

# **THREE DRAMAS OF EURIPIDES**

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Three dramas of Euripides by Euripides & William Cranston Lawton

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**EURIPIDES & WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON**

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OF

EURIPIDES

BY

WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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The Riverside Press, Cambridge  
1890

1851

To  
The Memory of my Mother

1851

THE present volume of essays is intended as a contribution to literature, not to classical philology. The writer's appeal is not to Greek scholars, except for unsparring criticism wherever he has missed the meaning of his original. His chief desire is to make this group of ancient dramas intelligible and interesting to the wider circle of men and women who are lovers of good literature. Incidentally, indeed, he could not refrain from striving to enforce the central article of his own creed: that in the drama, as in all the other creative arts, we may demand from the artist not a mere mirror of life in its more vulgar aspects, but rather aid in shaping and imitating our own loftiest and noblest ideals.

A series of essays upon the same plays has already appeared in the "Atlantic Monthly;" but besides many additions and changes in the original portions, the entire dramas are here given in translation, instead of a series of selected passages. The text is so printed that the versions alone may be read by those who prefer to listen to the classical dramatist without interruption. Critical read-

ers will doubtless notice certain differences in the treatment, especially of the choric portions, in the three plays. It may be well to state here that the attempt to imitate the original rhythms in such passages has been definitely abandoned. The *Medea* represents most nearly the translator's present ideas as to the proper relation of a version to the Greek text. Responsible and laborious duties unexpectedly assumed within the last few months have, however, precluded any radical recasting of the other dramas. If encouraged by the reception of his work, the author contemplates a similar volume on each of the other tragic poets, as well as a selection from Euripides' later plays. The *Prometheus*, *Persians*, and *Antigone*, are already translated.

While disclaiming all pretension to original research, the writer desires to acknowledge his debt to the long line of commentators and illustrators of the classic drama. Perhaps the two from whom he has learned most are Nicolaus Wecklein and John Addington Symonds. It may be those names were never in such juxtaposition before, and they suggest the remark, that we of farthest Hesperia — if we can have but one of the two — can better afford to renounce the encyclopædic learning of



the Germans than that English tradition of humanistic culture which is our birthright.

But the value of this book, as of every other, depends in the last analysis upon the spirit in which it is written, the views of life and life's opportunities which it reveals; and therefore an infinitely heavier indebtedness has been acknowledged, too late, in its dedication. Those who knew the heroic woman whose departure has left desolate the happiest of New England homes, the many who loved in her the ideal of womanhood, will understand how inevitable is her children's desire to consecrate to her memory all their work, and their entire earthly existence. Even his love for the beautiful creations of the classic poets her son owes first of all to the wondrous instinct of motherhood. Almost the first books put into his childish hands, and read at her knee, were the poems of Homer and Virgil. The only reason for repining over the slow years through which this first creature of his brain has taken shape is that he cannot now lay it in her hands, nor turn to her for sympathy in failure or success.

WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *November*, 1889.



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