

**THE REMORSE OF ORESTES,
KING OF ARGOS, LACEDEMON,
MYCENAE, AND SICYON, SON
OF AGAMEMNON**

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The Remorse of Orestes, King of Argos, Lacedemon, Mycenae, and Sicyon, Son of Agamemnon
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ANONYMOUS

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THE REMORSE

OR

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OF

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KING OF ARGOS, LACEDEMON, MYCENÆ,

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SON OF AGAMEMNON.

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534.



THE
REMORSE OF ORESTES.

BOOK I.

THE anger of the gods was not appeased by the destruction of Troy and the death of Priam. Their vengeance was turned against the Grecian chiefs. Achilles, Ajax (the son of Telamon,) Patroclus, and other commanders, had fallen during the war. New calamities awaited the survivors. Ulysses having compassed the death of Astyanax, the son of Hector, lest he might avenge that hero upon the enemies of Troy, had sailed on his return to Ithaca. In his voyage he encountered the numerous perils described in the immortal verse of Homer.

The other Ajax, Oilcus, had sailed from the Trojan shore, in the vain hope of returning to his country. His fleet was sunk by tempests; his body, either immersed in the caves of the ocean, became the prey of the monsters of the deep, or being dashed by the waves on the rocky coasts, was devoured by the vultures. At length Agamemnon, the wise and virtuous king of Argos, the supreme chief of all the Grecian commanders, set sail with his fleet from the Dardanian shore, and having sacrificed to the immortal gods, steered with propitious auspices towards the Argian shores.

The sun had descended into the realms of Pluto; Selene emerged from the depths of Oceanus; the vault of Uranus was without a cloud; the rowers had withdrawn their oars from the sides of the galleys, and had quitted their benches. The first watch was set; the fleet shortened sail for the night, and glided slowly along the rippling surface of the sea.

The king reclined on his couch in the stern of the royal galley. His mind was occupied with the events of the war. Revolving the past his imagination passed to the future. His reflections convinced him that the war, although successful, was disastrous to the conquerors; that the necessity for Greece to appeal to arms arose from that immutable principle of justice, that the perpetrators of wrongs ought to be punished for their crimes; that human laws punish individual transgressors, for which purpose the prince is armed with the sword of justice; and that the crimes of states are no less deserving of retribution, which it is the duty of other states to enforce. Yet, as the venomous insect perishes by the loss of its sting, which it leaves to rankle in the wound it inflicts, the consequences are often ruinous to those states which successfully vindicate the cause of justice. "For myself," argued this virtuous king in his own breast, "my conscience acquits me of any

breach of duty to the gods, whose vicegerent I am, in the part I have taken in the Trojan war. To have allowed Paris, after violating the laws of hospitality and honour, to outrage with impunity the moral sense of society, by living in open adultery with Helen, the abandoned wife of my brother Menelaus, the dishonoured king of Sparta; to have permitted Priam, whose character, in other respects, stood unimpeached, to give shelter and countenance to the guilty pair, in defiance of the laws both of the gods and of men; to have witnessed these enormities without an effort to redress them; would have evinced either cowardice or a want of honour in me; perhaps it might have inferred my approval of them. Doubtless, kings are the dernier resort of those complainants who are without remedy in any less powerful tribunal. Justice must otherwise fail altogether in such cases, which would, perhaps, bring down the vengeance of the gods,