

# HELEN

by Euripides

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# HELEN

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translated by E. P. Coleridge

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### CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

HELEN, wife Of MENELAUS  
TEUCER, a Greek warrior, who fought at Troy  
CHORUS OF CAPTIVE GREEK WOMEN, attending HELEN  
MENELAUS, King of Sparta  
PORTRESS of THEOCLYMENUS  
FIRST MESSENGER  
SECOND MESSENGER  
THEONOE, sister of THEOCLYMENUS  
THEOCLYMENUS, King of Egypt  
SERVANT of THEOCLYMENUS  
THE DIOSCURI  
Guards, attendants, etc.

(SCENE:—Before the palace of THEOCLYMENUS in Egypt. It is near the mouth of the Nile. The tomb of Proteus, the father of THEOCLYMENUS is visible. HELEN is discovered alone before the tomb.)

### HELEN

Lo! These are the fair virgin streams of Nile, the river that waters Egypt's tilth, fed by pure melting snow instead of rain from heaven. Proteus during his life—time was king of this land, dwelling in the isle of Pharos, and ruling o'er Egypt; and he took to wife one of the daughters of the sea, Psamathe, after she left the embraces of Aeacus. Two children she bare in this his palace, a son Theoclymenus, who hath passed his life in duteous service to the gods, and likewise a noble daughter, her mother's pride, called Eido in her infancy, but when she reached her youthful prime, the age for wedded joys, renamed Theonoe; for well she knew whate'er the gods design, both present and to come, for she had won this guerdon from her grandsire Nereus. Nor is my fatherland unknown to fame, e'en Sparta, or my sire Tyndareus; for a legend tells how Zeus winged his way to my mother Leda's breast, in the semblance of a bird, even a swan, and thus as he fled from an eagle's pursuit, achieved by guile his amorous purpose, if this tale be true. My name is Helen, and I will now recount the sorrows I have suffered. To a hollow vale on Ida came three goddesses to Paris, for beauty's prize contending, Hera and Cypris, and the virgin child of Zeus, eager to secure his verdict on their loveliness. Now Cypris held out my beauty,—if aught so wretched deserves that name,—as a bride before the eyes of Paris, saying he should marry me; and so she won the day; wherefore the shepherd of Ida left his steading, and came to Sparta, thinking to win me for his bride. But Hera, indignant at not defeating the goddesses, brought to naught my marriage with Paris, and gave to Priam's princely son not Helen, but a phantom endowed with life, that she made in my image out of the breath of heaven; and Paris thought that I was his, although I never was,—an idle fancy! Moreover, the counsels of Zeus added further troubles unto these; for upon the land of Hellas and the hapless Phrygians he brought a war, that he might lighten mother—earth of her myriad hosts of men, and to the bravest of the sons of Hellas bring renown. So I was set up as a prize for all the chivalry of Hellas, to test the might of Phrygia, yet not I, but my name alone; for Hermes caught me up in the embracing air, and veiled me in a cloud; for Zeus was not unmindful of me; and he set me down here in the house of Proteus, judging him to be the most virtuous of all mankind; that so I might preserve my marriage

## HELEN

with Menelaus free from taint. Here then I abide, while my hapless lord has gathered an army, and is setting out for the towers of Ilium to track and recover me. And there by Scamander's streams hath many a life breathed out its last, and all for me; and I, that have endured all this, am accursed, and seem to have embroiled all Hellas in a mighty war by proving a traitress to my husband. Why, then, do I prolong my life? Because I heard Hermes declare, that I should yet again make my home on Sparta's glorious soil, with my lord,—for Hermes knew I never went to Ilium,—that so I might never submit to any other's wooing. Now as long as Proteus gazed upon yon glorious sun, I was safe from marriage; but when o'er him the dark grave closed, the dead man's son was eager for my hand. But I, from regard to my former husband, am throwing myself down in suppliant wise before this tomb of Proteus, praying him to guard my husband's honour, that, though through Hellas I bear a name dishonoured, at least my body here may not incur disgrace.

(TEUCER enters.)

TEUCER

Who is lord and master of this fenced palace? The house is one I may compare to the halls of Plutus, with its royal bulwarks and towering buildings. Ha! great gods! what sight is here? I see the counterfeit of that fell murderous dame, who ruined me and all the Achaeans. May Heaven show its loathing for thee, so much dost thou resemble Helen! Were I not standing on a foreign soil, with this well-aimed shaft had worked thy death, thy reward for resembling the daughter of Zeus.

HELEN

Oh! why, poor man, whoe'er thou art, dost thou turn from me, loathing me for those troubles Helen caused?

TEUCER

I was wrong; I yielded to my anger more than I ought; my reason was, the hate all Hellas bears to that daughter of Zeus. Pardon me, lady, for the words I uttered.

HELEN

Who art thou? whence comest thou to visit this land?

TEUCER

One of those hapless Achaeans am I, lady.

HELEN

No wonder then that thou dost bate Helen. But say, who art thou? Whence comest? By what name am I to call thee?

TEUCER

My name is Teucer; my sire was Telamon, and Salamis is the land that nurtured me.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Then why art thou visiting these meadows by the Nile?

TEUCER

A wanderer I, an exile from my native land.

HELEN

Thine must be a piteous lot; who from thy country drives thee out?

TEUCER

My father Telamon. Couldst find a nearer and a dearer?

HELEN

But why? This case is surely fraught with woe.

TEUCER

The death of Ajax my brother at Troy was my ruin.

HELEN

How so? surely 'twas not thy sword that stole his life away?

TEUCER

He threw himself on his own blade and died.

HELEN

Was he mad? for who with sense endowed would bring himself to this?

TEUCER

Dost thou know aught of Achilles, son of Peleus?

HELEN

He came, so I have heard, to woo Helen once.

TEUCER

When he died, he left his arms for his comrades to contest.

HELEN

Well, if he did, what harm herein to Ajax?

TEUCER

HELEN

HELEN

When another won these arms, to himself he put an end.

HELEN

Art thou then a sufferer by woes that he inflicted?

TEUCER

Yes, because I did not join him in his death.

HELEN

So thou camest, sir stranger, to Ilium's famous town?

TEUCER

Aye, and, after helping to sack it, myself did learn what ruin meant.

HELEN

Is Troy already fired and utterly by flames consumed?

TEUCER

Yea, so that not so much as one vestige of her walls is now to be seen.

HELEN

Woe is thee, poor Helen! thou art the cause of Phrygia's ruin.

TEUCER

And of Achaea's too. Ah! 'tis a tale of grievous misery!

HELEN

How long is it since the city was sacked?

TEUCER

Nigh seven fruitful seasons have come and gone.

HELEN

And how much longer did ye abide in Troy?

TEUCER

Many a weary month, till through ten full years the moon had held her course.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

And did ye capture that Spartan dame?

TEUCER

Menelaus caught her by the hair, and was for dragging her away.

HELEN

Didst thou thyself behold that unhappy one? or art thou speaking from hearsay?

TEUCER

As plain as I now see thee, I then saw her.

HELEN

Consider whether ye were but indulging an idle fancy sent by heaven.

TEUCER

Bethink thee of some other topic; no more of her!

HELEN

Are you so sure this fancy was reliable?

TEUCER

With these eyes I saw her face to face, if so be I see thee now.

HELEN

Hath Menelaus reached his home by this time with his wife?

TEUCER

No; he is neither in Argos, nor yet by the streams of Eurotas.

HELEN

Ah me! here is evil news for those to whom thou art telling it.

TEUCER

'Tis said he disappeared with his wife.

HELEN

Did not all the Argives make the passage together?

TEUCER

HELEN

HELEN

Yes: but a tempest scattered them in every direction.

HELEN

In what quarter of the broad ocean?

TEUCER

They were crossing the Aegean in mid channel.

HELEN

And after that, doth no man know of Menelaus' arrival?

TEUCER

No; none; but through Hellas is he reported to be dead.

HELEN

Then am I lost. Is the daughter of Thestius alive?

TEUCER

Dost speak of Leda? She is dead; aye, dead and gone.

HELEN

Was it Helen's shame that caused her death?

TEUCER

Aye, 'tis said she tied the noose about her noble neck.

HELEN

Are the sons of Tyndareus still alive or not?

TEUCER

Dead, and yet alive: 'tis a double story.

HELEN

Which is the more credible report? Woe is me for my sorrows!

TEUCER

Men say that they are gods in the likeness of stars.

HELEN

HELEN

## HELEN

That is happy news; but what is the other rumour?

TEUCER

That they by self-inflicted wounds gave up the ghost because of their sister's shame. But enough of such talk! I have no wish to multiply my griefs. The reason of my coming to this royal palace was a wish to see that famous prophetess Theonoe. Do thou the means afford, that I from her may obtain an oracle how I shall steer a favourable course to the sea-girt shores of Cyprus; for there Apollo hath declared my home shall be, giving to it the name of Salamis, my island home, in honour of that fatherland across the main.

HELEN

That shall the voyage itself explain, sir stranger; but do thou leave these shores and fly, ere the son of Proteus, the ruler of this land, catch sight of thee. Now is he away with his trusty hounds tracking his savage quarry to the death; for every stranger that he catcheth from the land of Hellas doth he slay. His reason never ask to know; my lips are sealed; for what could word of mine avail thee?

TEUCER

Lady, thy words are fair. Heaven grant thee a fair requital for this kindness! For though in form thou dost resemble Helen, thy soul is not like hers, nay, very different. Perdition seize her! May she never reach the streams of Eurotas! But thine be joy for evermore, lady!

(TEUCER departs. The CHORUS OF CAPTIVE GREEK WOMEN enter. They sing responsively with HELEN.)

HELEN

Ah me! what piteous dirge shall I strive to utter, now that I am beginning my strain of bitter lamentation? What Muse shall I approach with tears or songs of death or woe? Ah me! ye Sirens, Earth's virgin daughters, winged maids, come, oh! come to aid my mourning, bringing with you the Libyan flute or pipe, to waft to Persephone's ear a tearful plaint, the echo of my sorrow, with grief for grief, and mournful chant for chant, with songs of death and doom to match my lamentation, that in return she may receive from me, besides my tears, dirges for the departed dead beneath her gloomy roof!

CHORUS

Beside the deep-blue water I chanced to be hanging purple robes along the tendrils green and on the sprouting reeds, to dry them in the sun-god's golden blaze, when lo! I heard a sound of woe, a mournful wail, the voice of one crying aloud in her anguish; yea, such a cry of woe as Naiad nymph might send ringing o'er the hills, while to her cry the depths of rocky grotts re-echo her screams at the violence of Pan.

