

AESCHYLUS

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Aeschylus by Reginald S. Copleston

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AESCHYLUS

ÆSCHYLUS

BY

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N O T E.

No discussion of the numerous points under dispute as to the structure of the theatre, the arrangement of the plays, and the dresses of the actors, has been admitted into this volume ; but in each case that view which appeared most probable and most intelligible has been adopted without any expression of uncertainty, and occasionally even the writer's own conjectures have been introduced. But, in truth, the greatest uncertainty prevails on all such points.

The writer desires here to express his thanks to Miss Swanwick and to Professor Plumptre for the courtesy with which they have granted permission to use their translations. To Professor Plumptre's Introduction, Chapter II. is greatly indebted ; nor is there any part in which his admirable book has not been of service.

ÆSCHYLUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE FEAST OF BACCHUS.

IN order rightly to understand the drama of the Greeks, and especially their tragedy, we must rid ourselves, as far as possible, of those associations which now cling in England round the names of "play" and "theatre." For our modern plays are so unlike a Greek tragedy, and the position which they occupy is so entirely different from that of the Athenian theatre, that the few points which both have in common are more likely to impede than assist us.

The Athenian theatre was a national institution; no private speculation, but the pride and glory of a great people; somewhat like, in this respect, to the celebrated theatres of some of the small German states, such as those of Dresden or Mannheim. It was also a religious institution; not merely a scene of national amusement, but at the same time a solemn ceremony in honour of the god Bacchus. The performances took place only at rare intervals, when the festivals of that