeance come, vengeance with sword aloft,
And stabbing through his throat
Slay me this godless, lawless, reckless man, Echion's earth-born son.

Him, who in his reckless temper, him who in his lawless will
Heaping on thy orgies, Bacchus, casting on thy mother's rites,
From his heart by madness stricken,
Scornfully his furious insult. He has dared to measure might
With thy all-unconquered powers.
He who without grudging offers, as a mortal ever must,
Due observance to the godhead
Ever liveth undismayed.
I will gladly search for wisdom,
If the search be not in malice: but this cannot satisfy,
Other holy things I reverence,
Which the livelong day may guide me into stedfast piety;
To the gods due honour giving, all unhallowed rites I spurn.
Let vengeance come, vengeance with sword aloft,
And stabbing through his throat
Slay me this godless, lawless, reckless man, Echion's earth-born son.

Envisaged like a bull, or many-headed snake,
Or like a lion, breathing fire, appear and shew thyself.
Go, Bacchus, cast into thy toils
This hunter of the Bacchæ, gleefully,
Cast him into the deadly-herd of Mænades.

MESSENGER.
O home, most happy throughout Hellas erst,—
Where the old man of Sidon sowed the crop,
The earth-born heroes of the dragon's breed,—
How I bewail thee, slave although I be,
Good servants mourn their master's sorrows aye.

CHORUS.
What is it? of the Bacchants dost thou carry news?

MESSENGER.
Pentheus hath perished. Old Echion's son.

CHORUS.
King Bromius! hail! the god is great indeed.

MESSENGER.
What sayest thou? what is this? dost thou rejoice
Over my master's woes? what hast thou said?
CHORUS.
I utter strange words in a foreign song,
I crouch no longer in the fear of chains.

MESSENGER.
Dost think that Thebes is cowed, [that thou hast dared
To taunt her sorrow with insulting joy?]

CHORUS.
'Tis Dionysus, Dionysus rules,
Thebes is no lord to me.

MESSENGER.
Ye may be pardoned, but on these dread deeds,
It is not seemly, women, to rejoice.

CHORUS.
Tell me, inform me, by what kind of death
This wrongful doer of injustice died.

MESSENGER.
Leaving the city's homesteads and the streams
Of the Asopus, on we journeyed, till
We neared at last the high Cithæron's crags,
Pentheus and I, I followed on my lord,
The stranger guiding us towards the scene.
We rested first within a grassy glen,
But let no foot-fall and no whisper tell
Whence we were looking, and would not be seen.
There in a hollow, crowded round by crags, 
Watered by streamlets, shaded o'er by pines, 
The Mænads sat, intent on pleasant tasks. 
Some, stripping off the drooping ivy-leaves, 
The thyrsus decked anew with fresher green. 
Others, like fillies loosened from the yoke, 
Sang Bacchic ditties in alternate strain. 
Then hapless Pentheus, for he saw not them, 
Said, Stranger, where we stand, I cannot spy 
The Mænads posturing in their wanton dance. 
Fain would I climb some cliff or lofty pine, 
And thence discern the Mænads' work of shame. 
Forthwith the stranger did a wondrous deed: 
He grasped the very top of a tall pine, 
And dragged, dragged, dragged it to the dusky earth.
For like a bow, or like a curved wheel, 
Shaped by the lathe into its rounded form, 
The stranger bent the trunk with both his hands, 
Down to the earth, doing no feat of men. 
Then, setting Pentheus firmly on its boughs, 
He slowly let the pine-tree rise again, 
Lest any sudden spring might jerk him off. 
Right up to heaven it rose, and steady stood, 
Holding my master seated on its crest.
The Mænads saw him, he beheld not them.

Awhile I scarcely saw him crouching there
And then the stranger vanished from our sight.
But from the æther, as I ween, the voice
Of Dionysus shouted. *Maidens! here*

*I bring the man who laughed to scorn both you,
And me, and these my rites, now punish him.*

But while he spoke, forthwith the awful fire
Flashed from the heaven, and blazed upon the earth.
The sky was silent, in the grassy glen
Still was each leaf, still was each living thing.

But they, uncertain what the voice might be,
Stood up erect, and gazed on every side.
Again he urged them, and the women knew
That Bacchus made his bidding manifest.

Then all at once, swift as a pigeon’s flight,
In eager haste the Bacchants fled away,
Agave, and her sisters, and the throng,
Through the deep glen, and up the torrent’s bed.
They leaped upon the crags with frenzied speed,
And saw my master seated on the pine.