HELEN

Woe! woe! ye maids of Hellas, booty of barbarian sailors! one hath come, an Achaean mariner, bringing fresh tears to me, the news of Ilium's overthrow, how that it is left to the mercy of the foeman's flame, and all for me the murderess, or for my name with sorrow fraught. While for anguish at my deed of shame, hath Leda sought her death by hanging; and on the deep, to weary wandering doomed my lord hath met his end; and Castor and his brother, twin glory of their native land, are vanished from men's sight, leaving the plains that shook to their galloping steeds, and the course beside reed-fringed Eurotas, where those youthful athletes strove.

CHORUS

HELEN

## HELEN

Ah, misery! Alas! for thy grievous destiny! Woe for thy sad lot, lady! Ah! 'twas a day of sorrow meted out for thee when Zeus came glancing through the sky on snowy pinions like a swan and won thy mother's heart. What evil is not thine? Is there a grief in life that thou hast not endured? Thy mother is dead; the two dear sons of Zeus have perished miserably, and thou art severed from thy country's sight, while through the towns of men a rumour runs, consigning thee, my honoured mistress, to a barbarian's bed; and 'mid the ocean waves thy lord hath lost his life, and never, never more shalt thou fill with joy thy father's halls or Athena's temple of the "Brazen House."

## HELEN

Ah! who was that Phrygian, who was he, that felled that pine with sorrow fraught for Ilium, and for those that came from Hellas? Hence it was that Priam's son his cursed barque did build, and sped by barbarian oars sailed unto my home, in quest of beauty, woman's curse, to win me for his bride; and with him sailed the treacherous queen of Love, on slaughter bent, with death alike for Priam's sons, and Danai too. Ah me! for my hard lot! Next, Hera, stately bride of Zeus, seated on her golden throne, sent the son of Maia, swift of foot, who caught me up as I was gathering fresh rose-buds in the folds of my robe, that I might go to the "Brazen House," and bore me through the air to this loveless land, making me an object of unhappy strife 'twixt Hellas and the race of Priam. And my name is but a sound without reality beside the streams of Simois.

## LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Well I know thou hast a bitter lot to bear; still 'tis best to bear as lightly as we may the ills that life is heir to.

## HELEN

Good friends, to what a fate am I united? Did not my mother bear me to be a monster to the world? For no woman, Hellene or barbarian, gives birth to babes in eggs inclosed, as they say Leda bare me to Zeus. My life and all I do is one miracle, partly owing to Hera, and partly is my beauty to blame. Would God I could rub my beauty out like a picture, and assume hereafter in its stead a form less comely, and oh! that Hellas had forgotten the evil fate that now I bear, and were now remembering my career of honour as surely as they do my deeds of shame. Now, if a man doth turn his eyes to a single phase of fortune, and meets ill-usage at heaven's hands, 'tis hard no doubt; but still it can be borne; but I in countless troubles am involved. First, although I never sinned, my good name is gone. And this is a grief beyond the reality, if a man incurs blame for sins that are not his. Next, have the gods removed me from my native land, to dwell with men of barbarous ways, and reft of every friend, I am become a slave though free by birth; for amongst barbarians all are slaves but one. And the last anchor that held my fortunes, the hope that my husband would return one day, and rid me of my woes, is now no more, lost since the day he died. My mother too is dead, and I am called her murderess, unjustly it is true, but still that injustice is mine to bear; and she that was the glory of my house, my darling child, is growing old and grey, unwedded still; and those twin brethren, called the sons of Zeus, are now no more. But 'tis fortune, not my own doing, that hath crushed me with sorrow and slain me. And this is the last evil of all; if ever I come to my native land. they will shut me up in prison, thinking me that Helen of Ilium, in quest of whom Menelaus came thither. Were my husband still alive, we might have recognized each other, by having recourse to tokens which ourselves alone would know. But now this may not be, nor is there any chance of his escape. Why then do I prolong my life? What fortune have I still in store? Shall I choose marriage as an alternative of evils, and dwell with a barbarian lord, seated at his sumptuous board? No! when a husband she loathes is mated with a woman, even life is loathly to her. Best for her to die; but how shall I die a noble death? The dangling noose is an uncomely end; even slaves consider it disgrace; to stab oneself hath something fair and noble in it; 'tis a small thing that moment of ridding the flesh of life. Yes, it must be; I am plunged so deep in misery; for that beauty, which to other women is a boon, to me hath been a very bane. LEADER

Helen, never believe that the stranger, whoe'er he was that came, has spoken naught but truth.

## HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Yet he said so clearly that my lord was dead. LEADER

There is much that falsehood seems to make quite clear.

HELEN

The word of truth hath a very different sound to falsehood. LEADER

Thou art inclined to misfortune, rather than to luck.

HELEN

Fear girds me with terrors as with a garment, and takes me in her train. LEADER

What friends hast thou within the palace?

HELEN

All are my friends here save him who seeks to wed—me. LEADER

Thy action then is clear; leave thy seat at the tomb.

HELEN

To what words or advice art thou leading up? LEADER

Go in and question the daughter of the ocean Nereid, who knoweth all things, even Theonoe, whether thy husband is still alive, or whether he hath left the light of day; and when thou knowest for certain, be glad or sorrowful, as fits thy fortune. But before thou hast right knowledge, what shall sorrow avail thee? Nay, hearken to me; leave this tomb and seek the maiden's company, that she may tell thee the truth, for from her shalt thou learn all. If thou abide here in this seat, what prospect hast thou? And I will myself go in with thee, and with thee inquire of the maiden's oracles; for 'tis a woman's bounden duty to share a sister's trouble.

(The following lines are chanted responsively by HELEN and the CHORUS.)

HELEN

Kind friends, I welcome your advice. Come in, come in, that ye may learn the result of my struggle within the palace.

CHORUS

Thy invitation comes to very willing ears.

HELEN

Woe for this heavy day! Ah me! what mournful tidings shall hear?

CHORUS

HELEN

HELEN

Dear mistress mine, be not a prophetess of sorrow, forestalling lamentation.

HELEN

What is the fate of my poor husband? Doth he still behold the light turning towards the sun—god's chariot and the stars in their courses? Or among the dead, beneath the earth, is he to death consigned?

CHORUS

Of the future take a brighter view, whatever shall betide.

HELEN

On thee I call, and thee adjure, Eurotas green with river—reeds, to tell me if this rumour of my husband's death be true.

CHORUS

What boots this meaningless appeal?

HELEN

About my neck will I fasten the deadly noose from above, or drive the murderous knife with self—aimed thrust deep into my throat to sever it, striving to cut my flesh, a sacrifice to those goddesses three and to that son of Priam, who in days gone by would wake the music of his pipe around his steading.

CHORUS

Oh may sorrow be averted otherwhither, and thou be blest!

HELEN

Woe is thee, unhappy Troy! Thou through deeds not done by the art ruined, and hast suffered direst woe; for the gift that Cypris gave to me, hath caused a sea of blood to flow, and many an eye to weep, with grief on grief and tear on tear. All this hath Ilium suffered and mothers have lost their children; and virgin sisters of the slain have cut off their tresses by the swollen tide of Phrygian Scamander. And the land of Hellas hath lifted her voice of woe and broken forth in wailing, smiting on her head, and making tender cheeks to stream with gore beneath the rending nail. Ah blest maid Callisto, who long ago in Arcady didst find favour with Zeus, in the semblance of beast four—footed, how much happier was thy lot than my mother's, for thou hast changed the burden of thy grief and now with savage eye art weeping o'er thy shaggy monster—shape; aye, and hers was a happier lot, whom on a day Artemis drove from her choir, changed to a hind with horns of gold, the fair Titanian maid, daughter of Merops, because of her beauty; but my fair form hath proved the curse of Dardan Troy and doomed Achaea's sons.

(HELEN and the CHORUS go into the palace. After the doors have closed upon them, MENELAUS enters. He is alone and clad in rags.)

MENELAUS

Ah! Pelops, easy victor long ago o'er thy rival Oenomaus in the chariot—race on Pisa's plain, would thou hadst ended thy career amongst the gods that day thou wert beguiled into making a banquet for them, or ever thou hadst

HELEN

## HELEN

begotten my father Atreus, to whom were born by Aerope his wife, Agamemnon and myself Menelaus, an illustrious pair; and herein I make no idle boast, for 'twas a mighty host, I trow, that I their leader carried o'er the sea to Troy, using no violence to make them follow me, but leading all the chivalry of Hellas by voluntary consent. And some of these must we number 'mid the slain, and some to their joy have 'scaped the sea, bearing to their homes again names long reckoned dead. But I, poor wretch, go wandering o'er grey Ocean's swell a weary space, long as that which saw me sick the towers of Ilium; and for all my longing to reach my country I am not counted worthy of this boon by heaven, but to Libya's desert cheerless roadsteads have I sailed, to each and all of them; and whensoever I draw me near my native land, the storm-wind drives me back again, and never yet have favouring breezes filled my sails, to let me reach my fatherland. And now a wretched, shipwrecked mariner, my friends all lost, am I cast up upon this shore; and my ship is shattered in a thousand pieces against the rocks; and its keel was wrested from its cunning fastenings; thereon did I with difficulty escape, most unexpectedly, and Helen also, for her had I rescued from Troy and had with me. But the name of this country and its people I know not; for I blushed to mingle with the crowd to question them, anxious for very shame to hide my misfortunes which reduce me to these sorry rags. For when a man of high degree meets with adversity, he feels the strangeness of his fallen state more keenly than a sufferer of long standing. Dire want is wasting me; for I have neither food, nor raiment to gird myself withal; behold the facts before you to judge from—I am clad in tatters cast up from the ship; while all the robes I once did wear, glorious attire and ornaments, bath the sea swallowed; and in a cavern's deep recesses have I hidden my wife, the cause of all my trouble, and have come hither, after straitly charging the survivors of my friends to watch her. Alone am I come, seeking for those there left some help, if haply I may find it after careful search. So when I saw this palace girt with towering walls and stately gates of some prosperous lord, I drew nigh; for I have hope to obtain somewhat for my sailors from this wealthy house, whereas from houses which have no store, the inmates for all their goodwill could furnish naught. Ho! there, who keeps the gate and will come forth to bear my tale of woe into the house? (A PORTRESS comes out of the palace in answer to his call.)

