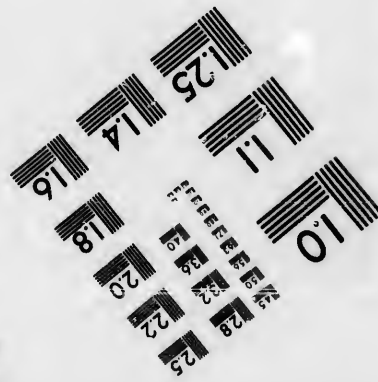
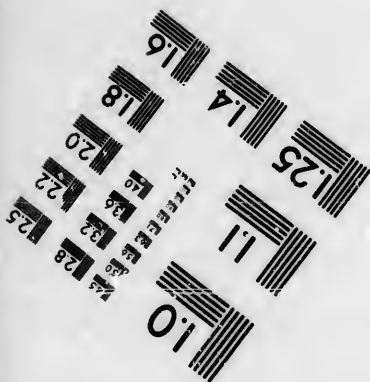
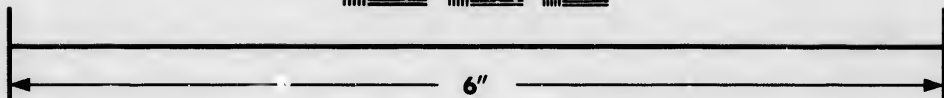
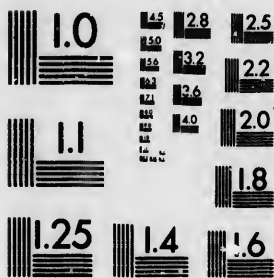


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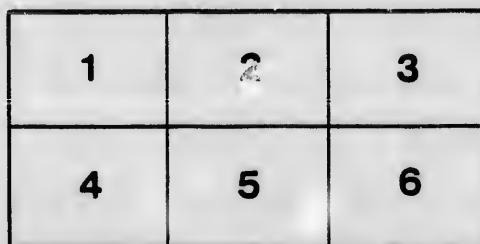
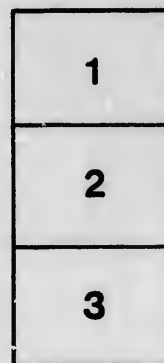
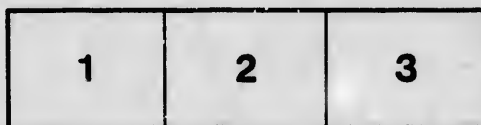
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MATHATHIAS

A TRAGEDY.

(RE-PRINT FROM THE "MESSENGER.")



WOODSTOCK COLLEGE

1880.



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The following attempt at verse-making that should bear immediate fruit, is the joint work of teacher and pupils in a classical school. The matter is taken from I Machabees, II., and an endeavour has been made to keep as closely as possible to scriptural language and turns of thought. As more in keeping with this, the form of some of the early Greek tragedies of Æschylus has been followed, admitting, unlike the purer dramatic form, of almost uninterrupted narrative, of much lyrical movement, all centring in the action of a soul, mounting up through every trial from faith to the high resolve of firm and unchanging hope. In the same way, the music, composed also by one of the class, for the more impassioned parts of the chorus, has in great part sought inspiration from the remains of that plaintive half-Greek, half-Eastern music, that still breathes through the different seasons of the Church's year in the varying moods of her plain-chant. As the piece, when brought out in the school-hall before a gathering of friends, met with general acceptance, a few notes have been subjoined, to explain its extremely simple scenic arrangement. It may thus, perhaps, be made a more fitting representation of the Beautiful which is the object of all art; the rather that this 'splendour of the True' is here also the Good, since it is the very 'beauty of justice.'

MATHATHIAS: A TRAGEDY.

PERSONS.

MATHATHIAS, *Father of the Machabees.*

CHORUS OF PRINCES AND ANCIENTS.

JUDAS MACHABEUS.

SIMON.

HERALD OF ANTIOCHUS.

ISRAELITE MESSENGER.

CHORUS.

How hath the God of might in wrath laid low
Thy glory, Sion! Princes of our race
And ancients, lift before His face
The prayer of woe.
Fallen is Sion—Sion, alas! no more;
For her towers have crumbled before the foe,
The pride of her strength is brought low,
Her hour of glory is o'er.
Woe to Jerusalem! to God's city, woe!
Her sins have mounted to His sight:
Heavy His hand of wrath, heavy and just His might.

