

ÆSCHYLUS AGAMEMNON.

vv. 1372-1398.

I spake to you before, and what I spake
 Suted the time : now am I not ashamed
 To strike th' opposing notes : for how should one
 By open enmity to secret foes
 Fence them in snares of death too high to leap ?
 That which I did, I did not heedlessly.
 There was a feud of old, which bred this strife
 Though after many years : here, where I stand,
 I struck him for his deeds : and so I struck,
 (For I deny it not) that neither flight
 Was in his power, nor yet to ward the blow.
 An ample net, as 'twere for fish, I cast
 About him and about, a fatal wealth
 Of vesture : twice I struck him : twice he groaned,
 Then bowed his limbs : and on his prostrate form
 I struck a third blow yet, a thank-off'ring
 To Death who keeps the dead : and so he lay,
 And poured his spirit forth ; and from the gash
 Breathed gasps of blood, and with dark gory gouts
 Besprinkled me : wherein my soul rejoiced
 As basks the corn-field in the rain of God
 When th' ears are bursting. Elders, thus it was :
 And ye—if so it be that ye rejoice—
 Rejoice thereat ! I glory in the deed !
 Aye, were it meet to offer thank-off'ring,
 Then were it just, nay more than just ! for he,
 * " Who drugged my cup with curses to the brim,
 Himself has drunk damnation to the dregs."

M. H.

MISS PETIT RECEIVES.

HE—How do you do, Miss Petit ? So lucky to find you at home.

SHE—A kind fate kept me at home to-day. I am seldom in on Wednesdays.

HE—You see I quite forgot that Thursday was your day until I saw the doubtful look on the maid's face when I asked for Mrs. Petit.

SHE—Mamma is not at home, but she will be in presently.

HE—Oh, I hope not— That is, I—I hope so.

SHE—That she is out ?

HE—Unkind as ever ! You know I always like to meet Mrs. Petit. She is a charming hostess, and her place is not easy to fill.

SHE (going toward the door)—Possibly I had better not try to do so, then.

HE (quickly)—Oh, wait ! You have mistaken me. *Please* sit down. Let me explain. I was not thinking of you at all—

SHE—Thank you.

HE—I mean I was not thinking of comparing her with you, but with other hostesses.

SHE (taking the chair he has offered her)—Do *they* try to fill her place ?

HE—Certainly they do. There was her sister, Mrs. Bryan, for instance, who stayed with you last summer when Mrs. Petit was in Scotland, and—

SHE—How rude of you to call my aunt an unsuccessful hostess !

HE (indignantly)—I did nothing of the kind—as you know. At all events, Mrs. Bryan never made her guests feel uncomfortable.

SHE (penitently)—Oh, I am so sorry if I have done that. But you know you compared me to Beatrice once, and—

HE—You are trying to wage "a merry war" on a very poor Benedick. I am not able to keep up my end at all, Miss Petit, (aside) except in feeling vicious.

* The last two lines are from Blackie's version.

SHE—Oh, you'll do better with a little practice.
 HE (laughing)—Don't patronize me, please. It's so inane. My Beatrice is degenerating.

SHE (aside)—*His* Beatrice ! Better change the subject.
 (Aloud)—Do you like Timmer, Mr. Kinnear ?

HE—Well—not in mid-winter. Do you ?

SHE—I was not thinking of the season. It seems hot enough in here. (A sudden thought strikes her. She moves across to a low table, takes from it a box of chocolates, and offers some to him.) Won't you take some, please ? They are quite fresh.

HE—Thank you. You are fond of chocolates ?

SHE (sitting down again on a low couch, and placing the box beside her)—Very. Some one sent me this box this morning with some verses on top of the chocolates.

HE—Were they original ?

SHE—The chocolates ? Oh ! the verses ? Yes, I should fancy so.

HE (hesitating)—Did you like them ?

SHE—I really don't remember. It is quite six hours since I received them.

HE—Would you—ah—would you mind my seeing them ?

SHE (indifferently)—Not in the least. They are inside the box. No ? In my *escritoire*, possibly. No ? Then I must have lost them. No matter—they were in blank verse. (Suddenly enlightened by a blanker look on his face.) But very good, you know.

HE—As far as you remember. (Aside)—My first and last poem.

SHE (aside)—This is delightful. Who would ever have thought of his writing poetry ? (Aloud)—May I give you some tea, Mr. Kinnear ? (Aside)—Tea has often a soothing effect. (Rises, and is about to ring the bell.)

HE—No. . . I thank you.

SHE (aside)—He declines to be soothed. (Aloud)—Won't you change your mind ? (Rings the bell, and a maid brings tea.) Now (seating herself, she pours out two cups, and offers him one), I am going to have some, and we will drink the cup of peace together.

HE (coldly)—I did not know we had quarrelled.

SHE (slightly confused)—Well—ah—I was speaking figuratively, you know. One often does.

HE—Does one ?

SHE (spiritedly)—Yes, one does when one happens to mean me. When it means you, possibly one does something superior.

HE—It might mean us both. But no, one could not mean two—unless—

SHE—Unless ?

HE (aside)—I seem bent on rushing to my death. (Looking straight at her)—Yes—unless—unless the two were—

SHE (quickly)—Now you are taking me beyond my depth. When you swim out in the mysterious waters of speculation, I want to get towed back to the beach, and—

HE—Oh, I should be charmed to tow you—anywhere !
 SHE—catch hold of the rope of—

HE (confidently)—Nothing like a man, if you're sinking.
 SHE—reality, and let the little waves of thought splash about my feet.

HE—What a bold metaphor ! Your command of language is excellent.

SHE—A woman's only weapon.

HE—She needs none.

SHE—Shall I keep silence, then ? Positively, Mr. Kinnear, you are improving—first, a poor hostess ; now, too talkative—next ?

HE—That you are charming.

SHE (gaily)—A spoonful of jam to hide the medicine.
 Well—I forgive you. I love jam.

HE—You love—

SHE—Yes—jam.

HE—Would that I were—jam.

SHE (laughing)—To be devoured ?