

**PROMETHEUS  
THE FIREGIVER**

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Prometheus the firegiver by Robert Bridges

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**ROBERT BRIDGES**

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P R O M E T H E U S

THE  
FIREGIVER.

BY  
ROBERT BRIDGES.



LONDON  
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN.

1884.

280. e 226.

*This poem was printed last year at the private press of  
the Rev. H. Daniel, Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford,  
and is now reprinted and published for the first time.*

**DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

**PROMETHEUS.**  
**INACHUS.**  
**ARGEIA.**  
**SERVANT.**  
**IO (persona muta).**

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**CHORUS:** Youths and maidens of the house of Inachus.

**SCENE:** ARGOS—Before the palace of Inachus; an altar inscribed  
to Zeus is at the centre of the stage.

## ARGUMENT.

*PROMETHEUS* coming on earth to give fire to men appears before the palace of *Inachus* in *Argos*, on a festival of *Zeus*. He interrupts the ceremony by announcing fire, and persuades *Inachus* to dare the anger of *Zeus* and accept the gift. *Inachus*, fetching *Argia* his wife from the palace, has in turn to quiet her fears. He asks a prophecy of *Prometheus*, who foretells the fate of *Io*, their daughter, and then setting flame to the altar, and writing his own name thereon in the place of *Zeus*, disappears.

The chorus sing (1) a hymn to *Zeus* with the stories of the birth of *Zeus* and the marriage of *Hera*, with the dances of the *Curetes* and the *Hesperides*; (2) Their anticipation of fire, with an ode on wonder; (3) A tragic hymn on the lot of man; (4) A fire-chorus; (5) A final chorus in praise of *Prometheus*.

All the characters are good. *Prometheus* prologises: he carries a long reed.





# PROMETHEUS

## THE FIREGIVER.

PROMETHEUS.



FROM high Olympus and the domeless  
courts,  
Where mighty Zeus our angry king con-  
firms

The Fates' decrees and bends the wills of the gods,  
I come : and on the earth step with glad foot.

This variegated ocean-floor of the air,  
The changeful circle of fair land, that lies  
Heaven's dial, sisterly mirror of night and day :  
The wide o'er-wandered plain, this nether world  
My truant haunt is, when from jealous eyes  
I steal, for hither 'tis I steal, and here  
Unseen repair my joy : yet not unseen

Methinks, nor seen unguessed of him I seek.  
Rather by swath or furrow, or where the path  
Is walled with corn I am found, by trellised vine  
Or olive led in banks or orchard trim :  
I watch all toil and tilth, farm, field and fold,  
And taste the mortal joy ; since not in heaven  
Among our easeful gods hath facile time  
A touch so keen, to wake such love of life  
As stirs the frail and careful being, who here,  
The king of sorrows, melancholy man,  
Bows at his labour, but in heart erect  
A god stands, nor for any gift of god  
Would barter his immortal-hearted prime.

Could I but win this world from Zeus for mine,  
With not a god to vex my happy rule,  
I would inhabit here and leave high heaven :  
So much I love it and its race of men,  
Even as he hates them, hates both them and me  
For loving what he hates, and would destroy me,  
Outcast in the scorn of all his cringing crew,  
For daring but to save what he would slay :  
And me must first destroy. Thus he denieth  
My heart's wish, thus my counsel sets at naught,  
Which him saved once, when all at stake he stood  
Uprisen in rebellion to overthrow  
The elderseated Titans, for I that day

Gave him the counsels which his foes despised.  
Unhappy they, who had still their blissful seats  
Preserved and their Olympian majesty  
Had they been one with me. Alas my kin !

But he when he had taken the throne and chained  
His foes in wasteful Tartarus, said no more  
Where is Prometheus our wise counsellor ?  
What saith Prometheus ? tell us, O Prometheus,  
What Fate requires ! but waxing confident  
And wanton, as a youth first tasting power,  
He wrecked the timeless monuments of heaven,  
The witness of the wisdom of the gods,  
And making all about him new, beyond  
Determined to destroy the race of men,  
And that create afresh or else have none.

Then his vain mind imagined a device,  
And at his bidding all the opposèd winds  
Blew, and the scattered clouds and furlèd snows,  
From every part of heaven together flying,  
He with brute hands in huge disorder heaped :  
They with the winds' weight and his angry breath  
Were thawed : in cataracts they fell, and earth  
In darkness deep and whelmèd tempest lay,  
Drowned 'neath the waters. Yet on the mountain-tops  
Some few escaped, and some thus warned by me  
Made shift to live in vessels which outrode