Holy, O Lord, and with darkness veiled the might of Thy face!
Holy and searching the heart the light of Thine eyes!
Stricken in wrath lie the children of Israel's race:
From the dust to Thy throne arise,
From the dust where in sack-cloth and ashes the strength of their
 beauty low lies,
Voices of weeping, of wailing the voices, of anguish and sorrow
 the cries.

Holy, O Lord, are Thine eyes, and pure and searching their light!
Sinful and dark are our deeds, the thoughts of the heart.
Sunk in the darkness our midday hath turned unto night:
We have seen the glad days depart;
And the voice of the mother that croons to the babe, hath forgot-
 ten its art:
High where the sun of our noon had been shining, Thy lightnings
 in wrathfulness dart.

How hast thou faithless proved, Israel, chosen of God!
He hath turned thy feasts to mourning, to lamentation thy songs:
Now is thine evil hour, bend thee low under His rod,
That thy prayers and tears of fasting may right thy burden of
 wrongs.

For the heathen hath entered the holy city;
On the holy mount are his idols of pride;
He hath slaughtered thy babes, he hath had no pity,
And thy happy ones are thy sons that have died.
Lift up our fathers' voice of tears
Unto our God on high, from woe and fears.

MATHATHIAS: A TRAGEDY.

Weeping we sate from early morn,
 Watching by Babylon's stream :
 Until, with grief and sorrow worn,
 We saw day's dying gleam.

On willows, weeping o'er the waves,
 Our voiceless harps we hung :
 How could we sing of Sion, slaves?
 How could their chords be strung ?

How could we sing, O Lord, Thy songs,
 Sion remembering not ?
 Sion, if we forget thy wrongs,
 Our right hands be forgot !

Remember, Lord, in Sion's day,
 That Babel slew Thine own ;
 Blest, who her little ones repay,
 And dash them to the stone.

MATHATHIAS.

My sons, behold the evils that befall
 The chosen people ; for they have not feared
 The God of justice, and, His solemn threats
 Unheeded, have despised His law.
 Then came the Heathen into the holy city
 And struck it with great slaughter, and the blood
 Of innocence was shed in the holy place.
 There have they laid them up, and are become
 The snare and evil spirit in Israel.

Their idols and their unclean sacrifice
Are in the Almighty's temple; from their sight
Jerusalem hath seen her children flee,
Forsaking her, where strangers entered in.
Lonely her temple as the wilderness;
Mourning her feasts; and all her sabbaths shame;
And all her glory to dishonour turned.

Woe, woe is me!

Was I then only born that I might see
My people's ruin and the city's sin?
City whose joy is o'er,
Holy of God no more,
Now that His enemies have entered in?
Captive the vessels of her glory;
Her temple as a man of shame;
In her the holy places gory
With old men murdered and young men fallen:
Lost in her blood her beauty's name.

She that was free is become a slave.

Why then, my children, should we prize our lives?
Is it not better for God's name to die,
Than live in shame and die the eternal death?
O God of nations, pity my gray hairs,
And in the face of such degenerate days
Permit me not, nor me nor aught of mine,
To wander ever from Thy holy way.
The nations, formerly so true to Thee,
Do now desert Thee; and to gods of stone

MATHATHIAS: A TRAGEDY.

They give the worship which they owe to Thee.
 On me, my sons, and brethren, turn Thine eyes.
 For me it is the 'yea' or 'nay' to say,
 That makes my nation treacherous or true.
 O weakness of my nature! How it weighs,
 Enfeebling all my age! To Thee alone
 For strength and light I turn in days like these.
 The terror of Thy voice goes forth, the strength
 Of Thy rebuke is heavy on Thy people.
 In fear and tremblings, quenched is each dim spark
 Of confidence in Thee, their fathers' God.
 But back of all this shadowy death's confusion
 With eyes that trust, I see Thy visage bright;
 Grant but Thy help, to seek Thee in the darkness,
 And we shall burn again with zeal, and love.

 But who comes here? A tool, as it would seem,
 Of King Antiochus.—O make me now
 Great God, against their darts invulnerable,
 And wary of their snares.

HERALD.

Hail Mathathias!
 Antiochus, our good and mighty king,
 Sends health and peace to thee.

MATHATHIAS.

Such words are vain;
 Make clear, I pray, the purport of thy message.

HERALD.

O Mathathias, noble patriarch,
 Ancient amid a people virtuous,
 A people noted ever for their love
 Of gods and men, and most obsequious ;
 Most honourable ruler of thy tribe,
 Adorned with sons an honour to their sire,—
 Most venerable, just and powerful,
 Do I salute thee ; thus my master bade.