PORTRESS

Who stands before the door? Begone from the house! stand not at the court-yard gate, annoying my masters! otherwise shalt thou die, for thou art a Hellene born. and with them have we no dealings.

MENELAUS

Mother, herein sayest thou rightly on all points. 'Tis well; I will obey; but moderate thy words.

PORTRESS

Away! stranger, my orders are to admit no Hellene to this palace.

MENELAUS

Ha! do not seek to push me hence, or thrust me away by violence.

PORTRESS

Thou dost not heed my words, and therefore hast thyself to blame.

MENELAUS

Carry my message to thy master in the palace.

PORTRESS

HELEN

HELEN

Some one would rue it, methinks, were I to take thy message.

MENELAUS

I come as a shipwrecked man and a stranger, whom heaven protects.

PORTRESS

Well, get thee to some other house than this.

MENELAUS

Nay, but I will pass into the house; so listen to me.

PORTRESS

Let me tell thee thou art unwelcome, and soon wilt be forcibly ejected.

MENELAUS

Ah me! where are now those famous troops of mine?

PORTRESS

Elsewhere maybe thou wert a mighty man; thou art not here.

MENELAUS

O fortune! I have not deserved such insult.

PORTRESS

Why are thy eyes with tear-drops wet? Why so sad?

MENELAUS

'Tis the contrast with my fortunes erst so blest.

PORTRESS

Hence! then, and give thy friends those tears.

MENELAUS

What land is this? whose is the palace?

PORTRESS

Proteus lives here. It is the land of Egypt.

MENELAUS

HELEN

HELEN

Egypt? Woe is me! to think that hither I have sailed!

PORTRESS

Pray, what fault hast thou to find with the race of Nile?

MENELAUS

'Twas no fault I found; my own disasters I lament.

PORTRESS

There be plenty in evil case; thou art not the only one.

MENELAUS

Is the king, of whom thou speakest, here within?

PORTRESS

There is his tomb; his son rules in his stead.

MENELAUS

And where may he be? abroad, or in the house?

PORTRESS

He is not within. To Hellas is he a bitter foe.

MENELAUS

His reason, pray, for this enmity? the results whereof I have experienced.

PORTRESS

Beneath this roof dwells the daughter of Zeus, Helen.

MENELAUS

What mean'st thou? what is it thou hast said? Repeat, I pray, thy words.

PORTRESS

The daughter of Tyndareus is here, who erst in Sparta dwelt.

MENELAUS

Whence came she? What means this business?

HELEN

## HELEN

### PORTRESS

She came from Lacedaemon hither.

### MENELAUS

When? Surely I have never been robbed of my wife from the cave!

### PORTRESS

Before the Achaeans went to Troy, sir stranger. But get thee hence; for somewhat hath chanced within, whereat the whole palace is in an uproar. Thou comest most unseasonably; and if my master catch thee, death will be thy stranger's gift. This say I, because to Hellas I am well disposed, albeit I gave thee harsh answers for fear of my master. (The PORTRESS goes back into the palace.)

### MENELAUS

What can I think or say? For after my previous troubles, this is a fresh piece of ill-luck I hear, if, indeed, after recovering my wife from Troy and bringing her hither, and putting her for safety in the cave, I am then to find another woman living here with the same name as my wife. She called her the begotten child of Zeus. Can there be a man that hath the name of Zeus by the banks of Nile? The Zeus of heaven is only one, at any rate. Where is there a Sparta in the world save where Eurotas glides between his reedy banks? The name of Tyndareus is the name of one alone. Is there any land of the same name as Lacedaemon or Troy? I know not what to say; for naturally there are many in the wide world that have the same names, cities and women too; there is nothing, then, to marvel at. Nor yet again will I fly from the alarm a servant raises; for there is none so cruel of heart as to refuse me food when once he hears my name. All have heard of Ilium's burning, and I, that set it ablaze, am famous now throughout the world, I, Menelaus. I therefore wait the master of this house. There are two issues I must watch; if he prove somewhat stern of heart, I will to my wreck and there conceal myself; but if he show any sign of pity, I will ask for help in this my present strait. This is the crowning woe in all my misery, to beg the means of life from other princes, prince though I be myself; still needs must I. Yea, this is no saying of mine, but a word of wisdom, "Naught in might exceedeth dread necessity."

(HELEN and the CHORUS enter from the palace. They do not notice MENELAUS.)

### CHORUS (singing)

I have heard the voice of the maiden inspired. Clear is the answer she hath vouchsafed within yon palace, declaring that Menelaus is not yet dead and buried, passed to the land of shades, where darkness takes the place of light; but on the stormy main is wearing out his life, nor yet hath reached the haven of his country, a wanderer dragging out a piteous existence, reft of every friend, setting foot in every corner of the world, as he voyageth home from Troy.

### HELEN

Lo! once again I seek the shelter of this tomb, with Theonoe's sweet tidings in my ears; she that knoweth all things of a truth; for she saith my lord is yet alive and in the light of day, albeit he is roaming to and fro after many a weary voyage, and hither shall he come whenso he reach the limit of his toils, no novice in the wanderer's life. But one thing did she leave unsaid. Is he to escape when he hath come? And I refrained from asking that question clearly, so glad was I when she told me he was safe. For she said that he was somewhere nigh this shore, cast up by shipwreck with a handful of friends. Ah! when shall I see thee come? How welcome will thy advent be! (She catches sight of MENELAUS.) Ha! who is this? Am I being snared by some trick of Proteus' impious

### HELEN

HELEN

son? Oh! let me, like a courser at its speed, or a votary of Bacchus, approach the tomb! for there is something wild about this fellow's looks, who is eager to o'ertake me.

MENELAUS

Ho there! thou that with fearful effort seekest to reach the basement of the tomb and the pillars of burnt sacrifice, stay thee. Wherefore art flying? Ah! with what speechless amaze the sight of thee affects me!

HELEN

O friends! I am being ill-treated. This man is keeping me from the tomb, and is eager to take and give me to his master, whose wooing I was seeking to avoid.

MENELAUS

No robber I, or minister of evil.

HELEN

At any rate the garb wherein thou art clad is unseemly.

MENELAUS

Stay thy hasty flight; put fear aside.

HELEN

I do so, now that I have reached this spot.

MENELAUS

Who art thou? whom do I behold in thee, lady?

HELEN

Nay, who art thou? The self-same reason prompts us both.

MENELAUS

never saw a closer resemblance.

HELEN

Great God! Yea, for to recognize our friends is of God.

MENELAUS

Art thou from Hellas, or a native of this land?

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

From Hellas; but I would learn thy story too.

MENELAUS

Lady, in thee I see a wondrous likeness to Helen.

HELEN

And I in thee to Menelaus; I know not what to say.

MENELAUS

Well, thou hast recognized aright a man of many sorrows.

HELEN

Hail! to thy wife's arms restored at last!

MENELAUS

Wife indeed! Lay not a finger on my robe.

HELEN

The wife that Tyndareus, my father, gave thee.

MENELAUS

O Hecate, giver of light, send thy visions favourably!

HELEN

In me thou beholdest no spectre of the night, attendant on the queen of phantoms.

MENELAUS

Nor yet am I in my single person the husband of two wives.

HELEN

What other woman calls thee lord?

MENELAUS

The inmate of yonder cave, whom I from Troy convey.

HELEN

Thou hast none other wife but me.

MENELAUS

HELEN

HELEN

Can it be my mind is wandering, my sight failing?

HELEN

Dost not believe thou seest in me thy wife?

MENELAUS

Thy form resembles her, but the real truth robs me of this belief.

HELEN

Observe me well; what need hast thou of clearer proof?

MENELAUS

Thou art like her; that will I never deny.

HELEN

Who then shall teach thee, unless it be thine own eyes?

MENELAUS

Herein is my dilemma; I have another wife.

HELEN

To Troy I never went; that was a phantom.

MENELAUS

Pray, who fashions living bodies?

HELEN

The air, whence thou hast a wife of heaven's workmanship.

MENELAUS

What god's handiwork? Strange is the tale thou tellest.

HELEN

Hera made it as a substitute, to keep me from Paris.

MENELAUS

How then couldst thou have been here, and in Troy, at the same time?

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

The name may be in many a place at once, though not the body.

MENELAUS

Unhand me! the sorrows I brought with me suffice.

HELEN

What! wilt leave me, and take that phantom bride away?

MENELAUS

For thy likeness unto Helen, fare thee well.

HELEN

Ruined! in thee I found my lord only to lose thee.

MENELAUS

The greatness of my troubles at Troy convinces me; thou dost not.

HELEN

Ah, woe is me! who was ever more unfortunate than I? Those whom I love best are leaving me, nor shall I ever reach Hellas, my own dear native land. (The FIRST MESSENGER enters in haste.)

MESSENGER

At last I find thee, Menelaus, after an anxious search, not till I have evandered through the length and breadth of this foreign strand; I am sent by thy comrades, whom thou didst leave behind.

MENELAUS

What news? surely you are not being spoiled by the barbarians?

MESSENGER

A miracle hath happened; my words are too weak for the reality.

MENELAUS

Speak; for judging by this haste, thou hast stirring news.

MESSENGER

My message is: thy countless toils have all been toiled in vain.

MENELAUS

That is an old tale of woe to mourn! come, thy news?

HELEN

## HELEN

MESSENGER

Thy wife hath disappeared, soaring away into the embracing air; in heaven she now is hidden, and as she left the hollowed cave where we were guarding her, she hailed us thus, "Ye hapless Phrygians, and all Achaea's race! for me upon Scamander's strand by Hera's arts ye died from day to day, in the false belief that Helen was in the hands of Paris. But I, since I have stayed my appointed time, and kept the laws of fate, will now depart unto the sky that gave me birth; but the unhappy daughter of Tyndareus, through no fault of hers, hath borne an evil name without reason." (Catching Sight of HELEN) Daughter of Leda, hail to thee, so thou art here after all! I was just announcing thy departure to the hidden starry realms, little knowing that thou couldst fly at will. I will not a second time let thee flout us thus, for thou didst cause tiki lord and his comrades trouble all for naught in Ilium.

MENELAUS

This is even what she said; her words are proved true; O longed-for day, how hath it restored thee to my arms!

HELEN

O Menelaus, dearest husband, the time of sorrow has been long, but joy is now ours at last. Ah, friends, what joy for me to hold my husband in a fond embrace after many a weary cycle of yon blazing lamp of day!

