

456 BC
 PROMETHEUS BOUND
 Aeschylus

Translated by G.M. Cookson

Aeschylus (525-456 BC) - Ranked with Sophocles and Euripides as one of the greatest Greek dramatists, he is often called the father of Greek tragic drama.

Aeschylus is distinguished for his grand imagination that dwelled habitually in the loftiest regions of theology and ancient mythology. Prometheus Bound (460/456 BC) - Often called Aeschylus' best work, it dramatizes the relationship between people and gods. It is the first and only extant part of a trilogy.

CHARACTERS

KRATOS
 BIA
 HEPHAESTUS
 PROMETHEUS
 CHORUS OF THE OCEANIDES
 OCEANUS
 IO
 HERMES
 PROMETHEUS BOUND

Mountainous country, and in the middle of a deep gorge a Rock, towards which KRATOS and BIA carry the gigantic form of PROMETHEUS. HEPHAESTUS follows dejectedly with hammer, nails, chains, etc.

KRATOS Now have we journeyed to a spot of earth Remote- the Scythian wild, a waste untrod.

And now, Hephaestus, thou must execute The task our father laid on thee, and fetter This malefactor to the jagged rocks In adamantine bonds infrangible; For thine own blossom of all forging fire He stole and gave to mortals; trespass grave For which the Gods have called him to account, That he may learn to bear Zeus' tyranny And cease to play the lover of mankind.

HEPHAESTUS Kratos and Bia, for ye twain the hest Of Zeus is done with; nothing lets you further.

But forcibly to bind a brother God,

In chains, in this deep chasm raked by all storms I have not courage; yet needs must I pluck Courage from manifest necessity, For woe worth him that slights the Father's word.

O high-souled son of Themis sage in counsel, With heavy heart I must make thy heart heavy, In bonds of brass not easy to be loosed, Nailing thee to this crag where no wight dwells, Nor sound of human voice nor shape of man Shall visit thee; but the sun-blaze shall roast Thy flesh; thy hue, flower-fair, shall suffer change; Welcome will Night be when with spangled robe She hides the light of day; welcome the sun Returning to disperse the frosts of dawn.

And every hour shall bring its weight of woe To wear thy heart away; for yet unborn Is he who shall release thee from thy pain.

This is thy wage for loving humankind.

For, being a God, thou dared'st the Gods' ill will, Preferring, to exceeding honour, Man.

Wherefore thy long watch shall be comfortless, Stretched on this rock, never to close an eye

Or bend a knee; and vainly shalt thou lift, With groanings deep and lamentable cries, Thy voice; for Zeus is hard to be entreated, As new-born power is ever pitiless. KRATOS Enough! Why palter? Why wast idle pity? Is not the God Gods loathe hateful to thee? Traitor to man of thy prerogative? HEPHAESTUS Kindred and fellowship are dreaded names. KRATOS Questionless; but to slight the Father's word How sayest thou? Is not this fraught with more dread? HEPHAESTUS Thy heart was ever hard and overbold. KRATOS But wailing will not ease him! Waste no pains Where thy endeavour nothing profiteth. HEPHAESTUS Oh execrable work! loathed handicraft! -

KRATOS Why curse thy trade? For what thou hast to do, Troth, smithcraft is in no wise answerable. HEPHAESTUS Would that it were another's craft, not mine! KRATOS Why, all things are a burden save to rule Over the Gods; for none is free but Zeus. HEPHAESTUS To that I answer not, knowing it true. KRATOS Why, then, make haste to cast the chains about him, Lest glancing down on thee the Father's eye Behold a laggard and a loiterer.

HEPHAESTUS Here are the iron bracelets for his arms. KRATOS Fasten them round his arms with all thy strength!

Strike with thy hammer! Nail him to the rocks! -

HEPHAESTUS 'Tis done! and would that it were done less well! KRATOS Harder- I say- strike harder- screw all tight And be not in the least particular Remiss, for unto one of his resource Bars are but instruments of liberty. HEPHAESTUS This forearm's fast: a shackle hard to shift. KRATOS Now buckle this! and handsomely! Let him learn Sharp though he be, he's a dull blade to Zeus. HEPHAESTUS None can find fault with this:- save him it tortures. KRATOS Now take thine iron spike and drive it in, Until it gnaw clean through the rebel's breast. HEPHAESTUS Woe's me, Prometheus, for thy weight of woe! -

KRATOS Still shirking? still a-groaning for the foes Of Zeus? Anon thou'lt wail thine own mishap. HEPHAESTUS Thou seest what eyes scarce bear to look upon! KRATOS I see this fellow getting his deserts!

But strap him with a belt about his ribs. HEPHAESTUS I do what I must do: for thee- less words! KRATOS "Words," quotha? Aye, and shout 'em if need be.

Come down and cast a ring-bolt round his legs. HEPHAESTUS The thing is featly done; and 'twas quick work. KRATOS Now with a sound rap knock the bolt-pins home!

For heavy-handed is thy task-master. HEPHAESTUS So villainous a form vile tongue befits. -

KRATOS Be thou the heart of wax, but chide not me That I am gruffish, stubborn and stiff-willed. HEPHAESTUS Oh, come away! The tackle holds him fast. KRATOS Now, where thou hang'st insult! Plunder the Gods For creatures of a day! To thee what gift Will mortals tender to requite thy pains? The destinies were out miscalling thee Designer: a designer thou wilt need From trap so well contrived to twist thee free.

Exeunt.

PROMETHEUS O divine air! Breezes on swift bird-wings, Ye river fountains, and of ocean-waves The multitudinous laughter! Mother Earth!

And thou all-seeing circle of the sun, Behold what I, a God, from Gods endure!

Look down upon my shame,

The cruel wrong that racks my frame, The grinding anguish that shall waste my strength, Till time's ten thousand years have measured out their length!

He hath devised these chains, The new throned potentate who reigns, Chief of the chieftains of the Blest. Ah me!

The woe which is and that which yet shall be I wail; and question make of these wide skies When shall the star of my deliverance rise.

And yet- and yet- exactly I foresee All that shall come to pass; no sharp surprise Of pain shall overtake me; what's determined Bear, as I can, I must, knowing the might Of strong Necessity is unconquerable.

But touching my fate silence and speech alike Are unsupportable. For boons bestowed On mortal men I am straitened in these bonds.

I sought the fount of fire in hollow reed Hid privily, a measureless resource For man, and mighty teacher of all arts.

This is the crime that I must expiate Hung here in chains, nailed 'neath the open sky.

Ha! Ha!

What echo, what odour floats by with no sound? God-wafted or mortal or mingled its strain? Comes there one to this world's end, this mountain-girt ground, To have sight of my torment? Or of what is he fain? A God ye behold in bondage and pain, The foe of Zeus and one at feud with all The deities that find Submissive entry to the tyrant's hall; His fault, too great a love of humankind.

