

Aesch. (*Sings.*) O murky night, shrouded in gloom,
 Say why didst thou send to my room
 Out of the dark a nightmare dread
 Clad in black garments like the dead—
 A minister of death
 With breathless breath,
 Child of black night,
 A shuddering sight
 With bloody, bloody looks
 And talons long as hooks?—

Dion. (*Interrupting.*) Stop now your singing.

[*They now proceed literally to weigh the merits of the two poets. A large pair of scales is brought forward; and each poet takes hold of a scale, into which at the word of command he quotes one of his best verses, and then lets go. The scale of Aeschylus always drops. Dionysus carefully explaining to Euripides the cause on each occasion.*]

Dion. Enough of Lyrics!

Aesch. I should say it is I
 I want to take him to the balances,
 Which is the only way to bring conviction
 By proving our respective weight of diction.

Dion. (*Arranging the scales.*)
 Now then you two stand by the scales!

Aesch. and Eur. All right
 Take hold of them and each in turn recite

Dion. And don't let go till I say "Cuckoo!"

Aesch. and Eur. Yes.

[*They each take hold of a scale.*]

Dion. Now speak your line into the balances

Eur. "Oh that the good ship Argo ne'er had flown" (1)

Aesch. "Spercheus river where the oxen stray" (2)

Dion. Cuckoo! let go!

[*They let go; Aeschylus' scale drops.*]

Yes this one certainly

Has gone right down.

Eur. But why? I cannot see.

(1) From the *Medea* of Euripides (extant).

(2) From the *Philoctetes* (2) of Aeschylus (lost).