MENELAUS

What joy for me to hold my wife! but with all that I would ask about these years, I now know not where I may first begin.

HELEN

O rapture! the very hair upon my head starts up for joy! my tears run down! Around thy neck I fling my arms, dear husband, to hug my joy to me.

MENELAUS

O happy, happy sight! I have no fault to find; my wife, he daughter of Zeus and Leda, is mine again, she whom her brothers on their snow-white steeds, whilst torches blazed, made my happy bride, but gods removed her from my home. Now is the deity guiding us to a new destiny, happier than of yore.

HELEN

Evil into good transformed hath brought us twain together at last, dear husband; but late though it be, God grant me joy of my good luck!

MENELAUS

God grant thee joy! I join thee in the self-same prayer; for of us twain one cannot suffer without the other.

HELEN

No more, my friends, I mourn the past; no longer now I grieve. My own dear husband is restored to me, whose coming from Troy I have waited many a long year.

MENELAUS

HELEN

HELEN

I to thee, and thou to me. And after these long, long years I have at last discovered the fraud of the goddess. But these tears, in gladness shed, are tears of thankfulness rather than of sorrow.

HELEN

What can I say? What mortal heart could e'er have had such hope? To my bosom I press thee, little as I ever thought to.

MENELAUS

And I to mine press thee, who all men thought hadst gone to Ida's town and the hapless towers of Ilium.

HELEN

Ah me! ah me! that is a bitter subject to begin on.

MENELAUS

Tell me, I adjure thee, how wert thou from my home conveyed?

HELEN

Alas! alas! 'tis a bitter tale thou askest to hear.

MENELAUS

Speak, for I must hear it; all that comes is Heaven's gift.

HELEN

I loathe the story I am now to tell.

MENELAUS

Tell it for all that. 'Tis sweet to hear of trouble past.

HELEN

I ne'er set forth to be the young barbarian's bride, with oars and wings of lawless love to speed me on my way.

MENELAUS

What deity or fate tore thee from thy country, then?

HELEN

Ah, my lord! 'twas Hermes, the son of Zeus, that brought and placed me by the banks of Nile.

MENELAUS

A miracle! Who sent thee thither? O monstrous story!

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

I wept, and still my eyes are wet with tears. 'Twas the wife of Zeus that ruined me.

MENELAUS

Hera? wherefore should she afflict us twain?

HELEN

Woe is me for my awful fate! Woe for those founts and baths where the goddesses made brighter still that beauty, which evoked the fatal verdict!

MENELAUS

Why did Hera visit thee with evil regarding this verdict?

HELEN

To wrest the promise of Cypris—

MENELAUS

How now? Say on.

HELEN

From Paris, to whom that goddess pledged me.

MENELAUS

Woe for thee!

HELEN

And so she brought me hither to Egypt to my sorrow.

MENELAUS

Then she gave him a phantom in thy stead, as thou tellest me?

HELEN

And then began those woes of thine, ah, mother! woe is me!

MENELAUS

What meanest thou?

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

My mother is no more; my shameful marriage made her fix the noose about her neck.

MENELAUS

Ah me! is our daughter Hermione yet alive?

HELEN

Still unwed, childless still, she mourns my fatal marriage.

MENELAUS

O Paris, who didst utterly o'erthrow my home, here was thy ruin too and theirs, those countless mail-clad Danaï.

HELEN

From my country, city, and from thee heaven cast me forth unhappy and accursed, because I left,—and yet not I,—home and husband for union of foul shame.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

If haply ye find happiness in the future, it will suffice when to the past ye look.

MESSENGER

Menelaus, grant me too a portion of that joy which, though mine own eyes see, I scarcely comprehend.

MENELAUS

Come then, old friend, and share with us our talk.

MESSENGER

Was it not then in her power to decide all the trouble in Troy?

MENELAUS

It was not; I was tricked by the gods into taking to my arms a misty phantom-form, to my sorrow.

MESSENGER

How so? was it then for this we vainly toiled?

MENELAUS

'Twas Hera's handiwork, and the jealousy of three goddesses.

MESSENGER

Is this real woman, then, thy wife?

HELEN

## HELEN

MENELAUS

This is she; trust my word for that.

MESSENGER

Daughter, how changeful and inscrutable is the nature of God! With some good end doth he vary men's fortune—now up, now down; one suffers; another who ne'er knew suffering, is in his turn to awful ruin brought, having no assurance in his lot from day to day. Thou and thy husband have had your share of trouble—thou in what the world has said, he in battle's heat. For all the striving that he strove, he got him naught; while now, without an effort made, every blessing fortune boasts is his. And thou, in spite of all, hast brought no shame upon thy aged sire, or those twin sons of Zeus, nor art thou guilty of those rumoured crimes. Now again do I recall thy wedding rites, remembering the blazing torch I bore beside thee in a four-horsed chariot at full gallop; while thou with this thy lord, a new-made bride, wert driving forth from thy happy home. A sorry servant he, whoso regardeth not his master's interest, sympathizing with his sorrows and his joys. Slave though I was born, yet may I be numbered amongst honest servants; for in heart, though not in name, I am free. For this is better far than in my single person to suffer these two evils, to feel my heart corrupt, and as the slave of others to be at my neighbour's beck and call.

MENELAUS

Come, old friend, oft hast thou stood side by side with me and taken thy full share of toil; so now be partner in my happiness. Go, tell my comrades, whom I left behind, the state of matters here, as thou hast found them, and the issue of my fortunes; and bid them wait upon the beach and abide the result of the struggle, which I trow awaits me; and if mayhap we find a way to take this lady from the land by stealth, tell them to keep good watch that we may share the luck and escape, if possible, from the barbarian's clutch.

MESSENGER

It shall be done, O king. Now I see how worthless are the seers' tricks, how full of falsehood; nor is there after all aught trustworthy in the blaze of sacrifice or in the cry of feathered fowls; 'tis folly, the very notion that birds can help mankind. Calchas never by word or sign showed the host the truth, when he saw his friends dying on behalf of a phantom, nor yet did Helenus; but the city was stormed in vain. Perhaps thou wilt say, 'twas not heaven's will that they should do so. Then why do we employ these prophets? Better were it to sacrifice to the gods, and crave a blessing, leaving prophecy alone; for this was but devised as a bait to catch livelihood, and no man grows rich by divination if he is idle. No! sound judgment and discernment are the best of seers. (The MESSENGER departs.) LEADER

My views about seers agree exactly with this old man's: whoso hath the gods upon his side will have the best seer in his house.

HELEN

Good! so far all is well. But how camest thou, poor husband, safe from Troy? though 'tis no gain to know, yet friends feel a longing to learn all that their friends have suffered.

MENELAUS

That one short sentence of thine contains a host of questions. Why should I tell thee of our losses in the Aegean, or of the beacon Nauplius lighted on Euboea? or of my visits to Crete and the cities of Libya, or of the peaks of Perseus? For I should never satisfy thee with the tale, and by telling thee should add to my own pain, though I

HELEN

HELEN

suffered enough at the time; and so would my grief be doubled.

HELEN

Thy answer shows more wisdom than my question. Omit the rest, and tell me only this; how long wert thou a weary wanderer o'er the wide sea's face?

MENELAUS

Seven long years did I see come and go, besides those ten in Troy.

HELEN

Alas, poor sufferer! 'twas a weary while. And thou hast thence escaped only to bleed here.

MENELAUS

How so? what wilt thou tell? Ah wife, thou hast ruined me.

HELEN

Escape and fly with all thy speed from this land. Thou wilt be slain by him whose house this is.

MENELAUS

What have I done to merit such a fate?

HELEN

Thou hast arrived unexpectedly to thwart my marriage.

MENELAUS

What! is some man bent on wedding my wife?

HELEN

Aye, and on heaping those insults on me, which I have hitherto endured.

MENELAUS

Is he some private prince, or a ruler of this land?

HELEN

The son of Proteus, king of the country.

MENELAUS

This was that dark saying I heard the servant tell.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

At which of the barbarian's gates wert thou standing?

MENELAUS

Here, whence like a beggar I was like to be driven.

HELEN

Surely thou wert not begging food? Ah, woe is me!

MENELAUS

That was what I was doing, though I had not the name of beggar.

HELEN

Of course thou knowest, then, all about my marriage.

MENELAUS

I do. But whether thou hast escaped thy lover, I know not.

HELEN

Be well assured I have kept my body chaste.

MENELAUS

How wilt thou convince me of this? If true, thy words are sweet.

HELEN

Dost see the wretched station I have kept at this tomb?

MENELAUS

I see, alas! a bed of straw; but what hast thou to do with it?

HELEN

There I crave escape from this marriage as a suppliant.

MENELAUS

For want of an altar, or because it is the barbarians' way?

HELEN

This was as good a protection to me as the gods' temples.

HELEN

HELEN

MENELAUS

May I not then even bear thee homeward on my ship?

HELEN

The sword far sooner than thy wife's embrace is waiting thee.

MENELAUS

So should I be of all men the most miserable.

HELEN

Put shame aside, and fly from this land.

MENELAUS

Leaving thee behind? 'twas for thy sake I sacked Troy.

HELEN

Better so, than that our union should cause thy death.

MENELAUS

Oh! these are coward words, unworthy of those days at Troy!

HELEN

Thou canst not slay the prince, thy possible intent.

MENELAUS

Hath he, then, a body which steel cannot wound?

HELEN

Thou shalt hear. But to attempt impossibilities is no mark of wisdom.

MENELAUS

Am I to let them bind my hands, and say nothing?

HELEN

Thou art in a dilemma; some scheme must be devised.

MENELAUS

I had liefer die in action than sitting still.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

There is one hope, and only one, of our safety.

MENELAUS

Will gold, or daring deeds, or winning words procure it?

HELEN

We are safe if the prince learn not of thy coming.

MENELAUS

any one tell him it is I? He certainly will not know who I am.

HELEN

He hath within his palace an ally equal to the gods.

MENELAUS

Some voice divine within the secret chambers of his house?

HELEN

No; his sister; Theonoe men call her.

MENELAUS

Her name hath a prophetic sound; tell me what she doth.

HELEN

She knoweth everything, and she will tell her brother thou art come.

MENELAUS

Then must we die; for I cannot escape her ken.

HELEN

Perchance we might by suppliant prayers win her over.

MENELAUS

To what end? To what vain hope art thou leading me?

HELEN

That she should not tell her brother thou art here.