Ah me! Ah me! what wafture nigh at hand, As of great birds of prey, is this I hear? The bright air fanned Whistles and shrills with rapid beat of wings.

There cometh nought but to my spirit brings Horror and fear. The DAUGHTERS OF OCEANUS draw near in mid-air in their winged chariot.

CHORUS Put thou all fear away!

In kindness cometh this array On wings of speed to mountain lone, Our sire's consent not lightly won.

But a fresh breeze our convoy brought, For loud the din of iron
 raught Even to our sea-cave's cold recess, And scared away the
 meek-eyed bashfulness.

I tarried not to tie my sandal shoe But haste, post haste, through air
 my winged chariot flew. PROMETHEUS Ah me! Ah me!

Fair progeny That many-childed Tethys brought to birth, Fathered
 of Ocean old Whose sleepless stream is rolled Round the vast
 shores of earth!

Look on me! Look upon these chains Wherein I hang fast held On
 rocks high-pinnacled, My dungeon and my tower of dole, Where
 o'er the abyss my soul, Sad warder, her unwearied watch sustains!

-

CHORUS Prometheus, I am gazing on thee now!

With the cold breath of fear upon my brow, Not without mist of
 dimming tears, While to my sight thy giant stature rears Its bulk
 forpined upon these savage rocks In shameful bonds the linked
 adamant locks.

For now new steersmen take the helm Olympian; now with little
 thought Of right, on strange, new laws Zeus stablisheth his realm,
 Bringing the mighty ones of old to naught. PROMETHEUS Oh that
 he had conveyed me 'Neath earth, 'neath hell that swalloweth up
 the dead; In Tartarus, illimitably vast With adamantine fetters
 bound me fast There his fierce anger on me visited, Where never
 mocking laughter could upbraid me Of God or aught beside!

But now a wretch enskied, A far-seen vane, All they that hate me
 triumph in my pain. -

CHORUS Who of the Gods is there so pitiless That he can triumph
 in thy sore distress? Who doth not inly groan With every pang of
 thine save Zeus alone? But he is ever wroth, not to be bent From his
 resolved intent The sons of heaven to subjugate; Nor shall he cease
 until his heart be satiate, Or one a way devise To hurl him from the
 throne where he doth monarchize. PROMETHEUS Yea, of a surety-
 though he do me wrong, Loading my limbs with fetters strong The
 president Of heaven's high parliament Shall need me yet to show
 What new conspiracy with privy blow Attempts his sceptre and his
 kingly seat.

Neither shall words with all persuasion sweet, Not though his
 tongue drop honey, cheat Nor charm my knowledge from me; nor
 duress

Of menace dire, fear of more grievous pains, Unseal my lips, till he have loosed these chains, And granted for these injuries redress. CHORUS High is the heart of thee, Thy will no whit by bitter woes unstrung, And all too free The licence of thy bold, unshackled tongue.

But fear hath roused my soul with piercing cry!

And for thy fate my heart misgives me! I Tremble to know when through the breakers' roar Thy keel shall touch again the friendly shore; For not by prayer to Zeus is access won; An unpersuadable heart hath Cronos' son. PROMETHEUS I know the heart of Zeus is hard, that he hath tied Justice to his side; But he shall be full gentle thus assuaged; And, the implacable wrath wherewith he raged Smoothed quite away, nor he nor I Be loth to seal a bond of peace and amity. -

CHORUS All that thou hast to tell I pray unfold, That we may hear at large upon what count Zeus took thee and with bitter wrong affronts:

Instruct us, if the telling hurt thee not. PROMETHEUS These things are sorrowful for me to speak, Yet silence too is sorrow: all ways woe!

When first the Blessed Ones were filled with wrath And there arose division in their midst, These instant to hurl Cronos from his throne That Zeus might be their king, and these, adverse, Contending that he ne'er should rule the Gods, Then I, wise counsel urging to persuade The Titans, sons of Ouranos and Chthon, Prevailed not: but, all indirect essays Despising, they by the strong hand, effortless, Yet by main force- supposed that they might seize Supremacy. But me my mother Themis And Gaia, one form called by many names, Not once alone with voice oracular Had prophesied how power should be disposed-

That not by strength neither by violence The mighty should be mastered, but by guile.

Which things by me set forth at large, they scorned, Nor graced my motion with the least regard.

Then, of all ways that offered, I judged best, Taking my mother with me, to support, No backward friend, the not less cordial Zeus.

And by my politic counsel Tartarus, The bottomless and black, old Cronos hides With his confederates. So helped by me, The tyrant of

the Gods, such service rendered With ignominious chastisement requites.

But 'tis a common malady of power Tyrannical never to trust a friend.

And now, what ye inquired, for what arraigned He shamefully entreats me, ye shall know.

When first upon his high, paternal throne He took his seat, forthwith to divers Gods Divers good gifts he gave, and parcelled out His empire, but of miserable men Recked not at all; rather it was his wish To wipe out man and rear another race:

And these designs none contravened but me.

I risked the bold attempt, and saved mankind From stark destruction and the road to hell.

Therefore with this sore penance am I bowed, Grievous to suffer, pitiful to see.

But, for compassion shown to man, such fate I no wise earned; rather in wrath's despite Am I to be reformed, and made a show Of infamy to Zeus. CHORUS He hath a heart Of iron, hewn out of unfeeling rock Is he, Prometheus, whom thy sufferings Rouse not to wrath. Would I had ne'er beheld them, For verily the sight hath wrung my heart. PROMETHEUS Yea, to my friends a woeful sight am I. CHORUS Hast not more boldly in aught else transgressed? PROMETHEUS I took from man expectancy of death. -

CHORUS What medicine found'st thou for this malady? PROMETHEUS I planted blind hope in the heart of him. CHORUS A mighty boon thou gavest there to man. PROMETHEUS Moreover, I conferred the gift of fire. CHORUS And have frail mortals now the flame-bright fire? PROMETHEUS Yea, and shall master many arts thereby. CHORUS And Zeus with such misfeasance charging thee- PROMETHEUS Torments me with extremity of woe. CHORUS And is no end in prospect of thy pains? -

PROMETHEUS None; save when he shall choose to make an end. CHORUS How should he choose? What hope is thine? Dost thou Not see that thou hast erred? But how thou erredst Small pleasure were to me to tell; to thee Exceeding sorrow. Let it go then: rather Seek thou for some deliverance from thy woes. PROMETHEUS He who stands free with an untrammelled foot Is quick to counsel and exhort a friend In trouble. But all these things I know well.

Of my free will, my own free will, I erred, And freely do I here acknowledge it.