And first they climbed upon a towering height,
And hurled huge boulders at him; others strove
To dart the pine-boughs at him; others hurled
The thyrsus through the air, seeking to hit
Pentheus, their hapless mark, but all in vain.  
For higher than their strength could reach, he sat,  
Unhappy man, hemmed in an evil strait.
At last they rent the boughs from off the oaks,  
And with that leverage, strove to uproot the tree.
But when they found no issue to their toil,  
Agave spoke: *Come hither, Mænades,*
*Stand in a circle, clasp the tree, and catch*  
*This climbing beast, and let him not betray*  
*God's secret offices to man.*  
At once  
The pine was seized by myriad hands, and torn  
Out of the earth, and Pentheus, as he sat  
Loftily high, fell headlong from aloft,  
Dashed with full many a groan upon the earth,  
His wits returning as he neared his doom.  
His mother first essayed the sacrifice  
And fell on him: then from his hair he tore  
The Phrygian bonnet, that Agave might  
Know him and slay him not.  
Fondling her cheek  
He said, *I, mother, look, I am thy child,*  
*Pentheus, born from thee in Echion's house;*  
*Alas! my mother, do not kill thy son*  
*For his transgression, pity take on me.*  
She, foaming at the mouth, and rolling round  
Her wandering eyes, distraught from natural sense,
Heeded him not, by Bacchus overpowered, Seized his left arm, then, grappling with her hands, Planted her foot upon the wretch's breast, And tore it from the shoulder. It was not Her strength, but the god's might which did the deed. Ino assailed the other side, and rent His flesh. Autonoe and the gathered crowd Of Bacchants aided, and a cry arose; He groaning, while the breath remained in him, They shouting shrilly. This one bears an arm That one a booted foot. To shreds they tore His mangled body, and with bloody hands All tossed his flesh about exultingly. The fragments lie upon the ragged rocks, And in the desert shades of the thick wood, No easy search to find. His hapless head Agave seized, and on the thyrsus' point Has fixed it, deeming it some lion's spoil, And carries it amid Cithæron's crags, Leaving her sisters in the Bacchic throng. Now comes she, gleeful from her luckless hunt, Within these walls, invoking Bacchus still, Her fellow in the chase, her comrade good, The glorious victor of the hunter's spoil,
A spoil whose victory is only tears.
Far from the sight of this great sorrow, hence I go, before Agave enters here.
For soberness and reverence for the gods I deem the wisest and the best of things To all such men as learn this lesson well.

CHORUS.
The dance to Bacchus let us raise At shout for joy at the mischance Which Pentheus, serpent-born, hath met. He, clad in woman's weeds, Seized the long reed, and grasped the thyrsus—Ah! Unfailing pledge of doom— And the bull guided him along to death.
Bacchæ of Theban race!
Well did ye chant the song of victory, Sorrow and tears the strain; Fair is the struggle when a mother's hand Drips with the blood of her son.

And now I see Agave hurrying back Mother of Pentheus, with her eyes distraught. Welcome the gladsome troop of Evius.

AGAVE.
Bacchæ of Asia!
CHORUS.
To what dost thou invite me?

AGAVE.
We bring from the hills
A cub newly slain to the house;
A glorious spoil.

CHORUS.
I see and greet my fellow-reveller.

AGAVE.
Without a noose I seized
And slew this lion's whelp;
Look on it, 'tis my prize.

CHORUS.
Where was its lair?

AGAVE.
Cithæron—

CHORUS.
What! Cithæron?

AGAVE.
Did him to death.

CHORUS.
Who smote him first?

AGAVE.
Mine is the glory, mine,
Happy Agave! all my comrades cry.

CHORUS.
Who next?
'Twas Cadmus—  
AGAVE.

What! Cadmus?  
CHORUS.

His children after me, aye, after me,  
AGAVE.
Assailed the beast.  
CHORUS.

A lucky huntress thou!  
AGAVE.

To the banquet then!  
CHORUS.

Alas! what part is mine?  
AGAVE.

Smooth is the whelp's young cheek.  
AGAVE.
His dainty curling mane  
AGAVE.
Is shed around his head.  
CHORUS.

'Tis like the mane of some wild beast to sight.  
AGAVE.

Bacchus the hunter good, deftly and well  
AGAVE.
Urged on the Mænades,  
AGAVE.
And helped us in the chase.  
CHORUS.

The king a mighty hunter is.  
AGAVE.

Art glad?
Glad? surely glad.

Soon the Cadmeans—

Pentheus his mother’s deed—

Will glorify:

Her chase is of a lion’s whelp.

Wondrous the chase!

Wondrous the chance!

Art joyous?

Aye, my heart is glad,

Great, great the deeds that I

Have done in this my fatherland.

Shew, hapless woman, to the citizens,

The glorious booty which thou bringest here.

All ye who dwell within this citadel,

Girdled with towers, come hither, see the spoil,

The spoil of Cadmus’ daughters in the chase.