HELEN

HELEN

MENELAUS

Suppose we persuade her, can we get away?

HELEN

Easily, if she connive thereat; without her knowledge, no,

MENELAUS

Be that thy task; women deal best with women.

HELEN

I will not fail, be sure, to clasp her knees.

MENELAUS

Come, then; only, suppose she reject our proposals?

HELEN

Thou wilt be slain, and I, alas! wedded by force.

MENELAUS

Thou wilt betray me; that "force" of thine is but an excuse.

HELEN

Nay, by thy life I swear a sacred oath.

MENELAUS

What meanest thou? dost swear to die and never to another husband yield?

HELEN

Yes, by the self-same sword; I will fall by thy side.

MENELAUS

On these conditions touch my right hand.

HELEN

I do so, swearing I will quit the light of day if thou art slain.

MENELAUS

I, too, will end my life if I lose thee.

HELEN

## HELEN

HELEN

How shall we die so as to gain fame?

MENELAUS

I will slay thee and then myself upon the summit of the tomb. But first will I in doughty fight contest another's claim to thee; and let who will draw nigh! for I will not sully the lustre of my Trojan fame, nor will I, on my return to Hellas, incur a storm of taunts, as one who robbed Thetis of Achilles; saw Ajax, son of Telamon, fall a weltering corpse; and the sort of Neleus of his child bereft; shall I then flinch myself from death for my own wife? No, no! For if the gods are wise, o'er a brave man by his foes laid low they lightly sprinkle the earth that is his tomb, while cowards 'they cast forth on barren rocky soil. LEADER

Grant, heaven, that the race of Tantalus may at last be blest, and pass from sorrow unto joy!

HELEN

Ah, woe is me! Yea, all my lot is woe; O Menelaus, we are utterly undone! Behold! from forth the house comes Theonoe, the prophetess, The palace echoes as the bolts are unfastened; fly! yet what use to fly? For whether absent or present she knows of thy arrival here. Ah me! how lost am I! Saved from Troy and from a barbarian land, thou hast come only to fall a prey to barbarian swords. (THEONOE enters, attended by hand-maidens carrying torches.)

THEONOE

Lead on, bearing before me blazing brands, and, as sacred rites ordain, purge with incense every cranny of the air, that I may breathe heaven's breath free from taint; meanwhile do thou, in case the tread of unclean feet have soiled the path, wave the cleansing flame above it, and brandish the torch in front, that I may pass upon my way. And when to heaven ye have paid the customs I exact, bear back into the house the brand from off the hearth. What of my prophecy, Helen? how stands it now? Thou hast seen thy husband Menelaus arrive without disguise, reft of his ships, and of thy counterfeit. Ah, hapless man! what troubles hast thou escaped, and art come hither, and yet knowest not whether thou art to return or to abide here; for there is strife in heaven, and Zeus this very day will sit in solemn conclave on thee. Hera, who erst was thy bitter foe, is now grown kind, and is willing to bring thee and thy wife safe home, that Hellas may learn that the marriage of Paris was all a sham, assigned to him by Cypris; but Cypris fain would mar thy homeward course, that she may not be convicted, or proved to have bought the palm of beauty at the price of Helen in a futile marriage. Now the decision rests with me, whether to ruin thee, as Cypris wishes, by telling my brother of thy presence here, or to save thy life by taking Hera's side, concealing thy coming from my brother, for his orders are that I should tell him, whensoever thou shouldst reach these shores. Ho! one of you, go show my brother this man is here, that I may secure my safety.

HELEN

Maiden, at thy knees I fall a suppliant, and seat myself in this sad posture on behalf of myself and him, whom I am in danger of seeing slain, after I have so hardly found him. Oh! tell not thy brother that my husband is returned to these loving arms; save us, I beseech thee; never for thy brother's sake sacrifice thy character for uprightness, by evil and unjust means bidding for his favour. For the deity hates violence, and biddeth all men get lawful gains without plundering others. Wealth unjustly gotten, though it bring some power, is to be eschewed. The breath of heaven and the earth are man's common heritage, wherein to store his home, without taking the goods of others, or wresting them away by force. Me did Hermes at a critical time, to my sorrow, intrust to thy father's safe keeping for this my lord, who now is here and wishes to reclaim me. But how can he recover me if he be slain? How could thy sire restore the living to the dead? Oh! consider ere that the will of heaven and thy father's too;

HELEN

## HELEN

would the deity or would thy dead sire restore their neighbour's goods, or would they forbear? restore them, I feel sure. It is not, therefore, right that thou shouldst more esteem thy wanton brother than thy righteous father. Yet if thou, prophetess as thou art and believer in divine providence, shalt pervert the just intention of thy father and gratify thy unrighteous brother, 'tis shameful thou shouldst have full knowledge of the heavenly will, both what is and what is not, and yet be ignorant of justice. Oh! save my wretched life from the troubles which beset it, granting this as an accession to our good fortune; for every living soul loathes Helen, seeing that there is gone a rumour throughout Hellas that I was false unto my lord, and took up my abode in Phrygia's sumptuous halls. Now, if I come to Hellas, and set foot once more in Sparta, they will hear and see how they were ruined by the wiles of goddesses, while was no traitress to my friends after all; and so will they restore to me my virtuous name again, and I shall give my daughter in marriage, whom no man now will wed; and, leaving this vagrant life in Egypt, shall enjoy the treasures in my home. Had Menelaus met his doom at some funeral pyre, with tears should I be cherishing his memory in a far-off land, but must lose him now when he is alive and safe? Ah! maiden, I beseech thee, say not so; grant me this boon, I pray, and reflect thy father's justice; for this is the fairest ornament of children, when the child of a virtuous sire resembles its parents in character. LEADER

Piteous thy pleading, and a piteous object thou! But I fain would hear what Menelaus will say to save his life.

## MENELAUS

I will not deign to throw myself at thy knees, or wet mine eyes with tears; for were I to play the coward, I should most foully blur my Trojan fame. And yet men say it shows a noble soul to let the tear-drop fall in misfortune. But that will not be the honourable course that I will choose in preference to bravery, if what I shall say is honourable. Art thou disposed to save a stranger seeking in mere justice to regain his wife, why then restore her and save us likewise; if not, this will not be the first by many a time that I have suffered, though thou wilt get an evil name. All that I deem worthy of me and honest, all that will touch thy heart most nearly, will I utter at the tomb of thy sire with regret for his loss. Old king beneath this tomb of stone reposing, pay back thy trust! I ask of thee my wife whom Zeus sent hither unto thee to keep for me. I know thou canst never restore her to me thyself, for thou art dead; but this thy daughter will never allow her father once so glorious, whom I invoke in his grave, to bear a tarnished name; for the decision rests with her now. Thee, too, great god of death, I call to my assistance, who hast received full many a corpse, slain by me for Helen, and art keeping thy wage; either restore those dead now to life again, or compel the daughter to show herself a worthy equal of her virtuous sire, and give me back my wife. But if ye will rob me of her, I will tell you that which she omitted in her speech. Know then, maiden, I by an oath am bound, first, to meet thy brother sword to sword, when he or I must die—there is no alternative. But if he refuse to meet me fairly front to front, and seek by famine to chase away us suppliants twain at this tomb, I am resolved to slay Helen, and then to plunge this two-edged sword through my own heart, upon the top of the sepulchre, that our streaming blood may trickle down the tomb; and our two corpses will be lying side by side upon this polished slab, a source of deathless grief to thee, and to thy sire reproach. Never shall thy brother wed Helen, nor shall any other; I will bear her hence myself, if not to my house, at any rate to death. And why this stern resolve? Were I to resort to women's ways and weep, I should be a pitiful creature, not a man of action. Slay me, if it seems thee good; I will not die ingloriously; but better yield to what I say, that thou mayst act with justice, and I regain my wife. LEADER

On thee, maiden, it rests to judge between these arguments. Decide in such a way as to please one and all.

## THEONOE

My nature and my inclination lean towards piety; myself, too, I respect, and I will never sully my father's fair name, or gratify my brother at the cost of bringing myself into open dishonour. For justice hath her temple firmly founded in my nature, and since I have this heritage from Nereus I will strive to save Menelaus; wherefore, seeing it is Hera's will to stand thy friend, I will give my vote with her. May Cypris be favourable to me! though in me she hath no part, and I will try to remain a maid always. As for thy reproaches against my father at this tomb; lo! I

HELEN

have the same words to utter; I should be wronging thee, did I not restore thy wife; for my sire, were he living, would have given her back into thy keeping, and thee to her. Yea, for there is recompense for these things as well amongst the dead as amongst all those who breathe the breath of life. The soul indeed of the dead lives no more, yet hath it a consciousness that lasts for ever, eternal as the ether into which it takes the final plunge. Briefly then to end the matter, I will observe strict silence on all that ye prayed I should, and never with my counsel will I aid my brother's wanton will. For I am doing him good service, though he little thinks it, if turn him from his godless life to holiness. Wherefore devise yourselves some way of escape; my lips are scaled; I will not cross your path. First with the goddesses begin, and of the one,—and that one Cypris,—Crave permission to return unto thy country; and of Hera, that her goodwill may abide in the same quarter, even her scheme to save thee and thy husband. And thou, my own dead sire, shalt never, in so far as rests with me, lose thy holy name to rank with evil—doers.

(THEONOE and her attendants enter the palace.) LEADER

No man ever prospered by unjust practices, but in a righteous cause there is hope of safety.

HELEN

Menelaus, on the maiden's side are we quite safe. Thou must from that point start, and by contributing thy advice, devise with me a scheme to save ourselves.

MENELAUS

Hearken then; thou hast been a long while in the palace, and art intimate with the king's attendants.

HELEN

What dost thou mean thereby? for thou art suggesting hopes, as if resolved on some plan for our mutual help.

MENELAUS

Couldst thou persuade one of those who have charge of cars and steeds to furnish us with a chariot?

HELEN

I might; but what escape is there for us who know nothing of the country and the barbarian's kingdom?

MENELAUS

True; 'tis impossible. Well, supposing I conceal myself in the palace and slay the king with this two-edged sword?

HELEN

His sister would never refrain from telling her brother that thou wert meditating his death.

MENELAUS

We have not so much as a ship to make our escape in; for the sea hath swallowed the one we had.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Hear me, if haply even a woriian can utter words of wisdom. Dost thou consent to be dead in word, though not really so?