Freeing mankind myself have durance found.

Natheless, I looked not for sentence so dread, High on this precipice to droop and pine, Having no neighbour but the desolate crags.

And now lament no more the ills I suffer, But come to earth and an attentive ear Lend to the things that shall befall hereafter.

Harken, oh harken, suffer as I suffer!

Who knows, who knows, but on some scatheless head, Another's yet for the like woes reserved, The wandering doom will presently alight? CHORUS Prometheus, we have heard thy call:

Not on deaf ears these awful accents fall.

Lo! lightly leaving at thy words My flying car And holy air, the pathway of great birds, I long to tread this land of peak and scar, And certify myself by tidings sure Of all thou hast endured and must endure. While the winged chariot of the OCEANIDES comes to ground their father OCEANUS enters, riding on a monster.

OCEANUS Now have I traversed the unending plain And unto thee, Prometheus, am I come, Guiding this winged monster with no rein, Nor any bit, but mind's firm masterdom.

And know that for thy grief my heart is sore;

The bond of kind, methinks, constraineth me; Nor is there any I would honour more, Apart from kinship, than I reverence thee.

And thou shalt learn that I speak verity:

Mine is no smooth, false tongue; for do but show How I can serve thee, grieved and outraged thus, Thou ne'er shalt say thou hast, come weal, come woe, A friend more faithful than Oceanus. PROMETHEUS How now? Who greets me? What! Art thou too come To gaze upon my woes? How could'st thou leave The stream that bears thy name, thine antres arched With native rock, to visit earth that breeds The massy iron in her womb? Com'st thou To be spectator of my evil lot And fellow sympathizer with my woes? Behold, a thing indeed to gaze upon!

The friend of Zeus, co-stabliher of his rule, See, by this sentence with what pains I am bowed! OCEANUS Prometheus, all too plainly I behold:

And for the best would counsel thee: albeit Thy brain is subtle.
Learn to know thy heart, And, as the times, so let thy manners
change, For by the law of change a new God rules.

But, if these bitter, savage, sharp-set words Thou ventest, it may be,
though he sit throned Far off and high above thee, Zeus will hear;
And then thy present multitude of ills Will seem the mild
correction of a babe.

Rather, O thou much chastened one, refrain Thine anger, and from
suffering seek release.

Stale, peradventure, seem these words of mine:

Nevertheless, of a too haughty tongue Such punishment,
Prometheus, is the wage.

But thou, not yet brought low by suffering, To what thou hast of ill
would'st add far worse.

Therefore, while thou hast me for schoolmaster, Thou shalt not
kick against the pricks; the more That an arch-despot who no audit
dreads Rules by his own rough will. And now I leave thee, To
strive with what success I may command For thy deliv'rance. Keep
a quiet mind

And use not over-vehemence of speech Knowest thou not, being
exceeding wise, A wanton, idle tongue brings chastisement?
PROMETHEUS I marvel that thou art not in my case, Seeing with
me thou did'st adventure all.

And now, I do entreat thee, spare thyself.

Thou wilt not move him: he's not easy moved.

Take heed lest thou find trouble by the way. OCEANUS Thou are a
better counsellor to others Than to thyself: I judge by deeds not
words.

Pluck me not back when I would fain set forth.

My oath upon it, Zeus will grant my prayer And free thee from
these pangs. PROMETHEUS I tender thee For this my thanks and
ever-during praise.

Certes, no backward friend art thou; and yet Trouble not thyself;
for at the best thy labour Will nothing serve me, if thou mean'st to
serve.

Being thyself untrammelled stand fast.

For, not to mitigate my own mischance, Would I see others hap on
evil days.

The thought be far from me. I feel the weight Of Atlas' woes, my brother, in the west Shouldering the pillar that props heaven and earth, No wieldy fardel for his arms to fold.

The giant dweller in Cilician dens I saw and pitied- a terrific shape, A hundred-headed monster- when he fell, Resistless Typhon who withstood the Gods, With fearsome hiss of beak-mouth horrible, While lightning from his eyes with Gorgon-glare Flashed for the ravage of the realm of Zeus.

But on him came the bolt that never sleeps, Down-crashing thunder, with emitted fire, Which shattered him and all his towering hopes Dashed into ruin; smitten through the breast, His strength as smoking cinder, lightning-charred.

And now a heap, a helpless, sprawling hulk, He lies stretched out beside the narrow seas, Pounded and crushed deep under Etna's roots.

But on the mountain-top Hephaestus sits Forging the molten iron, whence shall burst Rivers of fire, with red and ravening jaws To waste fair-fruited, smooth, Sicilian fields.

Such bilious up-boiling of his ire Shall Typho vent, with slingstone-showers red-hot, And unapproachable surge of fiery spray, Although combusted by the bolt of Zeus.

But thou art not unlearned, nor needest me To be thy teacher: save thyself the way Thou knowest and I will fortify my heart Until the wrathfulness of Zeus abate. OCEANUS Nay then, Prometheus, art thou ignorant Words are physicians to a wrath-sick soul? PROMETHEUS Yes, if with skill one soften the ripe core, Not by rough measures make it obdurate. OCEANUS Seest thou in warm affection detriment Or aught untoward in adventuring? -

PROMETHEUS A load of toil and a light mind withal. OCEANUS Then give me leave to call that sickness mine.

Wise men accounted fools attain their ends. PROMETHEUS But how if I am galled by thine offence? OCEANUS There very palpably thou thrustest home. PROMETHEUS Beware lest thou through pity come to broils. OCEANUS With one established in Omnipotence? PROMETHEUS Of him take heed lest thou find heaviness. OCEANUS I am schooled by thy calamity, Prometheus! PROMETHEUS Pack then! And, prithee, do not change thy mind! -

OCEANUS Thou criest "On" to one in haste to go.
For look, my dragon with impatient wings Flaps at the broad, smooth road of level air.

Fain would he kneel him down in his own stall.

Exit OCEANUS.

CHORUS (after alighting) I mourn for thee, Prometheus, minished and brought low, Watering my virgin cheeks with these sad drops, that flow From sorrow's rainy fount, to fill soft-lidded eyes With pure libations for thy fortune's obsequies.

An evil portion that none coveteth hath Zeus Prepared for thee; by self-made laws established for his use Disposing all, the elder Gods he purposeth to show How strong is that right arm wherewith he smites a foe.

There hath gone up a cry from earth, a groaning for the fall Of things of old renown and shapes majestic, And for thy passing an exceeding bitter groan; For thee and for thy brother Gods whose honour was thine own:

These things all they who dwell in Asia's holy seat, Time's minions, mourn and with their groans thy groans repeat.