MATHATHIAS.

No more, I pray, of this thy empty talk ;
 In words thou wrappest that thy heart belies.
 Think not, dissembler, hypocrite, to win
 The heart of Mathathias by skilled words.
 The day is past—God knows if e'er it shone—
 When Mathathias' mind was moved by praise
 To hearken to the serpent's voice and tale
 Of empty flattery, or, with pride puffed out,
 But for one little instant to forget
 The God of all, who made him what he is.
 Enough of words ! What is thy master's wish ?

HERALD.

The King Antiochus, my master, thus
 In fitting words, bade me recall to thee
 The glory of thy name that shines to him ;
 How, as a father, graced with many sons,
 Thou rulest all thy brethren in thy walls :

That thou, with wisdom as of patriarchs,
 Might give the signal to thy faithful sons,
 Thy brethren dutiful, and all thy tribe,
 And coming forth the first, as first in age,
 Should show obedience to the king's command,
 And offer sacrifice. So shall the gods and king
 Look on thy people gladly ; peace shall reign
 Throughout the land.

MATHATHIAS.

O fool's request, and vain !
 Thou knowest well, thou and Antiochus
 And all his ministers of impious pride,
 That I have once thrown back his idol's gifts.
 Have I not once for all made strong my soul
 Never to bend unto thy king's command ?

HERALD.

But all the nations since have sacrificed ;
 The men of Juda and their many brethren
 That dwell together in Jerusalem.

MATHATHIAS.

Alas, too true.

HERALD.

Wilt not thou then obey,
 As these have done, who when thou last didst see
 them
 Held out with thee against the king's command ?

. MATHATHIAS.

Thou knowest me not ; thou knowest not my God.
I must be mild with thee : but didst thou know
The God whom I adore, the same who now
Thus strengthens my gray hairs in days like these,
Thou wouldst not now endeavour thus to tempt me.
For know, if all the nations whom the sun
Shines on from morning rise till when at night
The stars appear, thy king's command obeyed,
And burnt their incense to his gods of stone,
Not Mathathias, not his seven sons,
Nor any of his brethren would cast off
The service of their fathers' fathers' God,
To bow low down to thine of wood and stone.

HERALD.

Wilt thou then lose the favour of our king,
And set at nought the treasure which he proffers
To thee and to thy sons, if thou consent
To do this single act, alike most pleasing
To him and to the gods whom he adores ?

MATHATHIAS.

Thy presents like thine empty words are vain ;
They move me not ; for the base gold and silver
Of all the kings on earth, could not make good
The loss which I should suffer by obeying
Thy master's orders. For I thus should lose

The friendship of the one and only God,
Who made the world, who me and mine gave life.

HERALD.

I pray thee, mighty patriarch, speak not thus ;
Drive hence those thoughts of foolishness, for ill
Do they become thine age and thy renown.
Bring not upon thy sons and all thy people
The anger of our just and generous king.
Hear me! the king, to show in what esteem
He holds thyself, thy sons, thine ancient race,
Hither hath sent me, offering in his name—

MATHATHIAS.

Hence, wicked man nor shame me with a price!
I've borne thine importunities too long.
I fain would have dismissed thee peaceably
Unto thy master with my firm response ;
But thou dost still persist.—Go now, I charge thee,
Tell to thy king how thus—I cast him back
His praises and the treasures of his hand.
Let him destroy me from this present life,
Tearing my limbs asunder, scattering them
To the four winds of heaven, nor leave a trace :
The God whom I adore shall gather all—
Though He do slay me, I will trust in Him,—
To add new beauty to this mangled frame,
And make my wounds with heavenly lustre shine,

Like to the sun.—Tempt me no further then,
But open to thy king our firm resolve.

HERALD.

Thou wilt not hear the king's condition then?

MATHATHIAS.

Hence, vile seducer, say no more to me:
Too long I listen to thy tempter's voice.

JUDAS MACHABEUS.

O father, save thy children from the wrath
Of our just God, that He strike not in His fury.
Lift up thy arm to avenge. Each messenger
Tells how the men of Juda turn away.
An Israelite even now defiles our eyes.
How valiantly, at first, he scorned the gold
Of king Antiochus, and all fair words;
And boldly chid the heathen for his folly
In bidding men to worship wood and stone!
But against threats and torture found less strong,
He offers incense to the heathen gods.
O now within our walls the smoke mounts up
To stranger gods. Save us then from the curse,
Lest quickly it consume us from the land.