MENELAUS

'Tis a bad omen; still, if by saying so I shall gain aught, I am ready to be dead in word, though not in deed.

HELEN

I, too, will mourn thee with hair cut short and dirges, as is women's way, before this impious wretch.

MENELAUS

What saving remedy doth this afford us twain? There is deception in thy scheme.

HELEN

I will beg the king of this country leave to bury thee in a cenotaph, as if thou hadst really died at sea.

MENELAUS

Suppose he grant it; how, e'en then, are we to escape without a ship, after having committed me to my empty tomb?

HELEN

I will bid him give me a vessel, from which to let drop into the sea's embrace thy funeral offerings.

MENELAUS

A clever plan in truth, save in one particular; suppose he bid thee rear the tomb upon the strand, thy pretext comes to naught.

HELEN

But I shall say it is not the custom in Hellas to bury those who die at sea upon the shore.

MENELAUS

Thou removest this obstacle too; I then will sail with thee and help stow the funeral garniture in the same ship.

HELEN

Above all, it is necessary that thou and all thy sailors who escaped from the wreck should be at hand.

MENELAUS

Be sure if once I find a ship at her moorings, they shall be there man for man, each with his sword.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Thou must direct everything; only let there be winds to waft our rails and a good ship to speed before them!

MENELAUS

So shall it be; for the deities will cause my troubles to cease. But from whom wilt thou say thou hadst tidings of my death?

HELEN

From thee; declare thyself the one and only survivor, telling how thou wert sailing with the son of Atreus, and didst see him perish.

MENELAUS

Of a truth the garments I have thrown about me, will bear out my tale that they were rags collected from the wreckage.

HELEN

They come in most opportunely, but they were near being lost just at the wrong time. Maybe that misfortune will turn to fortune.

MENELAUS

Am I to enter the palace with thee, or are we to sit here at the tomb quietly?

HELEN

Abide here; for if the king attempts to do thee any mischief, this tomb and thy good sword will protect thee. But I will go within and cut off my hair, and exchange my white robe for sable weeds, and rend my cheek with this hand's blood—thirsty nail. For 'tis a mighty struggle, and I see two possible issues; either I must die if detected in my plot, or else to my country shall I come and save thy soul alive. O Hera! awful queen, who sharest the couch of Zeus, grant some respite from their toil to two unhappy wretches; to thee I pray, tossing my arms upward to heaven, where thou hast thy home in the star-spangled firmament. Thou, too, that didst win the prize of beauty at the price of my marriage; O Cypris! daughter of Dione, destroy me not utterly. Thou hast injured me enough aforesaid, delivering up my name, though not my person, to live amongst barbarians. Oh! suffer me to die, if death is thy desire, in my native land. Why art thou so insatiate in mischief, employing every art of love, of fraud, and guileful schemes, and spells that bring bloodshed on families? Wert thou but moderate, only that!—in all else thou art by nature man's most well, come deity; and I have reason so to say.

(HELEN enters the palace and MENELAUS withdraws into the background.)

CHORUS (singing)

strophe 1

Thee let me invoke, tearful Philomel, lurking 'neath the leafy covert in thy place of song, most tuneful of all feathered songsters, oh! come to aid me in my dirge, trilling through thy tawny throat, as I sing the piteous woes of Helen, and the tearful fate of Trojan dames made subject to Achaea's spear, on the day that there came to their plains one who sped with foreign oar across the dashing billows, bringing to Priam's race from Lacedaemon thee his hapless bride, Helen,—even Paris, luckless bridegroom, by the guidance of Aphrodite.

HELEN

## HELEN

antistrophe 1

And many an Achaean hath breathed his last amid the spearmen's thrusts and hurtling hail of stones, and gone to his sad end; for these their wives cut off their hair in sorrow, and their houses are left without a bride; and one of the Achaeans, that had but a single ship, did light a blazing beacon on sea-girt Euboea, and destroy full many of them, wrecking them on the rocks of Caphareus and the shores that front the Aegean main, by the treacherous gleam he kindled; when thou, O Menelaus, from the very day of thy start, didst drift to harbourless hills, far from thy country before the breath of the storm, bearing on thy ship a prize that was no prize, but a phantom made by Hera out of cloud for the Danaï to struggle over.

strophe 2

What mortal claims, by searching to the utmost limit, to have found out the nature of God, or of his opposite, or of that which comes between, seeing as he doth this world of man tossed to and fro by waves of contradiction and strange vicissitudes? Thou, Helen, art the daughter of Zeus; for thy sire was the bird that nestled in Leda's bosom; and yet for all that art thou become a by-word for wickedness, through the length and breadth of Hellas, as faithless, treacherous wife and godless woman; nor can I tell what certainty is, whatever may pass for it amongst men. That which gods pronounce have I found true.

antistrophe 2

O fools! all ye who try to win the meed of valour through war and serried ranks of chivalry, seeking thus to still this mortal coil, in senselessness; for if bloody contests are to decide, there will never be any lack of strife in the towns of men; the maidens of the land of Priam left their bridal bowers, though arbitration might have put thy quarrel right, O Helen. And now Troy's sons are in Hades' keeping in the world below, and fire hath darted on her walls, as darts the flame of Zeus, and thou art bringing woe on woe to hapless sufferers in their misery.

(THEOCLYMENUS and his hunting attendants enter.)

### THEOCLYMENUS

All hail, my father's tomb! I buried thee, Proteus, at the place where men go out, that I might often greet thee; and so, ever as I go out and in, I, thy son Theoclymenus call on thee, father. Ho! servants, to the palace take my hounds and hunting nets! How often have I blamed myself for never punishing those miscreants with death! I have just heard that son of Hellas has come openly to my land, escaping the notice of the guard, a spy maybe or a would-be thief of Helen; death shall be his lot if only I can catch him. Ha! I find all my plans apparently frustrated, the daughter of Tyndareus has deserted her seat at the tomb and sailed away from my shores. Ho! there, undo the bars, loose the horses from their stalls, bring forth my chariot, servants, that the wife, on whom my heart is set, may not get away from these shores unseen, for want of any trouble I can take. Yet stay; for I see the object of my pursuit is still in the palace, and has not fled. (HELEN enters from the palace, clad in the garb of mourning.) How now, lady, why hast thou arrayed thee in sable weeds instead of white raiment, and from thy fair head hast shorn thy tresses with the steel, bedewing thy cheeks the while with tears but lately shed? Is it in response to visions of the night that thou art mourning, or, because thou hast heard some warning voice within, art thus distraught with grief?

### HELEN

My lord,—for already I have learnt to say that name,—I am undone; my luck is gone; I cease to be.

### THEOCLYMENUS

In what misfortune art thou plunged? What hath happened?

### HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Menelaus, ah me! how can I say it? is dead, my husband.

THEOCLYMENUS

How knowest thou? Did Theonoe tell thee this?

HELEN

Both she, and one who was there when he perished.

THEOCLYMENUS

What! hath one arrived who actually announces this for certain?

HELEN

One hath; oh may he come e'en as I wish him to!

THEOCLYMENUS

Who and where is he? that I may learn this more surely.

HELEN

There he is, sitting crouched beneath the shelter of this tomb,

THEOCLYMENUS

Great Apollo! how clad in unseemly rags!

HELEN

Ah me! methinks my own husband too is in like plight.

THEOCLYMENUS

From what country is this fellow? whence landed he here?

HELEN

From Hellas, one of the Achaeans who sailed with my husband.

THEOCLYMENUS

What kind of death doth he declare that Menelaus died?

HELEN

The most piteous of all; amid the watery waves at sea.

HELEN

HELEN

THEOCLYMENUS

On what part of the savage ocean was he sailing?

HELEN

Cast up on the harbourless rocks of Libya.

THEOCLYMENUS

How was it this man did not perish if he was with him aboard?

HELEN

There are times when churls have more luck than their betters.

THEOCLYMENUS

Where left he the wreck, on coming hither?

HELEN

There, where perdition catch it, but not Menelaus!

THEOCLYMENUS

He is lost; but on what vessel came this man?

HELEN

According to his story sailors fell in with him and picked him up.

THEOCLYMENUS

Where then is that ill thing that was sent to Troy in thy stead?

HELEN

Dost mean the phantom-form of cloud? It hath passed into the air.

THEOCLYMENUS

O Priam, and thou land of Troy, how fruitless thy ruin!

HELEN

I too have shared with Priam's race their misfortunes.

THEOCLYMENUS

Did this fellow leave thy husband unburied, or consign him to the grave?

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Unburied; woe is me for my sad lot!

THEOCLYMENUS

Wherefore hast thou shorn the tresses of thy golden hair?

HELEN

His memory lingers fondly in this heart, whate'er his fate.

THEOCLYMENUS

Are thy tears in genuine sorrow for this calamity?

HELEN

An easy task no doubt to escape thy sister's detection!

THEOCLYMENUS

No, surely; impossible. Wilt thou still make this tomb thy abode?

HELEN

Why jeer at me? canst thou not let the dead man be?

THEOCLYMENUS

No, thy loyalty to thy husband's memory makes thee fly from me.

HELEN

I will do so no more; prepare at once for my marriage.

THEOCLYMENUS

Thou hast been long in bringing thyself to it; still I do commend the now.

HELEN

Dost know thy part? Let us forget the past.

THEOCLYMENUS

On what terms? One good turn deserves another.

HELEN

Let us make peace; be reconciled to me.

HELEN

HELEN

THEOCLYMENUS

I relinquish my quarrel with thee; let it take wings and fly away.

HELEN

Then by thy knees, since thou art my friend indeed,—

THEOCLYMENUS

What art so bent on winning, that to me thou stretchest out a suppliant hand?

HELEN

My dead husband would I fain bury.

THEOCLYMENUS

What tomb can be bestowed on lost bodies? Wilt thou bury a shade?

HELEN

In Hellas we have a custom, whene'er one is drowned at sea—

THEOCLYMENUS

What is your custom? The race of Pelops truly hath some skill in matters such as this.

HELEN

To hold a burial with woven robes that wrap no corpse.

THEOCLYMENUS

Perform the ceremony; rear the tomb where'er thou wilt.

HELEN

'Tis not thus we give drowned sailors burial.

THEOCLYMENUS

How then? I know nothing of your customs in Hellas.

HELEN

We unmoor, and carry out to sea all that is the dead man's due.

THEOCLYMENUS

What am I to give thee then for thy dead husband?

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

Myself I cannot say; I had no such experience in my previous happy life.