Yea, and they mourn who dwell beside the Colchian shore, The hero maids unwedded that delight in war, And Scythia's swarming myriads who their dwelling make Around the borders of the world, the salt Maeotian lake.

Mourns Ares' stock, that flowers in desert Araby, And the strong city mourns, the hill-fort planted high, Near neighbour to huge Caucasus, dread mountaineers That love the clash of arms, the counter of sharp spears.

Beforetime of all Gods one have I seen in pain, One only Titan bound with adamantine chain, Atlas in strength supreme, who groaning stoops, downbent Under the burthen of the earth and heaven's broad firmament.

Bellows the main of waters, surge with foam-seethed surge Clashing tumultuous; for thee the deep seas chant their dirge; And Hell's dark under-world a hollow moaning fills; Thee mourn the sacred streams with all their fountain-rills. PROMETHEUS Think not that I for pride and stubbornness Am silent: rather is my heart the prey Of gnawing thoughts, both for the past, and now Seeing myself by vengeance buffeted.

For to these younger Gods their precedence

Who severally determined if not I? No more of that: I should but weary you With things ye know; but listen to the tale Of human sufferings, and how at first Senseless as beasts I gave men sense,

possessed them Of mind. I speak not in contempt of man; I do but tell of good gifts I conferred.

In the beginning, seeing they saw amiss, And hearing heard not, but, like phantoms huddled In dreams, the perplexed story of their days Confounded; knowing neither timber-work Nor brick-built dwellings basking in the light, But dug for themselves holes, wherein like ants, That hardly may contend against a breath, They dwelt in burrows of their unsunned caves.

Neither of winter's cold had they fixed sign, Nor of the spring when she comes decked with flowers, Nor yet of summer's heat with melting fruits Sure token: but utterly without knowledge Moiled, until I the rising of the stars Showed them, and when they set, though much obscure.

Moreover, number, the most excellent

Of all inventions, I for them devised, And gave them writing that retaineth all, The serviceable mother of the Muse.

I was the first that yoked unmanaged beasts, To serve as slaves with collar and with pack, And take upon themselves, to man's relief, The heaviest labour of his hands: and I Tamed to the rein and drove in wheeled cars The horse, of sumptuous pride the ornament.

And those sea-wanderers with the wings of cloth, The shipman's waggons, none but I contrived.

These manifold inventions for mankind I perfected, who, out upon't, have none No, not one shift- to rid me of this shame. CHORUS Thy sufferings have been shameful, and thy mind Strays at a loss: like to a bad physician Fallen sick, thou'rt out of heart: nor cans't prescribe For thine own case the draught to make thee sound. PROMETHEUS But hear the sequel and the more admire

What arts, what aids I cleverly evolved.

The chiefest that, if any man fell sick, There was no help for him, comestible, Lotion or potion; but for lack of drugs They dwindled quite away; until I taught them To compound draughts and mixtures sanative, Wherewith they now are armed against disease.

I staked the winding path of divination And was the first distinguisher of dreams, The true from false; and voices ominous Of meaning dark interpreted; and tokens Seen when men take the road; and augury By flight of all the greater crook-clawed birds With nice discrimination I defined; These by their nature fair and

favourable, Those, flattered with fair name. And of each sort The habits I described; their mutual feuds And friendships and the assemblages they hold.

And of the plumpness of the inward parts What colour is acceptable to the Gods, The well-streaked liver-lobe and gall-bladder.

Also by roasting limbs well wrapped in fat

And the long chine, I led men on the road Of dark and riddling knowledge; and I purged The glancing eye of fire, dim before, And made its meaning plain. These are my works.

Then, things beneath the earth, aids hid from man, Brass, iron, silver, gold, who dares to say He was before me in discovering? None, I wot well, unless he loves to babble.

And in a single word to sum the whole All manner of arts men from Prometheus learned. CHORUS Shoot not beyond the mark in succouring man While thou thyself art comfortless: for I Am of good hope that from these bonds escaped Thou shalt one day be mightier than Zeus. PROMETHEUS Fate, that brings all things to an end, not thus Apportioneth my lot: ten thousand pangs Must bow, ten thousand miseries afflict me Ere from these bonds I freedom find, for Art Is by much weaker than Necessity. -

CHORUS Who is the pilot of Necessity? PROMETHEUS The Fates triform, and the unforgetting Furies. CHORUS So then Zeus is of lesser might than these? PROMETHEUS Surely he shall not shun the lot apportioned. CHORUS What lot for Zeus save world-without-end reign? PROMETHEUS Tax me no further with importunate questions. CHORUS O deep the mystery thou shroudest there! PROMETHEUS Of aught but this freely thou may'st discourse; But touching this I charge thee speak no word; Nay, veil it utterly: for strictly kept The secret from these bonds shall set me free. -

CHORUS May Zeus who all things swayeth Ne'er wreak the might none stayeth On wayward will of mine; May I stint not nor waver With offerings of sweet savour And feasts of slaughtered kine; The holy to the holy, With frequent feet and lowly At altar, fane and shrine, Over the Ocean marches, The deep that no drought parches, Draw near to the divine.

My tongue the Gods estrange not; My firm set purpose change not, As wax melts in fire-shine.

Sweet is the life that lengthens, While joyous hope still strengthens,
And glad, bright thoughts sustain; But shuddering I behold thee,
The sorrows that enfold thee And all thine endless pain.

For Zeus thou hast despised; Thy fearless heart misprized All that
his vengeance can, Thy wayward will obeying, Excess of honour
paying, Prometheus, unto man. And, oh, beloved, for this graceless
grace What thanks? What prowess for thy bold essay Shall
champion thee from men of mortal race, The petty insects of a
passing day? Saw'st not how puny is the strength they spend?
With few, faint steps walking as dreams and blind, Nor can the
utmost of their lore transcend The harmony of the Eternal Mind.

These things I learned seeing thy glory dimmed, Prometheus. Ah,
not thus on me was shed The rapture of sweet music, when I
hymned The marriage-song round bath and bridal bed At thine
espousals, and of thy blood-kin, A bride thou chosest, wooing her
to thee With all good gifts that may a Goddess win, Thy father's
child, divine Hesione. -

Enter IO, crazed and horned.

IO What land is this? What people here abide? And who is he, The
prisoner of this windswept mountain-side? Speak, speak to me;
Tell me, poor caitiff, how did'st thou transgress, Thus buffeted?
Whither am I, half-dead with weariness, For-wandered? Ha! Ha!

Again the prick, the stab of gadfly-sting!

O earth, earth, hide, The hollow shape- Argus- that evil thing
The hundred-eyed Earth-born-herdsman! I see him yet; he stalks
With stealthy pace And crafty watch not all my poor wit baulks!

