

Fragments

Sophocles

A



Fragments

TRACKERS

Translated by Arthur S Hunt

THIS PLAY WAS written circa 460 B.C and only 400 lines have survived. Trackers is a satyr play, which was a type of burlesque or parody that playwrights staged after presenting their more serious tragedies. Satyr plays featured a chorus of eleven men dressed as satyrs. Only one satyr play survives complete, titled Cyclops and composed by Euripides. The plot of Trackers focuses on the exploits of Hermes, the winged messenger, a god renowned for theft, cunning, music and commerce. In the play, the chorus of eleven satyrs attempt to track down the cattle stolen by Hermes from the god Apollo. During their quest, Hermes charms them with an instrument of his own invention, a kithara (lyre).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: Hermes - wing-footed messenger of the gods

A chorus of satyrs (horned and lustful deities, with the upper body of a man and the lower of a goat. They are well known for their love of wine and depravity.

SCENE: There is a cave upstage centre (represented by the skene door).

Enter Apollo, right.

SCENE: APOLLO

I, Apollo, proclaim to all gods and all mortal men : I shall give a golden basin to whoever can bring back my cattle from far away. It is quite unpleasant to me that they are gone, all of them: cows, calves, heifers. They are all gone, and I look in vain for their tracks, while they wander far from their own mangers. I never thought that any of the gods or of men, whose lives are like a single day, would dare do such a thing. Since I found out about this, shocked as I was, I have been seeking them, and I have proclaimed the deed so that no god or mortal men could be unaware of it. I am beside myself. I have gone to visit the whole nation of the Locrians, those who inhabit Opus, those in Ozolis, those in Knemis by the Cephisus. I have gone to Aetolia and to Acarnanian Argos. From there I came to the grove of Zeus at Dodona, shaded by leaves of

prophecy. I then hastened to the fruitful plains of Thessaly and the wealthy cities of Boeotia. And then I came to Attica, to holy Athens, but I see my cows nowhere. Then I came to Dorian Argos and the nearby hill. From there I came, in one leap, to the Stymphalian Lake and Mount Cyllene, hard to climb. I speak to the forest: if any shepherd or any rustic or any charcoal-burner is here, or any saytr from the mountains, child of the river-nymphs, I announce these things to one and all. Whoever can capture the one who stole the cattle of Apollo Paean, his is the reward that stands here. Enter Silenus, left.

SCENE: SILENUS

As soon as I heard you shouting your proclamation, I came as fast as an old man can, because I want to help you out, Phoebus Apollo, and perhaps I can hunt up your cattle. Then a messenger will announce my golden reward. I will tell my children to look carefully, if you really do mean to do what you've promised.

SCENE: APOLLO

I will indeed; only confirm your promise.

SCENE: SILENUS

I will bring you back your cattle; but you confirm the reward.

SCENE: APOLLO

Whoever finds them will have it; it is ready at hand.

SCENE: SILENUS

Seek!

SCENE: APOLLO

Silenus.

SCENE: SILENUS

What? What are you saying?

SCENE: APOLLO

I say that you, and all the race of your children, will be free. Exit Apollo, right. Enter the chorus of satyrs, by the left parodos. They sing excitedly.

SCENE: CHORUS

Come, come here, see if you can find the footprints of the lost cattle. Apapapay! Oh, oh, listen, I tell you! Get the thief! underground finish the job my old father. How can we find out the secret thefts in the night? if I did meet

free life for my father. So may the dear god bring an end to my labors, as he has shown us the extraordinary excellence of his gold.

SCENE: SILENUS (Speaking.)

Oh gods, Fortune and the god who leads in the straight way, grant me success as I race out to seek out the prey, the spoil, and the booty: the cattle stolen from Phoebus. If there is anyone who has seen them, or heard about them, he would become my friend by telling me, and he would help me to help lord Phoebus. But if someone does not tell what he knows, his reward will be the god's disapproval.

SCENE: CHORUS

Hey... and not.

SCENE: SILENUS

Does anyone say, or does anyone know, where the cattle are? It seems that I must begin the search. Come, all of you, track them by their scent, if there is any trace left anywhere. Bent over, crouching to the ground, be guided by the scent. Carry out your search this way and bring it to a worthy fulfilment. Exit Silenus. The satyrs divide into two groups and begin sniffing around the stage.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS A

Oh god, oh god, oh god, oh god: aha! We seem to have it. Stand still, don't move.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS B

There they are: the marks of the cattle.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS A

Quiet! Some god is taking them to a new home.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS B

What should we do, my friend? Do we have to get them out?

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS A

Why? Do you think they're in here?