THEOCLYMENUS

Stranger, thou art the bearer of tidings I welcome.

MENELAUS

Well, I do not, nor yet doth the dead man.

THEOCLYMENUS

How do ye bury those who have been drowned at sea?

MENELAUS

Each according to his means.

THEOCLYMENUS

As far as wealth goes, name thy wishes for this lady's sake.

MENELAUS

There must be a blood-offering first to the dead.

THEOCLYMENUS

Blood of what? Do thou show me and I will comply.

MENELAUS

Decide that thyself; whate'er thou givest will suffice.

THEOCLYMENUS

Amongst barbarians 'tis customary to sacrifice a horse or bull,

MENELAUS

If thou givest at all, let there be nothing mean in thy gift.

THEOCLYMENUS

I have no lack of such in my rich herds

MENELAUS

Next an empty bier is decked and carried in procession.

HELEN

HELEN

THEOCLYMENUS

It shall be so; what else is it customary to add?

MENELAUS

Bronze arms; for war was his delight.

THEOCLYMENUS

These will be worthy of the race of Pelops, and these will we give.

MENELAUS

And with them all the fair increase of productive earth.

THEOCLYMENUS

And next, how do ye pour these offerings into the billows?

MENELAUS

There must be a ship ready and rowers.

THEOCLYMENUS

How far from the shore does the ship put out?

MENELAUS

So far that the foam in her wake can scarce be seen from the strand.

THEOCLYMENUS

Why so? wherefore doth Hellas observe this custom?

MENELAUS

That the billow may not cast up again our expiatory offerings.

THEOCLYMENUS

Phoenician rowers will soon cover the distance.

MENELAUS

'Twill be well done, and gratifying to Menelaus, too.

THEOCLYMENUS

Canst thou not perform these rites well enough without Helen?

HELEN

HELEN

MENELAUS

This task belongs to mother, wife, or children.

THEOCLYMENUS

'Tis her task then, according to thee, to bury her husband.

MENELAUS

To be sure; piety demands that the dead be not robbed of their due.

THEOCLYMENUS

Well, let her go; 'tis my interest to foster piety in a wife. And thou, enter the house and choose adornment for the dead. Thyself, too, will not send empty-handed away, since thou hast done her a service. And for the good news thou hast brought me, thou shalt receive raiment instead of going bare, and food, too, that thou mayst reach thy country; for as it is, I see thou art in sorry plight. As for thee, poor lady, waste not thyself in a hopeless case; Menelaus has met his doom, and thy dead husband cannot come to life.

MENELAUS

This then is thy duty, fair young wife; be content with thy present husband, and forget him who has no existence; for this is thy best course in face of what is happening. And if ever I come to Hellas and secure my safety, I will clear thee of thy former ill-repute, if thou prove a dutiful wife to thy true husband.

HELEN

I will; never shall my husband have cause to blame me; thou shalt thyself attend us and be witness thereto. Now go within, poor wanderer, and seek the bath, and change thy raiment. I will show my kindness to thee, and that without delay. For thou wilt perform all service due with kindlier feeling for my dear lord Menelaus, if at my hands thou meet with thy deserts. (THEOCLYMENUS, HELEN, MENELAUS enter the palace.)

CHORUS (singing)

strophe 1

Through wooded glen, o'er torrent's flood, and ocean's booming waves rushed the mountain-goddess, mother of the gods, in frantic haste, once long ago, yearning for her daughter lost, whose name men dare not utter; loudly rattled the Bacchic castanets in shrill accord, what time those maidens, swift as whirlwinds, sped forth with the goddess on her chariot yoked to wild creatures, in quest of her that was ravished from the circling choir of virgins; here was Artemis with her bow, and there the grim-eyed goddess, sheathed in mail, and spear in hand. But Zeus looked down from his throne in heaven, and turned the issue otherwhither.

antistrophe 1

Soon as the mother ceased from her wild wandering toil, in seeking her daughter stolen so subtly as to baffle all pursuit, she crossed the snow-capped heights of Ida's nymphs; and in anguish cast her down amongst the rocks and brushwood deep in snow; and, denying to man all increase to his tillage from those barren fields, she wasted the human race; nor would she let the leafy tendrils yield luxuriant fodder for the cattle, wherefore many a beast lay dying; no sacrifice was offered to the gods, and on the altars were no cakes to burn; yea, and she made the

HELEN

## HELEN

dew-fed founts of crystal water to cease their flow, in her insatiate sorrow for her child.

strophe 2

But when for gods and tribes of men alike she made an end to festal cheer, Zeus spoke out, seeking to soothe the mother's moody soul, "Ye stately Graces, go banish from Demeter's angry heart the grief her wanderings bring upon her for her child, and go, ye Muses too, with tuneful choir." Thereon did Cypris, fairest of the blessed gods, first catch up the crashing cymbals, native to that land, and the drum with tight-stretched skin, and then Demeter smiled, and in her hand, did take the deep-toned flute, well pleased with its loud note.

antistrophe 2

Thou hast wedded as thou never shouldst have done in defiance of all right, and thou hast incurred, my daughter, the wrath of the great mother by disregarding her sacrifices. Oh! mighty is the virtue in dress of dappled fawn-skin, in ivy green that twineth round a sacred thyrsus, in whirling tambourines struck as they revolve in air in tresses wildly streaming for the revelry of Bromius, and likewise in the sleepless vigils of the goddess, when the moon looks down and sheds her radiance o'er the scene. Thou wert confident in thy charms alone.  
(HELEN comes out of the palace alone.)

## HELEN

My friends, within the palace all goes well for us; for the daughter of Proteus, who is privy to our stealthy scheme, told her brother nothing when questioned as to my husband's coming, but for my sake declared him dead and buried. Most fortunate it is my lord hath had the luck to get these weapons; for he is now himself clad in the harness he was to plunge into the sea, his stalwart arm thrust through the buckler's strap, and in his right hand a spear, on pretence of joining in homage to the dead. He hath girded himself most serviceably for the fray, as if to triumph o'er a host of barbarian foes when once we are aboard yon oared ship; instead of his rags from the wreck hath he donned the robes I gave for his attire, and I have bathed his limbs in water from the stream, a bath he long hath wanted. But I must be silent, for from the house comes forth the man who thinks he has me in his power, prepared to be his bride; and thy goodwill I also claim and thy strict silence, if haply, when we save ourselves, we may save thee too some day.

(THEOCLYMENUS and MENELAUS enter, with a train of attendants bearing the offerings for the funeral rites.)

## THEOCLYMENUS

Advance in order, servants, as the stranger hath directed, bearing the funeral gifts the sea demands. But thou, Helen, if thou wilt not misconstrue my words, be persuaded and here abide; for thou wilt do thy husband equal service whether thou art present or not. For I am afraid that some sudden shock of fond regret may prompt thee to plunge into the swollen tide, in an ecstasy of gratitude toward thy former husband; for thy grief for him, though he is lost, is running to excess.

## HELEN

O my new lord, needs must I honour him with whom I first shared married joys; for I could even die with my husband, so well I loved him; yet how could he thank me, were I to share death's doom with him? Still, let me go and pay his funeral rites unto the dead in person. The gods grant thee the boon I wish and this stranger too, for the assistance he is lending here! And thou shalt find in me a wife fit to share thy house, since thou art rendering kindness to Menelaus and to me; for surely these events are to some good fortune tending. But now appoint someone to give us a ship wherein to convey these gifts, that I may find thy kindness made complete.

## HELEN

HELEN

THEOCLYMENUS (to an attendant)

Go thou, and furnish them with a Sidonian galley of fifty oars and rowers also.

HELEN

Shall not he command the ship who is ordering the funeral?

THEOCLYMENUS

Most certainly; my sailors are to obey him.

HELEN

Repeat the order, that they may clearly understand thee.

THEOCLYMENUS

I repeat it, and will do so yet again if that is thy pleasure.

HELEN

Good luck to thee and to me in my designs!

THEOCLYMENUS

Oh! waste not thy fair complexion with excessive weeping.

HELEN

This day shall show my gratitude to thee.

THEOCLYMENUS

The state of the dead is nothingness; to toil for them is vain.

HELEN

In what I say, this world, as well as that, hath share.

THEOCLYMENUS

Thou shalt not find in me a husband at all inferior to Menelaus.

HELEN

With thee have I no fault to find; good luck is all I need.

THEOCLYMENUS

That rests with thyself, if thou show thyself a loving wife to me.

HELEN

HELEN

HELEN

This is not a lesson I shall have to learn now, to love my friends.

THEOCLYMENUS

Is it thy wish that I should escort thee in person with active aid?

HELEN

God forbid! become not thy servant's servant, O king!

THEOCLYMENUS

Up and away! I am not concerned with customs which the race of Pelops holds. My house is pure, for Menelaus did not die here; go some one now and bid my vassal chiefs bring marriage-offerings to my palace; for the whole earth must re-echo in glad accord the hymn of my wedding with Helen, to make men envious. Go, stranger, and pour into the sea's embrace these offerings to Helen's former lord, and then speed back again with my bride, that after sharing with me her marriage-feast thou mayst set out for home, or here abide in happiness.  
(THEOCLYMENUS and his retinue enter the palace.)

MENELAUS

O Zeus, who art called the father of all and god of wisdom, look down on us and change our woe to joy! Lend us thy ready help, as we seek to drag our fortunes up the rugged hill; if with but thy finger-tip thou touch us, we shall reach our longed-for goal. Sufficient are the troubles we ere this have undergone. Full oft have I invoked you gods to near my joys and sorrows; I do not deserve to be for ever unhappy, but to advance and prosper. Grant me but this one boon, and so will ye crown my future with blessing. (MENELAUS, HELEN and their train of attendants depart.)