From the deep place Of earth that hath his bones he breaketh
bound, And from the pale Of Death, the Underworld, a hell-sent
hound

On the blood-trail, Fasting and faint he drives me on before, With
spectral hand, Along the windings of the wasteful shore, The salt
sea-sand!

List! List! the pipe! how drowsily it shrills!

A cricket-cry!

See! See! the wax-webbed reeds! Oh, to these ills Ye Gods on high,
Ye blessed Gods, what bourne? O wandering feet When will ye
rest? O Cronian child, wherein by aught unmeet Have I
transgressed To be yoke-fellow with Calamity? My mind unstrung,

A crack-brained lack-wit, frantic mad am I, By gad-fly stung, Thy scourge, that tarres me on with buzzing wing!

Plunge me in fire, Hide me in earth, to deep-sea monsters fling, But my desire
Kneeling I pray- grudge not to grant, O King!

Too long a race Stripped for the course have I run to and fro; And still I chase
The vanishing goal, the end of all my woe; Enough have I mourned!

Hear'st thou the lowing of the maid cow-horned? PROMETHEUS
How should I hear thee not? Thou art the child Of Inachus, dazed with the dizzying fly.

The heart of Zeus thou hast made hot with love And Hera's curse even as a runner stripped
Pursues thee ever on thine endless round. IO How dost thou know my father's name? Impart
To one like thee A poor, distressful creature, who thou art.

Sorrow with me, Sorrowful one! Tell me, whose voice proclaims Things true and sad,
Naming by all their old, unhappy names, What drove me mad-

Sick! Sick! ye Gods, with suffering ye have sent, That clings and clings;
Wasting my lamp of life till it be spent!

Crazed with your stings!

Famished I come with trampling and with leaping, Torment and shame,
To Hera's cruel wrath, her craft unsleeping, Captive and tame!

Of all wights woe-begone and fortune-crossed, Oh, in the storm Of the world's sorrow
is there one so lost? Speak, godlike form, And be in this dark world my oracle!

Can'st thou not sift The things to come? Hast thou no art to tell What subtle shift,
Or sound of charming song shall make me well? Hide naught of ill!

But- if indeed thou knowest- prophesy In words that thrill Clear-toned through air-
what such a wretch as I Must yet abide-

The lost, lost maid that roams earth's kingdoms wide? PROMETHEUS What thou wouldst learn
I will make clear to thee, Not weaving subtleties, but simple sooth Unfolding as the mouth
should speak to friends.

I am Prometheus, giver of fire to mortals. IO Oh universal succour of mankind,
Sorrowful Prometheus, why art thou punished thus? PROMETHEUS I have but now ceased
mourning for my griefs. IO

Wilt thou not grant me then so small a boon? PROMETHEUS What is it thou dost ask? Thou shalt know all. IO Declare to me who chained thee in this gorge. PROMETHEUS The hest of Zeus, but 'twas Hephaestus' hand. -

IO But what transgression dost thou expiate? PROMETHEUS Let this suffice thee: thou shalt know no more. IO Nay, but the end of my long wandering When shall it be? This too thou must declare. PROMETHEUS That it is better for thee not to know. IO Oh hide not from me what I have to suffer! PROMETHEUS Poor child! Poor child! I do not grudge the gift. IO Why then, art thou so slow to tell me all? PROMETHEUS It is not from unkindness; but I fear 'Twill break thy heart. -

IO Take thou no thought for me Where thinking thwarteth heart's desire! PROMETHEUS So keen To know thy sorrows! List! and thou shalt learn. CHORUS Not till thou hast indulged a wish of mine.

First let us hear the story of her grief And she herself shall tell the woeful tale.

After, thy wisdom shall impart to her The conflict yet to come. PROMETHEUS So be it, then.

And, Io, thus much courtesy thou owest These maidens being thine own father's kin.

For with a moving story of our woes To win a tear from weeping auditors In nought demeans the teller. IO I know not

How fitly to refuse; and at your wish All ye desire to know I will in plain, Round terms set forth. And yet the telling of it Harrows my soul; this winter's tale of wrong, Of angry Gods and brute deformity, And how and why on me these horrors swooped.

Always there were dreams visiting by night The woman's chambers where I slept; and they With flattering words admonished and cajoled me, Saying, "O lucky one, so long a maid? And what a match for thee if thou would'st wed!

Why, pretty, here is Zeus as hot as hot Love-sick- to have thee! Such a bolt as thou Hast shot clean through his heart! And he won't rest Till Cypris help him win thee! Lift not then, My daughter, a proud foot to spurn the bed Of Zeus: but get thee gone to meadow deep By Lerna's marsh, where are thy father's flocks And cattle-folds, that on the eye of Zeus May fall the balm that shall assuage desire." Such dreams oppressed me, troubling all my nights, Woe's me! till I plucked courage up to tell

My father of these fears that walked in darkness.

And many times to Pytho and Dodona He sent his sacred
missioners, to inquire How, or by deed or word, he might conform
To the high will and pleasure of the Gods.

And they returned with slippery oracles, Nought plain, but all to
baffle and perplex And then at last to Inachus there raught A saying
that flashed clear; the drift, that I Must be put out from home and
country, forced To be a wanderer at the ends of the earth, A thing
devote and dedicate; and if I would not, there should fall a
thunderbolt From Zeus, with blinding flash, and utterly Destroy
my race. So spake the oracle Of Loxias. In sorrow he obeyed, And
from beneath his roof drove forth his child Grieving as he grieved,
and from house and home Bolted and barred me out. But the high
hand Of Zeus bear hardly on the rein of fate.

And, instantly- even in a moment- mind And body suffered
strange distortion. Horned

Even as ye see me now, and with sharp bite Of gadfly pricked,
with high-flung skip, stark-mad, I bounded, galloping headlong
on, until I came to the sweet and of the stream Kerchneian, hard by
Lerna's spring. And thither Argus, the giant herdsman, fierce and
fell As a strong wine unmixed, with hateful cast Of all his cunning
eyes upon the trail, Gave chase and tracked me down. And there
he perished By violent and sudden doom surprised.

But I with darting sting- the scorpion whip Of angry Gods- am
lashed from land to land.

Thou hast my story, and, if thou can'st tell What I have still to
suffer, speak; but do not, Moved by compassion, with a lying tale
Warm my cold heart; no sickness of the soul Is half so shameful as
composed falsehoods. CHORUS Off! lost one! off! Horror, I cry!

Horror and misery!

Was this the traveller's tale I craved to hear? Oh, that mine eyes
should see

A sight so ill to look upon! Ah me!

Sorrow, defilement, haunting fear, Fan my blood cold, Stabbed
with a two-edged sting!

