

INTRODUCTION

THIS short play needs rather a long introduction. It has had the bad fortune to become a literary problem, and almost all its few readers are so much occupied with the question whether it can be the work of Euripides—and if not his, whose?—that they seldom allow themselves to take it on its merits as a stirring and adventurous piece, not particularly profound or subtle, but always full of movement and life and possessing at least one or two scenes of great and penetrating beauty.

The outlines of the *Rhesus* Question are these.—The *Rhesus* appears in the MSS. of Euripides; we know from the Athenian Didascaliae, or Records of Performances, that Euripides wrote a play of the name; some passages in it are quoted by early Alexandrian writers as from “the *Rhesus* of Euripides;” no passage is quoted under any other name. This seems about as strong as external evidence need be. Yet the ancient introduction to the play mentions that “some think the play spurious,” and expresses the odd opinion that “it suggests rather the Sophoclean style.” Further, it tells us that, besides the present opening scene, there were extant two different prologues, one of which was “quite prosy and perhaps concocted by the actors.” This seems to show that the Alexandrian scholars who tried for the first