CHORUS (singing)

strophe 1

Hail! thou swift Phoenician ship of Sidon! dear to the rowers, mother to the foam, leader of fair dolphins' gambols, what time the deep is hushed and still, and Ocean's azure child, the queen of calm, takes up her parable and says: "Away! and spread your canvas to the ocean-breeze. Ho! sailors, ho! come grip your oars of pine, speeding Helen on her way to the sheltered beach where Perseus dwelt of yore."

antistrophe 1

It may be thou wilt find the daughters of Leucippus beside the brimming river or before the temple of Pallas, when at last with dance and revelry thou joinest in the merry midnight festival of Hyacinthus, him whom Phoebus slew in the lists by a quoit hurled o'er the mark; wherefore did the son of Zeus ordain that Laconia's land should set apart that day for sacrifice; there too shalt thou find the tender maid, whom ye left in your house, for as yet no nuptial torch has shed its light for her.

strophe 2

Oh! for wings to cleave the air in the track of Libyan cranes, whose serried ranks leave far behind the wintry storm at the shrill summons of some veteran leader, who raises his exultant cry as he wings his way o'er plains

HELEN

## HELEN

that know no rain and yet bear fruitful increase. Ye feathered birds with necks outstretched, comrades of the racing clouds, on on! till ye reach the Pleiads in their central station and Orion, lord of the night; and as ye settle on Eurotas' banks proclaim the glad tidings that Menelaus hath sacked the city of Dardanus, and will soon be home.

antistrophe 2

Ye sons of Tyndareus at length appear, speeding in your chariot through the sky, denizens of heaven's courts beneath the radiant whirling stars, guide this lady Helen safely o'er the azure main, across the foam-flecked billows of the deep-blue sea, sending the mariners a favouring gale from Zeus; and from your sister snatch the ill-repute of wedding with a barbarian, even the punishment bequeathed to her from that strife on Ida's mount, albeit she never went to the land of Ilium, to the battlements of Phoebus.

(The SECOND MESSENGER enters in haste, as THEOCLYMENUS comes out of the palace.) SECOND MESSENGER

O king, at last have I found thee in the palace; for new tidings of woe art thou soon to hear from me.

THEOCLYMENUS

How now?

MESSENGER

Make haste to woo a new wife; for Helen hath escaped.

THEOCLYMENUS

Borne aloft on soaring wings, or treading still the earth?

MESSENGER

Menelaus has succeeded in bearing her hence; 'twas he that brought the news of his own death.

THEOCLYMENUS

O monstrous story! what ship conveyed her from these shores? Thy tale is past belief.

MESSENGER

The very ship thou didst thyself give the stranger; and that thou mayest briefly know all, he is gone, taking thy sailors with him.

THEOCLYMENUS

How was it? I long to know, for I never thought that a single arm could master all those sailors with whom thou wert despatched.

MESSENGER

HELEN

## HELEN

Soon as the daughter of Zeus had left this royal mansion and come unto the sea, daintily picking her way, most craftily she set to mourn her husband, though he was not dead but at her side. Now when we reached thy docks well walled, we began to launch the fastest of Sidonian ships, with her full complement of fifty rowers, and each task in due succession followed; some set up the mast, others ranged the oars with their blades ready, and stored the white sails within the hold, and the rudder was let down astern and fastened securely. While we were thus employed, those Hellenes, who had been fellow-voyagers with Menelaus, were watching us, it seems, and they drew nigh the beach, clad in the rags of shipwrecked men,—well built enough, but squalid to look upon. And the son of Atreus, directly he saw them approach, bespoke them, craftily introducing the reason for his mourning: "Ye hapless mariners, how have ye come hither? your Achaean ship where wrecked? Are ye here to help bury dead Atreus' son, whose missing body this lady, daughter of Tyndareas, is honouring with a cenotaph?" Then they with feigned tears proceeded to the ship, bearing aboard the offerings to be thrown into the deep for Menelaus. Thereat were we suspicious, and communed amongst ourselves regarding the number of extra voyagers; but still we kept silence out of respect for thy orders, for by intrusting the command of the vessel to the stranger thou didst thus spoil all. Now the other victims gave no trouble, and we easily put them aboard; only the bull refused to go forward along the gangway, but rolled his eyes around and kept bellowing, and, arching his back and glaring askance towards his horns, he would not let us touch him. But Helen's lord cried out: "O! ye who laid waste the town of Ilium, come pick up yon bull, the dead man's offering, on your stout shoulders, as is the way in Hellas, and cast him into the hold;" and as he spoke he drew his sword in readiness. Then they at his command came and caught up the bull and carried him bodily on to the deck. And Menelaus stroked the horse on neck and brow, coaxing it to go aboard. At length, when the ship was fully freighted, Helen climbed the ladder with graceful step and took her seat midway betwixt the rowers' benches, and he sat by her side, even Menelaus who was called dead; and the rest, equally divided on the right and left side of the ship, sat them down, each beside his man, with swords concealed beneath their cloaks, and the billows soon were echoing to the rowers' song, as we heard the boatswain's note. Now when we were put out a space, not very far nor very near, the helmsman asked, "Shall we, sir stranger, sail yet further on our course, or will this serve? For thine it is to command the ship." And he answered: "'Tis far enough for me," while in his right hand he gripped his sword and stepped on to the prow; then standing o'er the bull to slay it, never a word said he of any dead man, but cut its throat and thus made prayer: "Poseidon, lord of the sea, whose home is in the deep, and ye holy daughters of Nereus, bring me and my wife safe and sound to Nauplia's strand from hence! Anon a gush of blood, fair omen for the stranger, spouted into the tide. One cried, "There is treachery in this voyage; why should we now sail to Nauplia? Give the order, helmsman, turn thy rudder." But the son of Atreus, standing where he slew the bull, called to his comrades, "Why do ye, the pick of Hellas, delay to smite and slay the barbarians and fling them from the ship into the waves?" While to thy crew the boatswain cried the opposite command: "Ho! some of you catch up chance spars, break up the benches, or snatch the oar-blade from the thole, and beat out the brains of these our foreign foes." Forthwith up sprang each man, the one part armed with poles that sailors use, the other with swords. And the ship ran down with blood; while Helen from her seat upon the stern thus cheered them on: "Where is the fame ye won in Troy? show it against these barbarians." Then as they hasted to the fray, some would fall and some rise up again, while others hadst thou seen laid low in death. But Menelaus in full armour, made his way, sword in hand, to any point where his watchful eye perceived his comrades in distress; so we leapt from the ship and swam, and he cleared the benches of thy rowers. Then did the prince set himself to steer, and bade them make a straight course to Hellas. So they set up the mast, and favouring breezes blew; and they are clear away, while I, from death escaped, let myself down by the anchor chain into the sea; and, just as I was spent, one threw me a rope and rescued me, and drew me to land to bring to thee this message. Ah! there is naught more serviceable to mankind than a prudent distrust.

## LEADER OF THE CHORUS

I would never have believed that Menelaus could have eluded us and thee, O king, in the way he did on his coming.

## THEOCLYMENUS

## HELEN

HELEN

Woe is me! cozened by a woman's tricks! My bride hath escaped me. If the ship could have been pursued and overtaken, I would have used every means forthwith to catch the strangers; as it is, I will avenge myself upon my treacherous sister, in that she saw Menelaus in my palace and did not tell me. Wherefore shall she nevermore deceive another by her prophetic art. (A SERVANT comes out of the palace.)

SERVANT

Ho, there! whither away so fast, my lord? on what bloody thought intent?

THEOCLYMENUS

Whither justice calls me. Out of my path!

SERVANT

I will not loose thy robe, for on grievous mischief art thou bent.

THEOCLYMENUS

Shalt thou, a slave, control thy master?

SERVANT

Yea, for I am in my senses.

THEOCLYMENUS

I should not say so, if thou wilt not let me

SERVANT

Nay, but that I never will.

THEOCLYMENUS

Slay my sister most accursed.

SERVANT

Say rather, most righteous.

THEOCLYMENUS

"Righteous?" She who betrayed me?

SERVANT

There is an honourable treachery, which 'tis right to commit.

THEOCLYMENUS

HELEN

HELEN

By giving my bride to another?

SERVANT

Only to those who had a better right.

THEOCLYMENUS

Who hath any rights o'er mine?

SERVANT

He that received her from her father.

THEOCLYMENUS

Nay, but fortune gave her to me.

SERVANT

And destiny took her away.

THEOCLYMENUS

"Tis not for thee to decide my affairs.

SERVANT

Only supposing mine be the better counsel.

THEOCLYMENUS

So I am thy subject, not thy ruler.

SERVANT

Aye, a subject bound to do the right, and eschew the wrong.

THEOCLYMENUS

It seems thou art eager to be slain.

SERVANT

Slay me; thy sister shalt thou never slay with my consent, but me perchance; for to die for their masters is the fairest death that noble slaves can find. (THE DIOSCURI appear from above.)

DIOSCURI

Restrain those bursts of rage that hurry thee to undue lengths, Theoclymenus, king of this country. We are the twin sons of Zeus that call to thee by name, whom Leda bore one day, with Helen too who hath fled from thy

HELEN

## HELEN

palace. For thou art wroth for a marriage never destined for thee; nor is thy sister Theonoe, daughter of a Nereid goddess, wronging thee because she honours the word of God and her father's just behests. For it was ordained that Helen should abide within thy halls up till the present time, but since Troy is razed to the ground and she hath lent her name to the goddesses, no longer need she stay, now must she be united in the self-same wedlock as before, and reach her home and share it with her husband. Withhold then thy malignant blade from thy sister, and believe that she herein is acting with discretion. Long, long ago had we our sister saved, seeing that Zeus has made us gods, but we were too weak for destiny as well as the deities, who willed these things to be. This is my bidding to thee; while to my sister I say, "Sail on with thy husband; and ye shall have a prosperous breeze; for we, thy brethren twain, will course along the deep and bring you safely to your fatherland. And when at last thy goal is reached and thy life ended, thou shalt be famous as a goddess, and with thy twin brethren share the drink-offering, and like us receive gifts from men, for such is the will of Zeus. Yea, and that spot where the son of Maia first appointed thee a home when from Sparta he removed thee, after stealing an image of thee from Heaven's mansions to prevent thy marriage with Paris, even the isle that lies like a sentinel along the Attic coast, shall henceforth be called by thy name amongst men, for that it welcomed thee when stolen from thy home. Moreover, Heaven ordains that the wanderer Menelaus shall find a home within an island of the blest; for to noble souls hath the deity no dislike, albeit these oft suffer more than those of no account."

## THEOCLYMENUS

Ye sons of Leda and of Zeus, I will forego my former quarrel about your sister, nor no longer seek to slay mine own. Let Helen to her home repair, if such is Heaven's pleasure. Ye know that ye are sprung of the same stock as your sister, best of women, chastest too; hail then for the true nobility of Helen's soul, a quality too seldom found amongst her sex!

## CHORUS (chanting)

Many are the forms the heavenly will assumes; and many a thing God brings to pass contrary to expectation: that which was looked for is not accomplished, while Heaven finds out a way for what we never hoped; e'en such has been the issue here.

—THE END—