O Fate, Fate, Fate, tremblingly I behold The plight of Io, thine
apportioning! PROMETHEUS Thou dost lament too soon, and art
as one All fear. Refrain thyself till thou hast heard What's yet to be.
CHORUS Speak and be our instructor:

There is a kind of balm to the sick soul In certain knowledge of the
grief to come. PROMETHEUS Your former wish I lightly granted
ye:

And ye have heard, even as ye desired, From this maid's lips the
story of her sorrow.

Now hear the sequel, the ensuing woes The damsel must endure
from Hera's hate.

And thou, O seed of Inachaeon loins,

Weigh well my words, that thou may'st understand Thy journey's
end. First towards the rising sun Turn hence, and traverse fields
that ne'er felt plough Until thou reach the country of the Scyths, A
race of wanderers handling the long-bow That shoots afar, and
having their habitations Under the open sky in wattled cotes That
move on wheels. Go not thou nigh to them, But ever within sound
of the breaking waves Pass through their land. And on the left of
thee The Chalybes, workers in iron, dwell.

Beware of them, for they are savages, Who suffer not a stranger to
come near.

And thou shalt reach the river Hybristes, Well named. Cross not,
for it is ill to cross, Until thou come even unto Caucasus, Highest of
mountains, where the foaming river Blows all its volume from the
summit ridge That o'ertops all. And that star-neighbour'd ridge
Thy feet must climb; and, following the road That runneth south,
thou presently shall reach The Amazonian hosts that loathe the
male,

And shall one day remove from thence and found Themiscyra hard
by Thermodon's stream, Where on the craggy Salmadessian coast
Waves gnash their teeth, the maw of mariners And step-mother of
ships. And they shall lead thee Upon thy way, and with a right
good will.

Then shalt thou come to the Cimmerian Isthmus, Even at the pass
and portals of the sea, And leaving it behind thee, stout of heart,
Cross o'er the channel of Maeotis' Lake.

For ever famous among men shall be The story of thy crossing, and
the strait Be called by a new name, the Bosphorus, In memory of
thee. Then having left Europa's soil behind thee thou shalt come To
the main land of Asia. What think ye? Is not the only ruler of the
Gods A complete tyrant, violent to all, Respecting none? First,
being himself a God, He burneth to enjoy a mortal maid, And then
torments her with these wanderings.

A sorry suitor for thy love, poor girl,

A bitter wooing. Yet having heard so much Thou art not even in the overture And prelude of the song. IO Alas! Oh! Oh! PROMETHEUS Thou dost cry out, fetching again deep groans:

What wilt thou do when thou hast heard in full The evils yet to come? CHORUS And wilt thou tell The maiden something further: some fresh sorrow? PROMETHEUS A stormy sea of wrong and ruining. IO What does it profit me to live! Oh, why Do I not throw myself from this rough crag And in one leap rid me of all my pain? Better to die at once than live, and all My days be evil. -

PROMETHEUS Thou would'st find it hard To bear what I must bear: for unto me It is not given to die,- a dear release From pain; but now of suffering there is No end in sight till Zeus shall fall. IO And shall Zeus fall? His power be taken from him? No matter when if true- PROMETHEUS 'Twould make thee happy Methinks, if thou could'st see calamity Whelm him. IO How should it not when all my woes Are of his sending? PROMETHEUS Well, then, thou may'st learn how These things shall be. -

IO Oh, who will snatch away The tyrant's rod? PROMETHEUS Himself by his own vain And fond imaginings. IO But how? Oh, speak, If the declaring draw no evil down! PROMETHEUS A marriage he shall make shall vex him sore. IO A marriage? Whether of gods or mortals? Speak!

If this be utterable! PROMETHEUS Why dost thou ask What I may not declare? IO And shall he quit The throne of all the worlds, by a new spouse

Supplanted? PROMETHEUS She will bear to him a child, And he shall be in might more excellent Than his progenitor. IO And he will find No way to parry this strong stroke of fate? PROMETHEUS None save my own self- when these bonds are loosed. IO And who shall loose them if Zeus wills not? PROMETHEUS One Of thine own seed. IO How say'st thou? Shall a child Of mine release thee? PROMETHEUS Son of thine, but son

The thirteenth generation shall beget. IO A prophecy oracularly dark. PROMETHEUS Then seek not thou to know thine own fate. IO Nay, Tender me not a boon to snatch it from me. PROMETHEUS Of two gifts thou hast asked one shall be thine. IO What gifts? Pronounce and leave to me the choice. PROMETHEUS Nay, thou are free to choose. Say, therefore, whether I shall declare to thee thy future woes Or him who shall be my deliverer. CHORUS Nay, but let both be granted! Unto her That which she

chooseth, unto me my choice, That I, too, may have honour from thy lips.

First unto her declare her wanderings, And unto me him who shall set thee free; 'Tis that I long to know. PROMETHEUS I will resist No further, but to your importunacy All things which ye desire to learn reveal.

And, Io, first to thee I will declare Thy far-driven wanderings; write thou my words In the retentive tablets of thy heart.

When thou hast crossed the flood that flows between And is the boundary of two continents, Turn to the sun's uprising, where he treads Printing with fiery steps the eastern sky, And from the roaring of the Pontic surge Do thou pass on, until before thee lies The Gorgonean plain, Kisthene called, Where dwell the gray-haired three, the Phorcides, Old, mumbling maids, swan-shaped, having one eye Betwixt the three, and but a single tooth.

On them the sun with his bright beams ne'er glanceth Nor moon that lamps the night. Not far from them

The sisters three, the Gorgons, have their haunt; Winged forms, with snaky locks, hateful to man, Whom nothing mortal looking on can live.

Thus much that thou may'st have a care of these.

Now of another portent thou shalt hear.

Beware the dogs of Zeus that ne'er give tongue, The sharp-beaked gryphons, and the one-eyed horde Of Arimaspians, riding upon horses, Who dwell around the river rolling gold, The ferry and the frith of Pluto's port.

Go not thou nigh them. After thou shalt come To a far land, a dark-skinned race, that dwell Beside the fountains of the sun, whence flows The river Aethiops: follow its banks Until thou comest to the steep-down slope Where from the Bibline mountains Nilus old Pours the sweet waters of his holy stream.

And thou, the river guiding thee, shalt come To the three-sided, wedge-shaped land of Nile, Where for thyself, Io, and for thy children Long sojourn is appointed. If in aught My story seems to stammer and to err

From indirectness, ask and ask again Till all be manifest. I do not lack For leisure, having more than well contents me! CHORUS If there be aught that she must suffer yet, Or aught omitted in the narrative Of her long wanderings, I pray thee speak.

But if thou hast told all, then grant the boon We asked and doubtless thou wilt call to mind. PROMETHEUS Nay, she has heard the last of her long journey.