MATHATHIAS.

Be Thine, O God, my strength—I fly to avenge!

CHORUS.

How long, O Lord, how long, O Lord,
Wilt thou forget Thy chosen ones :
How long shall Thy great enemy's sword
With threatening death hang o'er Thy sons ?

And thou wrap round Thy throne with clouds,
Nor look upon our suffering race,
Nor rend the darkening veil that shrouds
The gracious might of Thine own face ?

From morning's rise to evening's fall,
A swelling sorrow fills our breast ;
And with our tears for help we call :
Let help descend and bring us rest.

Above our heads our foes arise,
And pour in thousands all around ;
They seem to tread the exalted skies,
To trample us upon the ground.

How long, O Lord, wilt Thou withhold,
The hand of wrath from off Thy foes ;
While they adore their gods of gold,
And still heap up our countless woes ?

On Thee, great Lord, on Thee we call ;
To heathen gods we ne'er shall bow :
Behold at Thy great name we fall ;
Let Thy right hand protect us now !

JUDAS.

Behold the altar with its idols decked
My father hath thrown down: and there too lies
The worshipper of idols in his blood.
God is avenged!

MATHATHIAS.

Was I then to remain
In silence, when I saw my God despised
And men bow low, adoring wood and stone?
O men and brethren, hear ye not the call?
Why stand ye idle then the live-long day?
The very stones in shame would hide away,
To see us fearful in the cause of God.
O men of Israel, if such there be,
And who hath zeal for God's most holy law,
Let him now follow! But who cometh here?
From face and eyes, belike, a tale of woe.

ISRAELITE MESSENGER.

Hail! From the mountains I alone am come,
From where our people found their last retreat.
I, I alone escaped to cross in haste
The burnt-up plains, with weary body and mind,
Till my heart fails me.

MATHATHIAS.

Said I not the truth?

O tale of woe! And thou alone remainest
Of all who sought the mountain wilderness?

ISRAELITE MESSENGER.

Alas! the heathen on the Sabbath-day
Sent to us, saying: "Do you still resist?
Come forth and do according to the edict,
And you shall live!"

MATHATHIAS.

List, list, my brethren, now
The bright example.—What answer gave they back?

ISRAELITE MESSENGER.

"We will not come forth, nor yet profane
God's Sabbath."—Then they came in haste
To give us battle, but we answered not,
Nor downward cast a stone, nor stopped the way
To the fastness. But we said: "Let us all die
In innocence: and heaven and earth shall witness
Our wrongful death."

MATHATHIAS.

O God! and nought was done!

ISRAELITE MESSENGER.

Then came they on, upon that Sabbath-day—
And all, with wives, and children, cattle, all,
The thousand, all were slain.

CHORUS.

Now hath the tyrant's hand dropped heavily on the people: and
they fall as ripe grass before the sickle.

Alas! where is thy glory now, O Israel! The light of thy face
hath vanished.

The heathen hath persecuted thy just ones: and his wrath hath
allowed them no resting.

The day of unrighteousness hath come upon us: and the saints
dare not tread the highways.

No longer can Jerusalem protect them: no longer may the wil-
derness screen them.

O God, why hast Thou abandoned us to Thine enemies: and
withdrawn from us the help of Thy protection?

How sickened our hearts within us at the sight of the slaughter!
With silent eyes we gazed on the dying.

O God! what soul had not swooned with bitterness: whose rage
had not then flamed forth?

White haired sires with golden youth lay in death in the cavern:
blood held their locks to the ground, and the moon hal-
lowed the peace of their faces.

Why were they all slaughtered? Could never one be spared us?

Let loose Thy anger on the bloody wronger : and in Thy wrath
 spare not, O Lord !
 Send down Thine angels and smite the foes of Thy chosen ones :
 and let Thy rod be raised from off Thy children.
 Thou hast been our refuge in every generation, O God of Israel :
 Thou art our hope in desolation, O God of Mercy !

Thus do God's people stand in fear and dread.
 All their life centres in their leader's breast.

MATHATHIAS.

My people grieve—their grief is mine ; this heart
 Is filled to bursting with our common woe.
 Yet, shall we all do as our brethren did,
 Nor fight against the heathen for our lives ?
 Then shall they quickly root us from the earth.

SIMON.

Is then man for the Sabbath ? and may wrath
 Not righteously from innocence turn on sin ?
 Then quickly shall they root us from the earth.

JUDAS.

