

**AESCHYLUS
PROMETHEUS
BOUND**

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Aeschylus Prometheus Bound by A. O. Prickard

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A. O. PRICKARD

**AESCHYLUS
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Clarendon Press Series

AESCHYLUS
PROMETHEUS BOUND

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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FELLOW AND TUTOR OF NEW COLLEGE



Oxford

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PREFACE.

THE text of this edition is, with the exceptions noticed in the Appendix, that of Dindorf's Second Edition (Oxford, 1851). Where this has not been followed, the change has almost always been made in favour of a reading which has manuscript authority as against one which rests on conjecture. Entire consistency can scarcely be looked for in such a process: the general aim has been to combine the practical advantages of a familiar text with the greater respect to Aeschylean MSS. which scholars now allow to be their due. In one noteworthy passage (l. 49), where Dindorf gives the reading of the MSS., a time-honoured conjecture has been admitted. Several of the variations will be found in Dindorf's last text (1869); but it has been thought better to make his earlier 'one (which is substantially that of the older 'Poetae Scenici,' &c.), the basis of that now published.

In the notes the editor has wished to give all necessary explanation of the text as printed—

οἰγῶν θ' ἔπου δεῖ, καὶ λέγων τὰ καίρια.

They are intended for those who read this play at an early stage of their study of Greek. As far as possible, all controverted matter, of text or of interpretation, has been avoided. Happily the play is one in which this can

be done with comparative impunity: still the ungraciousness has often been felt of giving 'a silent vote' where the views of eminent scholars are divided. But it is to be remembered that, in the case of a writer so straightforward as Aeschylus, only one view of his meaning can be right; therefore the choice of some one must at last be made, either by the editor, or by the reader; all other views go for nothing, so far as the interpretation of the author, the first duty of both editor and reader, is concerned.

References to other plays and other authors have been very sparingly given; to passages in the play itself more copiously. It has been said that 'Aeschylus will generally be found his own best interpreter,' and the truth of this may be abundantly seen, even within the compass of one short play. A careful reading of almost any part of Homer will suggest valuable illustrations of the language and thoughts of Aeschylus.

It is perhaps unnecessary to acknowledge assistance throughout derived from Mr. Linwood's Lexicon to Aeschylus, and Mr. Paley's editions. Liddell and Scott's Lexicon is specially rich in information about this play, and should be constantly at hand. For some of the matter of the Introduction the editor is indebted to Professor Westphal's most interesting essay on the Prometheus Trilogy.

AUGUST 1, 1878.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN Chaos came to an end, the first rulers of the Universe were Earth and Heaven. Earth bore many children ; among whom were Ocean, and the Titans, and the Cyclopes, and the Giants, such as Cottus, and Briareus, and Gyes. But one of her sons, Cronus, rose up against his parents, and seized the throne for himself. He did not enjoy it long unpunished ; for Zeus, his son, overthrew him, and became lord, the third in succession. But before he was seated firmly on his throne he had a great battle to fight with the Titans, which lasted ten years, and ended in the complete victory of Zeus. The Titans were sent down to the lower darkness, as Cronus had been before them ; and Zeus established his rule firmly, allotting to the other Gods, whom with him we call the Olympians, their several offices.

At the time of this conflict we first hear of Prometheus. He was son of Iapetus, a Titan, and Atlas was his brother. But he is sometimes spoken of as though he were himself a son of Earth and a Titan. Endowed with foresight to read the future, he counselled his kinsmen, the Titans, not to come to a trial of strength with Zeus, but to make the best terms they could with the conqueror who was to be. They would not listen to him, but scorned his politic advice. Then he saw nothing left for him but to stand by Zeus, and the defeat and punishment of the Titans was in large part due to him.

Zeus was not in these early days of his power the beneficent ruler of whom we read in Homer, 'the father of Gods and men.' No sooner was his victory secured, than he displayed all the insolence of an usurper, to whom authority is a new thing, drawing all the reins of power into his own hands, recognising no law but his own will, and trusting no

one but himself. If this was his behaviour towards the Gods who were his kin, men came off far worse. Miserable and brutish as their state was, he would take no heed of them ; but was even ready to sweep away their whole race. But Prometheus withstood the tyrant to his face, for he saw that men were capable of better things. And first he stole fire, which Zeus had expressly refused them, carrying it down in a hollow reed from heaven. With this he taught them many arts, which could not be practised without fire. He taught them also to count, number being the key to all sciences ; and gave them the faculty of memory ; and he shewed them how to break horses for use, and to sail the sea in ships, and to cure diseases, and to read dreams. But above all he gave them Hope, that they should not be always looking forward to death, but, buoyed up by hope, might endure the life of the present.

This interference between the tyrant and his creatures was more than Zeus could brook. He sent his messengers to seize Prometheus and bind him fast in a rocky gully in Scythia, or, as most say, to a crag in the Caucasus ; there, till Zeus should be pleased to loose him, to expiate his great offence. Further he sent an eagle, or vulture, to visit him from time to time, and torture him by preying upon his liver. But Prometheus, strong in the righteousness of his purpose, and in his full knowledge of all that was before him, and moreover knowing that he possessed a secret which, though not till after many hundred years of agony, would enable him to dictate his own terms to Zeus, would not lower his tone ; but scorned the threats, and turned a deaf ear to the overtures, of the ruler of Olympus.

Such is the story set before us by Aeschylus in the 'Prometheus Bound,' and almost every detail given above can be supplied from that play ; which is so arranged that no spectator, however uninformed, could fail, if he listened attentively, to catch the drift.

But the story, as it came into the hands of Aeschylus in older poems which we can still read for ourselves, such as those of Hesiod, contained many other incidents. Some of these Aeschylus passed by, as being good enough allegory, but little to the purpose of the great main drama, or action,

which he had chosen to set forth. Such, for instance, was the account of the brother Epimetheus ; who was wise after the event, as Prometheus, whose name signified 'forethought,' was wise before it. Others were simply childish ; as the tale that, in apportioning the flesh of an ox, Prometheus had played a trick upon Zeus, and so raised his anger. And these could be of no use in a play addressed to the highest feelings of cultivated Athenians.

The part of the story actually comprised in the 'Prometheus Bound' is very small. It is confined to the exhibition of Prometheus being bound to his rock by the agents of Zeus, and afterwards discoursing to certain persons who in succession visit him there. The play ends, as its second scene (if we may use the word) begins, with a defiant appeal to the powers of Nature to witness the tyranny of Zeus ; which is then visibly made manifest in a mighty convulsion of the elements, overwhelming, but not overawing, the chained Immortal. In one sense the action does advance ; for, through what falls from Prometheus, we see our way forward to a solution in the far future ; but nothing passes before the senses of the spectator which makes any change in the dramatic situation itself.

Let us ask what special points of interest we are likely to find in such a drama ?

In the first place, we have a display of human action presented to us on a great scale. Though the persons who take part in it are Gods, and Titans, and Nymphs, yet they all act, and feel, and think, as men and women. Just as Aeschylus himself and the other tragedians chose from the materials found in the epic poets such stories of royal houses as they felt to be suitable to their art—those for instance of Thebes and Mycenae—in order that they might shew their countrymen life like that of Athenian men and women, but magnified and ennobled ; so here, in the loves and strifes of these superhuman beings, Aeschylus intends us to see character as truly human as is that of Satan or of Abdiel in our great English epic. It is characteristic of the gentler genius of Sophocles that he forbore to treat the story of Prometheus ; Euripides did dramatise it, but in what spirit we do not know ; it is a theme eminently