But, as some warrant for her patient hearing I will relate her former sufferings Ere she came hither. Much I will omit That had detained us else with long discourse And touch at once her journey's thus far goal.

When thou wast come to the Molossian plain That lies about the high top of Dodona, Where is an oracle and shrine of Zeus Thesprotian, and- portent past belief The talking oaks, the same from whom the word

Flashed clear and nothing questionably hailed thee The destined spouse- ah! do I touch old wounds? Of Zeus, honoured above thy sex; stung thence In torment, where the road runs by the sea, Thou cam'st to the broad gulf of Rhea, whence Beat back by a strong wind, thou didst retrace Most painfully thy course; and it shall be That times to come in memory of thy passage Shall call that inlet the Ionian Sea.

Thus much for thee in witness that my mind Beholdeth more than that which leaps to light.

Now for the things to come; what I shall say Concerns ye both alike. Return we then And follow our old track. There is a city Yclept Canobus, built at the land's end, Even at the mouth and mounded silt of Nile, And there shall Zeus restore to thee thy mind With touch benign and laying on of hands.

And from that touch thou shalt conceive and bear Swarth Epaphus, touch-born; and he shall reap As much of earth as Nilus watereth With his broad-flowing river. In descent

The fifth from him there shall come back to Argos, Thine ancient home, but driven by hard hap, Two score and ten maids, daughters of one house, Fleeing pollution of unlawful marriage With their next kin, who winged with wild desire, As hawks that follow hard on cushat-doves, Shall harry prey which they should not pursue And hunt forbidden brides. But God shall be Exceeding jealous for their chastity; And old Pelasgia, for the mortal thrust Of woman's hands and midnight murder done Upon their new-wed lords, shall shelter them; For every wife shall strike her husband down Dipping a two-edged broadsword in his blood.

Oh, that mine enemies might wed such wives!

But of the fifty, one alone desire Shall tame, as with the stroke of charming-wand, So that she shall not lift her hands to slay The partner of her bed; yea, melting love Shall blunt her sharp-set will, and she shall choose Rather to be called weak and womanly Than the dark stain of blood; and she shall be

Mother of kings in Argos. 'Tis a tale Were't told in full, would occupy us long.

For, of her sowing, there shall spring to fame The lion's whelp, the archer bold, whose bow Shall set me free. This is the oracle Themis, my ancient Mother, Titan-born, Disclosed to me; but how and in what wise Were long to tell, nor would it profit thee. IO Again they come, again The fury and the pain!

The gangrened wound! The ache of pulses dinned With raging throes!

It beats upon my brain- the burning wind That madness blows!

It pricks- the barb, the hook not forged with heat, The gadfly dart!

Against my ribs with thud of trampling feet Hammers my heart!

And like a bowling wheel mine eyeballs spin, And I am flung By fierce winds from my course, nor can rein in

My frantic tongue That raves I know not what!- a random tide Of words- a froth Of muddied waters buffeting the wide, High-crested, hateful wave of ruin and God's wrath!

Exit raving.

CHORUS I hold him wise who first in his own mind This canon fixed and taught it to mankind:

True marriage is the union that mates Equal with equal; not where wealth emasculates, Or mighty lineage is magnified, Should he who earns his bread look for a bride.

Therefore, grave mistresses of fate, I pray That I may never live to see the day When Zeus takes me for his bedfellow; or I Draw near in love to husband from on high.

For I am full of fear when I behold Io, the maid no human love may fold, And her virginity disconsolate, Homeless and husbandless by Hera's hate.

For me, when love is level, fear is far.

May none of all the Gods that greater are Eye me with his unshunnable regard; For in that warfare victory is hard, And of that plenty cometh emptiness.

What should befall me then I dare not guess; Nor whither I should flee that I might shun The craft and subtlety of Cronos' Son. PROMETHEUS I tell thee that the self-willed pride of Zeus Shall surely be abased; that even now He plots a marriage that shall hurl him forth Far out of sight of his imperial throne And kingly dignity. Then, in that hour, Shall be fulfilled, nor in one tittle fail, The curse wherewith his father Cronos cursed him, What time he fell from his majestic place Established from of old. And such a stroke None of the Gods save me could turn aside.

I know these things shall be and on what wise.

Therefore let him secure him in his seat, And put his trust in airy noise, and swing

His bright, two-handed, blazing thunderbolt, For these shall nothing stead him, nor avert Fall insupportable and glory humbled.

A wrestler of such might he maketh ready For his own ruin; yea, a wonder, strong In strength unmatchable; and he shall find Fire that shall set at naught the burning bolt And blasts more dreadful that o'er-crow the thunder.

The pestilence that scourgeth the deep seas And shaketh solid earth, the three-pronged mace, Poseidon's spear, a mightier shall scatter; And when he stumbleth striking there his foot, Fallen on evil days, the tyrant's pride Shall measure all the miserable length That parts rule absolute from servitude. CHORUS Methinks the wish is father to the thought And whets thy railing tongue. PROMETHEUS Not so: the wish And the accomplishment go hand in hand. -

CHORUS Then must we look for one who shall supplant And reign instead of Zeus? PROMETHEUS Calamity Far, far more grievous shall bow down his neck. CHORUS Hast thou no fear venting such blasphemy? PROMETHEUS What should I fear who have no part nor lot In doom of dying? CHORUS But he might afflict thee With agony more dreadful, pain beyond These pains. PROMETHEUS Why let him if he will!

All evils I foreknow. CHORUS Ah, they are wise

Who do obeisance, prostrate in the dust, To the implacable, eternal Will. PROMETHEUS Go thou and worship; fold thy hands in prayer, And be the dog that licks the foot of power!

Nothing care I for Zeus; yea, less than naught!

Let him do what he will, and sway the world His little hour; he has not long to lord it Among the Gods.

Oh! here his runner comes!

The upstart tyrant's lacquey! He'll bring news, A message, never doubt it, from his master. Enter HERMES.

HERMES You, the sophisticated rogue, the heart of gall, The renegade of heaven, to short-lived men Purveyor of prerogatives and titles, Fire-thief! Dost hear me? I've a word for thee.

Thou'rt to declare- this is the Father's pleasure These marriage-feasts of thine, whereof thy tongue Rattles a-pace, and by the which his greatness

Shall take a fall. And look you rede no riddles, But tell the truth, in each particular Exact. I am not to sweat for thee, Prometheus, Upon a double journey. And thou seest Zeus by thy dark defiance is not moved. PROMETHEUS A very solemn piece of insolence Spoken like an underling of the Gods! Ye are young!