Not captured by the looped Thessalian dart,
Not by the net, but by white hands and arms.
What boots it still to brag the armourer’s craft? 1175
Why vaunt the skill which fashions weapons now?
With our own hands we captured him, and tore
To fragments all his limbs from off the beast.
Where is my aged father? let him come.
Where my son Pentheus? bid him speed to take 1180
This head and nail it to the palace walls,
Where the broad staircase stands, this lion’s head,
Which I have hunted down, and hither bring.

CADMUS.

Follow me, carrying the unhappy corpse
Of Pentheus, follow, servants, to the house. 1185
Painfully searching through Cithæron’s dells,
I found the scattered fragments here and there,
Torn piecemeal, up and down the pathless woods.
For as I walked within the city’s walls,
With old Teiresias, of my daughter’s deeds 1190
And of the Bacchant’s, news was brought to me.
So to the mountains forth I went, and bring
My grandson, murdered by the Mænads, back.
And there I saw Autonoe, her who bore
Actæon to Aristeus, Ino too, 1195
Still in the thickets, hapless, frenzy-struck.
Then some man told me that Agave comes
Hither in frantic haste, no idle tale,
For here she is—how ghastly is her face.

AGAVE.
Father, how full of glory is thy lot.
Sire art thou of the noblest womankind,
Thy daughters, but above them all, myself.
I leave the shuttle idle at the loom
And do the stoutest feats of venerie.
Hither I come, and carry in my arms
The greatest prize of all. Dear father, take
And in thy palace hang the trophy up.
Then rightly glorying in my prey, invite
Friends to the banquet: happy, happy thou,
Our father, for our hands have wrought this deed.

CADMUS.
Oh! boundless grief. I dare not look upon
The murder those unhappy hands have done;
Fair is the sacrifice thou makest the gods,
Brave is the feast, forsooth, for Thebes and me,
I mourn thy sorrow first, and next my own.

King Bromius, though he be of kin to us
Is righteous in his wrath, and merciless.

AGAVE.
How cross old age is, what a sullen look
It ever wears. I wish that son of mine
May have his mother’s fortune in the chase
When with the Theban youths he eagerly
Pursues his quarry. With the gods alone
He fain would battle. Father, thou and I
Should warn him from these rash and evil ways.
Where is he? Who will bring him to my sight?
That he may view me, joyous as I am.

CADMUS.
Alas! alas! the deed that ye have done
When sense returns, will yield you bitter grief.
Were ye to always be, as ye are now,
Your evil case might not misfortune seem.

AGAVE.
What is there that’s not well? what grief is here?

CADMUS.
First cast thine eyes upon the sky’s expanse.

AGAVE.
’Tis done. But wherefore dost thou bid me this?

CADMUS.
Seems it the same, or has it suffered change?

AGAVE.
’Tis clearer than before, and brighter too.
THE BACCHÆ.

CADMUS.
Still does distraction lurk within thy breast?

AGAVE.
I know not what thou sayest, but I become
More tranquil, changing from my former self.

CADMUS.
Canst thou hear aught, and answer sensibly?

AGAVE.
I have forgotten all I said before.

CADMUS.
After thy wedding, to whose home camest thou?

AGAVE.
Thou gavest me to Echion, so they say.

CADMUS.
What son was born thy husband in the house?

AGAVE.
Pentheus, the offspring of myself and him.

CADMUS.
Whose head is that thou carriest in thy hands?

AGAVE.
A lion's, so the huntresses averred.

CADMUS.
Look at it closely: slight the toil to look.
AGAVE.
Ah! what is this? what head is this I hold?

CADMUS.
Look carefully and learn more clearly still.

AGAVE.
Ah me! I see a weight of dismal grief.

CADMUS.
Still seems it to thee like a lion's head?

AGAVE.
Nay, wretched me! 'tis Pentheus' head I hold.

CADMUS.
Before thou knewest it, cause there was to wail.

AGAVE.
Who slew him? how came he into my hands?

CADMUS.
Unhappy truth, unseasonable here.

AGAVE.
Tell me! my heart is throbbing for the news.

CADMUS.
Thou and thy sisters with thee murdered him.

AGAVE.
Where did he die? at home, or in what place?

CADMUS.
Where erst Actæon's bloodhounds worried him.
AGAVE.
Why to Cithæron came the hapless man?

CADMUS.
He went to mock the Bacchants and their god.

AGAVE.
How was it that we happened to be there?

CADMUS.
Madness possessed you, all the city raved.

AGAVE.
'Twas Dionysus' deed. Too late I know.

CADMUS.
Ye outraged him. Ye thought he was no god.

AGAVE.
Where, father, is the body of my child?

CADMUS.
I bring it, long and anxious was the search.

