

**IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS,  
FROM THE GERM. WITH  
ORIGINAL POEMS**

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Iphigenia in Tauris, from the Germ. With Original Poems by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

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**JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE**

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# IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

FROM THE GERMAN OF GÖTTE

WITH

ORIGINAL POEMS.

Was ich gewollt ist löblich, wenn das Ziel

Auch meines Kräfte unerschlicher bleib. — *Tasso, G. 4.*

Or conjet, ch'el crime per me venci

Ma tiranda m'istati col non erro

Fatti così a penna, stettero in vici. — *Dante.*

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1851.

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## PREFACE.

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THE drama of "Iphigenia in Tauris" is generally considered as Goethe's masterpiece. It is styled, by his illustrious countryman, Schlegel, an echo of Greek song; and although that echo must necessarily lose in clearness by passing into another language, the translator hopes that, faint as the sounds may be, they will yet be strong enough to convey to the English reader some idea of the beauty of the German drama. As a proof of the high estimation in which "Iphigenia in Tauris" is held by the Germans, it may be mentioned that it was performed at the Theatre of Weimar on Goethe's eightieth birthday, as the highest tribute that could be offered to the poet's genius.

Sidmouth, October 17th, 1850.

CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA.

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IPHIGENIA, Priestess of Diana.

THOAS, King of Tauris.

ORESTES, Brother of Iphigenia.

PYLADES, Friend of Orestes.

AREAS, a Taurian Soldier.

*Scene*—Grove before the Temple of Diana.

# IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

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## ACT I.

### SCENE THE FIRST.

#### IPHIGENIA.

Beneath your sacred shades, ye ancient groves,  
With shuddering awe I walk, as when I trod  
Your silent precincts first, and ne'er my soul  
Familiar with your solemn scenes has grown :  
For, though, full many years, that higher will,  
To which I bow, has kept me here concealed,  
To you I feel myself a stranger still ;  
For, ah ! the sea divides me from the loved,  
And on the coast I stand the live-long day,  
My sad soul seeking for the Grecian land,  
But to my sighs the waves bring no reply  
Save hollow murmurs rolling from afar.  
Alas ! for him, who far from home and kin,  
A lonely life must lead. For grief, the bliss  
Which nearest to him lies, does snatch away ;  
Whilst thickly swarming thoughts for ever rise  
Towards his father's halls, where first the sun  
Before his eyes revealed the glorious sky :



Where, playing with his child-mates, each to each,  
 In tender bands were ever faster knit.  
 I will not judge the gods, but yet I know  
 That woman's destiny for pity calls ;  
 At home, and in the strife, man rules supreme,  
 And e'en in foreign lands himself can aid ;  
 Possession makes him glad, him victory crowns,  
 And for him is prepared a glorious death.  
 How narrowly bound up is woman's lot !  
 For e'en a savage husband to obey  
 Her duty is and comfort ; wretched she,  
 When driven by a hostile fate afar,  
 As I am now, whom noble Thoas keeps  
 In stern and sacred slavish fetters fast.  
 Oh ! how it shames me, goddess, to avow,  
 That 'tis with dumb aversion thee I serve,  
 Thee, my deliverer, when my life should be  
 In willing service given up to thee.  
 In thee I ever hoped, and I will trust,  
 Diana ! still in thee—in thee, who me,  
 The exiled daughter of a mighty king,  
 Within thy tender sacred arms received.  
 Oh, Zeus's daughter ! if the valiant man  
 Whom thou, his daughter claiming, didst afflict ;  
 If thou, the godlike Agamemnon, who  
 His best and dearest to thy altars brought ;  
 If thou hast him from Troy's uprooted walls  
 Back to his native land in triumph led ;

If thou, his spouse, Electra, and his son,  
 Those dear delights, hast guarded for him well ;  
 Then give me also back to him at last,  
 And save me, thou, who rescued me from death,  
 Save me from life passed here, this second death.

SCENE THE SECOND.

*Iphigenia—Arkas.*

ARKAS.

The king has sent me here, and wills that I  
 Should, with his greeting, Diana's priestess hail ;  
 Tauris, upon this day, her goddess thanks,  
 For glorious, fresh, and wondrous vict'ries gained.  
 I hasten from the host, and from the king,  
 To announce his coming, and his near approach.

IPHIGENIA.

To meet him worthily, we are prepared :  
 The welcome offerings brought by Thoas' hand,  
 With fav'ring eye, our goddess will regard.

ARKAS.

Oh, priestess, would I also saw thine eye,  
 Most holy maid, more bright and more serene,—  
 A sign of good to all ; but sorrow still  
 Enshrouds mysteriously thy inmost soul.

Through many years we 've waited, yet in vain,  
 To hear from thee one kind, confiding word.  
 So long as in this office thee I 've known,  
 Thy gaze has made me shudder, e'en as now ;  
 And, as with iron bands, remains thy soul,  
 Within thy inmost bosom fettered fast.

IPHIGENIA.

As suits the banished and the orphaned one.

ARKAS.

Banished and orphaned here, dost feel thyself?

IPHIGENIA.

Can foreign lands ever become our own ?

ARKAS.

To thee thy native land is strange as this.

IPHIGENIA.

And that is why my heart for ever bleeds.—  
 In my first youth, when yet my soul scarce knew  
 Parents and brethren to itself to bind ;  
 When the young shoot, so loving and so loved,  
 From the old root, strove heavenwards to press,  
 'Twas then, alas ! that I was fiercely seized  
 By that dread curse which strangely severed me  
 From my beloved, tearing each sweetest tie,