Ye are young! New come to power! And ye suppose Your towered citadel Calamity Can never enter! Ah, and have not I Seen from those pinnacles a two-fold fall Of tyrants? And the third, who his brief "now" Of lordship arrogates, I shall see yet By lapse most swift, most ignominious, Sink to perdition. And dost thou suppose I crouch and cower in reverence and awe To Gods of yesterday? I fail of that So much, the total all of space and time Bulks in between. Take thyself hence and count Thy toiling steps back by the way thou camest, In nothing wiser for thy questionings. -

HERMES This is that former stubbornness of thine That brought thee hither to foul anchorage. PROMETHEUS Mistake me not; I would not, if I might, Change my misfortunes for thy vassalage. HERMES Oh! better be the vassal of this rock Than born the trusty messenger of Zeus! PROMETHEUS I answer insolence, as it deserves, With insolence. How else should it be answered? HERMES Surely; and, being in trouble, it is plain You revel in your plight. PROMETHEUS Revel, forsooth!

I would my enemies might hold such revels And thou amongst the first. -

HERMES Dost thou blame me For thy misfortunes?
 PROMETHEUS I hate all the Gods, Because, having received good
 at my hands, They have rewarded me with evil. HERMES This
 Proves thee stark mad! PROMETHEUS Mad as you please, if
 hating Your enemies is madness. HERMES Were all well With
 thee, thou'dst be insufferable! PROMETHEUS Alas! HERMES Alas,
 that Zeus knows not that word, Alas! -

PROMETHEUS But ageing Time teacheth all knowledge. HERMES
 Time Hath not yet taught thy rash, imperious will Over wild
 impulse to win mastery. PROMETHEUS Nay: had Time taught me
 that, I had not stooped To bandy words with such a slave as thou.
 HERMES This, then, is all thine answer: thou'lt not speak One
 syllable of what our Father asks. PROMETHEUS Oh, that I were a
 debtor to his kindness!

I would requite him to the uttermost! HERMES A cutting speech!
 You take me for a boy Whom you may taunt and tease.
 PROMETHEUS Why art thou not

A boy- a very booby- to suppose Thou wilt get aught from me?
 There is no wrong However shameful, nor no shift of malice
 Whereby Zeus shall persuade me to unlock My lips until these
 shackles be cast loose.

Therefore let lightning leap with smoke and flame, And all that is
 be beat and tossed together, With whirl of feathery snowflakes and
 loud crack Of subterranean thunder; none of these Shall bend my
 will or force me to disclose By whom 'tis fated he shall fall from
 power. HERMES What good can come of this? Think yet again!
 PROMETHEUS I long ago have thought and long ago Determined.
 HERMES Patience! patience! thou rash fool!

Have so much patience as to school thy mind To a right judgment
 in thy present troubles. -

PROMETHEUS Lo, I am rockfast, and thy words are wave That
 weary me in vain. Let not the thought Enter thy mind, that I in awe
 of Zeus Shall change my nature for a girl's, or beg The Loathed
 beyond all loathing- with my hands Spread out in woman's
 fashion- to cast loose These bonds; from that I am utterly removed.
 HERMES I have talked much, yet further not my purpose; For thou
 art in no whit melted or moved By my prolonged entreaties: like a
 colt New to the harness thou dost back and plunge, Snap at thy bit
 and fight against the rein.

And yet thy confidence is in a straw; For stubbornness, if one be in the wrong, Is in itself weaker than naught at all.

See now, if thou wilt not obey my words, What storm, what triple-crested wave of woe Unshunnable shall come upon thee. First, This rocky chasm shall the Father split With earthquake thunder and his burning bolt,

And he shall hide thy form, and thou shalt hang Bolt upright, dandled in the rock's rude arms.

Nor till thou hast completed thy long term Shalt thou come back into the light; and then The winged hound of Zeus, the tawny eagle, Shall violently fall upon thy flesh And rend it as 'twere rags; and every day And all day long shall thine unbidden guest Sit at thy table, feasting on thy liver Till he hath gnawn it black. Look for no term To such an agony till there stand forth Among the Gods one who shall take upon him Thy sufferings and consent to enter hell Far from the light of Sun, yea, the deep pit And mirk of Tartarus, for thee. Be advised; This is not stuffed speech framed to frighten thee But woeful truth. For Zeus knows not to lie And every word of his shall be fulfilled.

Look sharply to thyself then: weigh my words And do not in thy folly think self-will Better than prudent counsel. -

CHORUS To our mind The words of Hermes fail not of the mark.

For he enjoins thee to let self-will go And follow after prudent counsels. Him Harken; for error in the wise is shame. PROMETHEUS These are stale tidings I foreknew; Therefore, since suffering is the due A foe must pay his foes, Let curled lightnings clasp and clash And close upon my limbs: loud crash The thunder, and fierce throes Of savage winds convulse calm air:

The embowelled blast earth's roots uprear And toss beyond its bars, The rough surge, till the roaring deep In one devouring deluge sweep The pathway of the stars!

Finally, let him fling my form Down whirling gulfs, the central storm Of being; let me lie

Plunged in the black Tartarean gloom; Yet- yet- his sentence shall not doom This deathless self to die! HERMES These are the workings of a brain More than a little touched; the vein Of voluble ecstasy!

Surely he wandereth from the way, His reason lost, who thus can pray!

A mouthing madman he!

Therefore, O ye who court his fate, Rash mourners- ere it be too late
And ye indeed are sad For vengeance spurring hither fast
Hence! lest the bellowing thunderblast Like him should strike you mad!
CHORUS Words which might work persuasion speak If thou must counsel me;
nor seek Thus, like a stream in spate, To uproot mine honour.
Dost thou dare

Urge me to baseness! I will bear With him all blows of fate; For false forsakers I despise;
At treachery my gorge doth rise:

I spew it forth with hate! HERMES Only- with ruin on your track
Rail not at fortune; but look back And these my words recall;
Neither blame Zeus that he hath sent Sorrow no warning word forewent!

Ye labour for your fall With your own hands! Not by surprise Nor yet by stealth,
but with clear eyes, Knowing the thing ye do, Ye walk into the yawning net
That for the feet of is set And Ruin spreads for you.

Exit.

PROMETHEUS The time is past for words; earth quakes

Sensibly: hark! pent thunder rakes The depths, with bellowing din
Of echoes rolling ever nigher:

Lightnings shake out their locks of fire; The dust cones dance and spin;
The skipping winds, as if possessed By faction- north, south, east and west,
Puff at each other; sea And sky are shook together: Lo!

The swing and fury of the blow Wherewith Zeus smiteth me Sweepeth apace,
and, visibly, To strike my heart with fear. See, see, Earth, awful Mother!
Air, That shedd'st from the revolving sky On all the light they see thee by,
What bitter wrongs I bear! The scene closes with earthquake and thunder,
in the midst of which PROMETHEUS and the DAUGHTERS OF OCEANUS sink into the abyss.

THE END