

- Eur. You shall see,
And if you notice a tautology,
Any extraneous matter or a trace
Of padding, then—*conspuez* in my face!
- Dion. Do say one; I am dying for a sight
Of the correctness of the lines you write.
- Eur. (*Quoting*) (1) "A happy man was Oedipus (2) at first.
- Aesch. (*Interrupting.*) Not he, by jove; but utterly accurst:
Doomed ere his birth the oracle to fulfil,
And, yet unborn, I say, his sire to kill,
How then was he a happy man at first?
- Eur. (*Disregarding the interruption.*)
"Then fell at last into the very worse misfortune."
- Aesch. No, not he! he never rose
Out of it. First, an infant, they expose
Him in a bit of crockery in a storm,
Not to grow up and do his father's harm;
And after that, with both ankles swelling (3),
He drifts away to Polybus' dwelling;
Then marries an old woman in his prime,
And she was his own mother all the time!
- Eur. Nonsense! I think my Prologues very fine. (4)
- Aesch. Well, I wont nibble at them line by line,
But, with the help of Heaven for the task,
I will overthrow them with a pocket flask.
- Eur. A pocket flask! You! Mine!

(1) From the "Antigone," of Euripides, a lost play.

(2) Oedipus was destined to slay his father, Laius, and marry his mother, Jocasta; a destiny which he fulfilled. The legend was treated in several plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and other Attic tragedians.

(3) Laius, King of Thebes, to avoid the threatened doom, exposed his infant son, on Mt. Cithaeron, after tying his ankles together. Here the child was found, with his feet badly swollen, by a shepherd who took him to the house of Polybus, King of Corinth, where he was brought up. The name Oedipus means swollen-foot.

(4) Aeschylus, after accusing Euripides of absurdity in his treatment of the story of Oedipus, proceeds to criticize his Prologues because of the monotonous regularity of their rhythm, and their sameness of style. They are such that anything can be put in to fill up the line, moreover they are commonplace and undignified.