

**SCENES FROM
EURIPIDES.
THE ELECTRA**

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Scenes from Euripides. The Electra by A. Sidgwick

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A. SIDGWICK

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THE ELECTRA**

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FROM
EURIPIDES

Rugby Edition

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THE ELECTRA

NEW EDITION

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Κλυταιμνήστρα, queen of Argos.

Ὀρέστης, son of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra.

Ἡλέκτρα, his sister.

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

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

* Ἄγγελος ('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.

THE 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 AESCHYLUS, 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 AEGISTHUS 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 AESCHYLUS in the fourth scene is both unworthy and irrelevant. But, on the whole, the play has been rather too hardly treated by the critics.

The plot is as follows:—

CLYTEMNESTRA, having treacherously murdered her husband, AGAMEMNON, on his return from Troy, has married her lover AEGISTHUS, and rules Argolis from the palace at Mycenae. 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 the queen.

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.]

ARGISTHUS 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 corpses 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, girt 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 φίλον ξένου τ' ἐμοί·
 μόνος δ' Ὀρέστην τόνδ' ἐθαύμαζες φίλων,
 πρᾶσσονθ' ἂ πρᾶσσω δεῖν ὑπ' Αἰγίσθου παθῶν,
 ὃς μου κατέκτα πατέρα χῆ πανώλεθρος 5
 μήτηρ. ἀφίγμαι δ' ἐκ θεοῦ μυστηρίων
 Ἄργεϊον οὐδας, οὐδενὸς ξυνειδότης,
 [*fiercely*] φόνον φονεῦσι πατρὸς ἀλλάζων ἐμοῦ.
 νυκτὸς δὲ τῆσδε πρὸς τάφον μολῶν πατρὸς
 δάκρυά τ' ἔδωκα καὶ κόμης ἀπηρξάμην 10
 πυρῆ τ' ἐπέσφαξ' αἶμα μηλείου φόνου
 λαθῶν τυράννουσ' οἱ κρατοῦσι τῆσδε γῆς.
 καὶ τειχέων μὲν ἐντὸς οὐ βαίνω πόδα,

THE ELECTRA OF

δυοῖν δ' ἄμιλλαν ξυντιθεῖς ἀφικόμην πρὸς τέρμονας γῆς τῆσδ', ἔν' ἐκβάλω ποδὶ ἄλλην ἐπ' αἶαν, εἰ μὲ τις γνοίῃ σκοπῶν ζητοῦντ' ἀδελφίην, (φασὶ γὰρ νιν ἐν γάμοις ζευχθεῖσαν οἰκείν, οὐδὲ παρθένον μένειν,) ὡς συγγένωμαι καὶ φόνου συνεργάτιν λαβῶν τά γ' εἴσω τειχέων σαφῶς μάθω. [gazing at the sunrise in the east]	15 20
νῦν οὖν, Ἔως γὰρ λευκὸν ὄμμ' ἀναίρεται, ἔξω τρίβου τοῦδ' ἴχνος ἀλλαξώμεθα. ἢ γὰρ τις ἀροτῆρ ἢ τις οἰκέτις γυνή φανήσεται νῶν, ἦντιν' ἱστορήσομεν εἰ τοῦσδε ναίει σύγγονος τόπους ἐμή. [They retire aside out of the path, and sit down.]	25