If they come up against us in their might
 And we stand not, like to our brethren slain,
 We all shall die.

MATHATHIAS.

But we will not all die,

As did our brethren in their hiding-place.
And whoso on the Sabbath comes against us,
We will withstand.

SIMON.

Then all, from evils fled,
Shall gather to us.

JUDAS.

Then our wrath shall slay
The sinner, and the wicked man shall flee
Back to the nations.

SIMON.

Then shall idols fall ;
The children of their pride be chased afar ;
The work of God shall prosper to our hand.
Not quickly shall they root us from the earth.

CHORUS.

And the law of our God from the sinful nation
Returneth ; from heathen kings, our law :
And eyes that the sinner uplifted saw,
Shall see him hurled from his haughty station.
For the day of wrath is nigh,
Wrath of our God, and safety, nigh.

MATHATHIAS.

Ere the days draw near that I die,
O may I see again the chastisement

Of pride that now hath strength, as oft of old
When came the time of wrath and indignation.
O sons, be zealous for your fathers' law,
And give your lives therefor. Call now to mind
Your fathers' deeds which they so well have done
In every generation :
Abraham, found faithful in temptation ;
Joseph who kept the commandment in distress ;
And Phineës, fervent in his zeal,
Made everlasting priest of righteousness ;
Josue the ruler ; Caleb, whom the seal
Of faithful witness gave inheritance ;
David his throne ; living Elias' chance ;
To the three children, fire as the sweet south ;
Daniel delivered from the lion's mouth ;
And thus through every generation. Think
How none that trust in Him, have failed in strength.
Fear not the words of sinful man ;
His glory, dung and worms ;
To-day uplifted, and not found to-morrow,
Because unto his earth he is returned,
And his thought, empty, come to nothingness.
O sons, be manful then in the law ; thereby
Ye shall be glorious. And now, let all
Who observe the law, come to us ; and with us
Revenge our people's wrong ; and to the gentile
Render reward. And we take heed to the law,

That so the Almighty's wrath no more may lie
On Sion—city of our fathers' God.

CHORUS.

How shall we sing, O Lord, Thy songs,
Sion remembering not?
Sion, if we forget thy wrongs,
Our right hands be forgot.



NOTE.—The following plan was followed in the original representation. It is perhaps comprehensive enough for artistic purposes, and anything more elaborate might easily be less in keeping with the severe character of the piece, and besides give no truer reality.

SCENE—a court or open place among houses (oriental).

COSTUME—loosely flowing robes with girdles, of a single colour.

The extreme of variety would, perhaps, be black for the Chorus, white for the Jewish characters, white with red girdle for *Herald*, who alone should be covered, turban colour of robe.

The persons, except the Chorus who are always on the stage, make their entrance or exit behind, or at one side. The context of the play sufficiently indicates the time: first, Mathathias, who at once addresses the Chorus; then Herald of Antiochus, who, as he goes out, is passed by Judas Machabeus, who in turn goes out with Mathathias, leaving only Chorus on the stage; at the proper time he returns, followed shortly by his father, and soon after, by Simon leading in the Israelite Messenger; after which all remain till the close.

Much depends on the Chorus. They are ideal spectators, but of the real action. Accordingly, they introduce and help on the narrative, and especially contribute to the pathetic movement of the piece. However, they are in no wise actors, and should not be placed as such. The following is the arrangement that seems most effective, and is certainly most conformable to Greek models.

Position at beginning, resumed when other characters leave the stage: Princes on one hand, Ancients on other, forming semicircle across the entire stage, at the extremities of which, nearest the audience, stand the two *choragi* (leaders.) When one of the characters is on the point of entering, the line breaks in the centre, each part retiring backwards, until they form two parallel lines, facing each other and leaving the stage free between.

		*		*		*		*
	*		*		*		*	
	*		*		*		*	
	*		*		*		*	
(Princes)	1st position.			*(Ancients)	* 2d position.*			

All the movements of the Chorus should be made together. The leaders, in the part that is sung, take the solo, and also all that is spoken, alternating as far as possible. Thus the opening is to be spoken by the leader of the Princes, the *choragus* of the Ancients follows singing, the other in turn sings, then leader of Ancients speaks, full Chorus sing, etc. In speaking or singing alone a slow, rhythmic gesture might be made by the leaders, when demanded by the sense, as raising the hands to heaven, etc. The same gesture by the *full* Chorus, when singing together, is effective. There should be no instrumental music beyond the accompaniment. The curtain remains drawn throughout.