AGAVE.
Is all his body shut within that bier?

AGAVE.
Why did my folly light on Pentheus' head?

CADMUS.
Like you, he shewed no honour to the god; The god, then, in one mischief bound us all, Both you and him. He ruined all our race.
And I, whom nature had denied a son,  
I see, most basely and most fouily slain,  
This fruit, O wretched woman! of thy womb.  

To him the house looked up. Thou, dearest child,  
My daughter's son, upheld'st this house of mine.  
The city dreaded thee, for seeing thee  
None ever dared to mock the old man's age  
Without enduring worthy punishment.  

And now, unhonoured, I shall quit this house,  
I, the great Cadmus, I, who sowed the race  
Of Thebans, I, who reaped that glorious crop.  
Dearest of all, for, dead although thou be,  
Of all my offspring dearest art thou still,  

No more thy hand shall stroke this cheek of mine,  
No more thy grandsire, darling, thou'lt embrace,  
With— 'who hath slighted, wronged thee, dear old man?'  

Who is it gives thee pain, or wounds thy heart?  
Tell me, and, father, I chastise the man.'  

Unhappy I, and miserable thou.  
Woeful thy mother, and her sisters too.  
If there be one who still disdains the gods,  
Let him behold this corpse and reverence them.  

CHORUS.  
I sorrow with thee, Cadmus, but the death  
Of this thy daughter's son, is just, though sad.
AGAVE.

Father! thou seest how my lot has changed—

*  *  *  *

DIONYSUS.

*  *  *  *

Thou shalt become a python, and thy wife
Harmonia, Ares' child, wedded to thee,
A mortal man, shall change her nature too,
To a fierce serpent she shall be transformed.
And with thy wife, drawn by a yoke of steers,
Thou'lt lead, so Zeus predicts, a foreign host,
And many cities with thy vast array
Thou must lay waste. But when the plunderers dare
To essay the shrine of Loxias, evil waits
On them. Thee and Harmonia Ares saves
And takes you to the region of the blest.
I, Dionysus, from no mortal sire,
But from great Zeus, say this: but had ye known
What wisdom means, when ye would not, ye might
Have had the son of Zeus your good ally.

AGAVE.

We pray thee, Dionysus, we have sinned.
THE BACCHÆ.

DIONYSUS.
Too late ye know, ye knew not when ye ought.

AGAVE.
We know it all. Excessive was thy wrath.

DIONYSUS.
I was a god, and I was scorned by you.

AGAVE.
Heaven's wrath should not be like the wrath of men.

DIONYSUS.
My father Zeus long since determined this.

AGAVE.
Alas! my sire, sad exile is our lot.

DIONYSUS.
Why then delay to bear what must be borne?

CADMUS.
My child, to what a grievous doom we come. Unhappy thou, thy sisters too, and I— I, in my age, must go to foreign lands A wretched wanderer, and as god declares To Hellas must I lead a mongrel host. Harmonia, Ares' daughter, and my wife, Both of us changed to serpents, must be guides To warriors who will waste the shrines and graves
Of Hellas. Nor is any respite given
To these my woes, not even when I cross
Over the stream of nether Acheron.

AGAVE.
And I am banished, father, reft of thee.

CADMUS.
Why dost thou cling upon me, hapless child?
As the white swan clings to its feeble sire.

AGAVE.
Exiled alas! ah whither can I go?

CADMUS.
I know not, child! small help thy father is.

AGAVE.
Farewell to the home; to the city, farewell.
My father-land quitting, unhappy, I go,
Driven out from my birth-place.

CADMUS.
Go, daughter, and like Aristæus begin
[The exile which sorrow constrains thee to bear.]

AGAVE.
I grieve for thee, father!

CADMUS.
I grieve for thee, child!
And I weep for thy sisters, ah! terrible doom.
AGAVE.
Grievous sure, and wanton wrong,
Dionysus the king in his might and his wrath
Hath put on our house.

CADMUS.
The wrongs which he suffered were grievous to him
For he saw that his name was unhonoured in Thebes.

AGAVE.
Farewell to thee, father!

CADMUS.
Farewell to thee, child;
Unhappy! thou hardly canst ever fare well.

AGAVE.
Come, lead me, my guides, to my sisters I go,
My companions in exile, in sorrow, in grief.
For 'tis thither I wend,
Where accursed Cithæron shall see me no more,
Nor I cast my eyes on Cithæron again,
Where the thyrsus no more may come back to my mind;
Let others engage in these rites.
THE BACCHÆ.

CHORUS.

Many the forms in which God is made manifest,
Often He orders what seemed unexpected,
Much men resolve on remains uneffectuated,
Much men can not do God finds a way for;
Such is the meaning of what ye see.