

**SCENES FROM  
EURIPIDES, RUGBY  
EDITION. THE ELECTRA**

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Scenes from euripides, rugby edition. The electra by A. Sidgwick

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**A. SIDGWICK**

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EURIPIDES, RUGBY  
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SCENES FROM EURIPIDES

THE ELECTRA



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Κλυταιμνήστρα, queen of Argos.

'Ορέστης, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.

'Ηλέκτρα, his sister.

Αΐτουργός ('a husbandman'), married to Electra.

Πρεσβύς ('old man'), servant of Electra, who had tended her as a child.

\* Άγγελος ('a messenger').

Πυλάδης, the friend of Orestes, who appears on the stage, but does not speak.

*Chorus of Argive maidens, singing usually in the orchestra below the stage, but mounting the stage itself when the action requires it.*

*The scene is a rustic cottage in Argolis, and is the same all through the play.*





## PREFACE.

**T**HE *ELECTRA* is one of the strongest and most instructive examples of the *realism* of EURIPIDES. His object was to excite interest, not by distant grandeur like *ÆSCHYLUS*, nor by ideals however touching and poetic like *SOPHOCLES*, but by bringing real men and women on the stage, with real human passions and feelings, as his countrymen saw them every day in Athens. The strong side of this realism is clearly the 'touch of nature;' the weak side is the danger of its losing all effect by becoming commonplace and undignified. This play has passages which illustrate both tendencies.

There are many delicate touches of natural feeling, many striking displays of passion; the recognition of *ORESTES*, though inferior to that in the *IPHIGENIA*, is full of beauties; and the curse of *ÆGISTHUS* is very finely written. On the other hand, there is something repulsive in the incongruity of *ELECTRA* being married to a farm labourer; all the characters, from time to time, talk in a commonplace strain; and the satire on *ÆSCHYLUS* in the fourth scene is both unworthy and irrelevant. But, on the whole, it certainly has been unduly scorned by the critics.

The plot of the play is as follows:—

*CLYTEMNESTRA*, having treacherously murdered her husband, *AGAMEMNON*, on his return from Troy, has married her lover *ÆGISTHUS*, and rules Argolis from the palace at Mycenæ. *ORESTES* is in foreign lands; and *ELECTRA*, whose love for her father might be awkward, is safely married to a poor but noble-minded tiller of the soil. All seems well for her.

But *ORESTES* returns, bidden by the Delphic oracle to slay

## PREFACE.

her. He and *PYLADES* reach Argolis (and the cottage of *ELECTRA*, though they know it not,) at daybreak. Here the play opens with *ORESTES*' short address to *PYLADES*, announcing his night-visit to his father's tomb, and his purpose. [Scene 1.]

*ELECTRA* discovers the two travellers lurking near her cottage, and at first she takes them for thieves. *ORESTES*, however, informs her that he brings news of her brother, and inquires after her. She joyfully tells him all her case, and plans of vengeance, which he promises to report. [Scene 2.]

The husband of *ELECTRA* returns, and hearing who the strangers are, courteously invites them in. *ORESTES* warmly admires virtue in such humble rank. [Scene 3.]

An old servant of the family arrives with some provisions, and tells her that some one has been visiting her father's tomb. Presently *ORESTES* and *PYLADES* come in, and the old man recognises the former. [Scene 4.]

The brother and sister now contrive their plot. [Scene 5.]

*ÆGISTHUS* is slain by *ORESTES* under pretence of joining in the sacrifice which the former is celebrating. [Scene 6.]

*ORESTES* returns to his sister with the body, having revealed his real name to the Argives. *ELECTRA* utters her famous curse against the dead man. [Scene 7.]

*CLYTEMNESTRA*, in answer to an appeal from *ELECTRA*, who asks her to come as she has recently given birth to a child, visits the cottage in state. There (behind the scenes) she is murdered, and the scene is then shifted, showing the brother and sister standing over the corpse of the guilty pair. [Scene 8.]

SCENE I.

THE RETURN OF ORESTES.

*The cottage where ELECTRA and her husband live, in a rural district of Argolis. The stream Inachus is seen in the background, and over the hills behind the day is breaking. The ground slopes steeply down with rude steps at the sides, from the higher level of the stage to the lower level of the orchestra.*

*Enter ORESTES and PYLADES, girl with swords, in the guise of way-worn travellers, with luggage on their backs. They stop as they are approaching the cottage and put down their baggage, and ORESTES turns to his friend and says:—*

OP. Πυλάδη, σὲ γὰρ δὴ πρῶτον ἀνθρώπων ἐγὼ  
 πιστὸν νομίζω καὶ φίλου ξένου τ' ἐμοί·  
 μόνος δ' Ὀρέστην τάνδ' ἐθαύμαζες φίλων,  
 πρᾶσσονθ' ἢ πρᾶσσω δεῖν ὑπ' Αἰγίσθου παθῶν,  
 ὅς μου κατέκτα πατέρα χῆ πανάλεθρος 5  
 μήτηρ. ἀφίγμαι δ' ἐκ θεοῦ μυστηρίων  
 Ἄργεϊου οὔδας, οὐδενὸς ζυνειδότης,  
 [stercory] φόνου φονεῦσι πατρὸς ἀλλάξων ἐμοῦ.  
 νυκτὸς δὲ τῆσδε πρὸς τάφον μολῶν πατρὸς  
 δάκρᾴ τ' ἔδωκα καὶ κόμης ἀπηρξάμην 10  
 πυρᾷ τ' ἐπέσφαξ' αἷμα μηλείου φόνου  
 λαθῶν τυράννουσ ὅι κρατοῦσι τῆσδε γῆς.  
 καὶ τειχέων μὲν ἐντὸς σὺ βαίνω πόδα,