

**EMPEDOCLES ON
ETNA, A
DRAMATIC POEM**

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Empedocles on Etna, a dramatic poem by Matthew Arnold

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MATTHEW ARNOLD

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EMPEDOCLES
ON
ETNA
A
DRAMATIC POEM.
BY
MATTHEW
ARNOLD.

✦ PERSONS
EMPEDOCLES.
PAUSANIAS, a Physician.
CALLICLES, a young Harp-player.



THE Scene of the Poem is on Mount Etna; at first in the forest region, afterwards on the summit of the mountain.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

MORNING. A pass in the forest region of Etna. ♪

♣ CALLICLES.

♪ (Alone, resting on a rock by the path.)



HE
MULES,
I
THINK,
WILL
NOT BE
HERE
THIS
HOUR;

THEY FEEL THE COOL
WET TURF UNDER
THEIR FEET
BY THE STREAM-SIDE,
AFTER the DUSTY LANES
IN WHICH THEY HAVE
TOIL'D ALL NIGHT
FROM CATANA,

And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan,
How gracious is the mountain at this hour!
A thousand times have I been here alone,
Or with the revellers from the mountain-towns,
But never on so fair a morn;—the sun
Is shining on the brilliant mountain-crests,
And on the highest pines; but farther down,
Here in the valley, is in shade; the sward
Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs;
One sees one's footprints crush'd in the wet grass,
One's breath curls in the air; and on these pines
That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey
tufts,

Which the goats love, are jewell'd thick with dew.
Here will I stay till the slow litter comes.
I have my harp too—that is well.—Apollo!
What mortal could be sick or sorry here?
I know not in what mind Empedocles,
Whose mules I follow'd, may be coming up,
But if, as most men say, he is half mad
With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs,
Pausanias, his sage friend, who mounts with him,
Could scarce have lighted on a lovelier cure.
The mules must be below, far down. I hear
Their tinkling bells, mix'd with the song of birds,
Rise faintly to me—now it stops!—Who's here?
vi

Pausanias! and on foot! alone!

✦ PAUSANIAS.

And thou, then!

I left thee supping with Peisianax,
With thy head full of wine, and thy hair crown'd,
Touching thy harp as the whim came on thee,
And praised and spoil'd by master and by guests
Almost as much as the new dancing-girl.
Why hast thou follow'd us!

✦ CALLICLES.

*The night was hot,

And the feast past its prime; so we slipp'd out,
Some of us, to the portico to breathe;—
Peisianax, thou know'st, drinks late;—and then,
As I was lifting my soil'd garland off,
I saw the mules and litter in the court,
And in the litter sate Empedocles;
Thou, too, wast with him. Straightway I sped
home;
I saddled my white mule, and all night long
Through the cool lovely country follow'd you,
Pass'd you a little since as morning dawn'd,
And have this hour sate by the torrent here,
Till the slow mules should climb in sight again.