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS B

Definitely. All the signs say so clearly.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS A

Look! Here's the same hoof mark again.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS B

Look at that! They measure out to exactly the same size.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS A

Make way, and if you hear any sound from the cattle.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS B

I don't yet hear their voices clearly. But these tracks and footprints are obviously those of the cattle.

SCENE: SEMI-CHORUS A

Hey! As Zeus is my witness, the tracks turn around and go backward. Look at them. Why is that? Why would their line wheel around? The front is turned to the back, and they're all tangled up together. The cowherd must have been awfully confused.

SCENE: SILENUS

What kind of a way to hunt is that, bent over and leaning down to the ground? Where are you going? I don't understand. You're lying there like a hedgehog fallen on the ground, or an ape sticking his head forward and having a temper tantrum. What's this? Where on earth did you learn this, and how? Tell me, because I certainly don't understand what you're doing.

SCENE: CHORUS

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh! The chorus are still squealing as he starts to speak.

SCENE: SILENUS

What are you "ooh-ooh"-ing for? What are you afraid of? What do you see? What frightful thing are you looking at? Why are you carrying on like bacchantes? Is there a hawk nearby? From offstage, we hear a lyre being tuned. Since the player is in fact Hermes, it sounds divine, but no mortal has ever heard this instrument before, and the satyrs are terrified. They abruptly stop squealing. Do you want to know what it was? Why are you so quiet, when you were just now babbling away?

SCENE: CHORUS

Be quiet!

SCENE: SILENUS

What is it over there that you're trying to get away from?

SCENE: CHORUS

Listen!

SCENE: SILENUS

I'll listen. He pauses for a moment, listening. But I don't hear any sound.

SCENE: CHORUS

Do what I say!

SCENE: SILENUS

No one is helping me with this hunt.

SCENE: CHORUS

Listen just a moment, will you? When we went over there we were assaulted by a noise like no one ever heard before.

SCENE: SILENUS

Why are you running away, afraid of a noise? You wretched beasts, with your filthy bodies all smeared with wax, seeing terrors in every shadow, scared of everything! You're gutless, and careless, and servile. You're nothing but body and tongue and voice. You trust to words and flee from actions. Worst of animals, how did you ever come to have a father like me? There are lots of monuments to my courage, when I was young, songs sung at every household's wedding feast. I was never put to flight, never afraid, and I didn't quiver at noises made by animals up on the mountains. Instead, I accomplished great things with my spear. That brilliant spear is now besmirched by you, because some new sound from the shepherds has frightened you, like the babies you are, and you've given up on the golden wealth that Phoebus said he was offering to you, to say nothing of freedom, which he also offered to you and to me. You've put all that away and gone to sleep. Unless you get back to work tracking those cows and their cowherd, wherever they are, you'll be making noises of your own for your cowardice.

SCENE: CHORUS

Father, walk beside me, so you'll know whether I'm really a coward. If you're here, you'll know first hand, not through rumors.

SCENE: SILENUS

I will approach this sound with you, and I will call out and whistle as I'd call a dog. You, line up three by three, and I will go beside you and get you straightened out again.

SCENE: CHORUS

Perhaps separate satyrs sing the various lines of this song.

With Silenus, they approach the cave, upstage, jostling, confused, and squabbling. The lyre-noises resume.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ssh, ssh, aah, aah! Say what you're working on.

Why did you shout and scream? It's pointless. And why were you suspicious of me? Who's holding back in our first task?

You are. He came, he came.

You are mine; lead the way.

This way, ho! Who is the ?

The dragon, the wrinkled one

Goddess of fair winds, you were beside me, drunk

Whatever bring set on top of it

the way which warlike

Follow me, this way! To the cows, to the task

so he doesn't drop the saffron

You see something beautiful and the good lawful

Follow me

Oppopopoy! Hey, filthy polluted one! As soon as you get away from here, you'll be set free and

But don't get lost. Come on, straight ahead, this way. Now we've got the crook.

Father, why are you quiet? Isn't what we're saying true? Aren't you listening?

Or are you deafened by the noise?

SCENE: SILENUS

Shush! What is it?

SCENE: CHORUS

I'm getting out of here!

SCENE: SILENUS

Stay, if you can.

SCENE: CHORUS

No way. But you go ahead: you keep looking and track down the cows, any way you want to, and take the gold unless the biggest time.

SCENE: SILENUS

No, I won't leave you, nor sneak away from the work, before we know for sure what's going on in there.

SCENE: CHORUS

Addressing the source of the noise

Hey! You in there! voice reward you will be happy at home.

To Silenus

He's not coming out.

To the noise-maker again. But I'll force you out, making the ground rumble with my swift leaps and kicks, so you'll listen, even if you're altogether deaf.

Cyllene emerges from the cave.

SCENE: CYLLENE

Satyrs, why have you rushed up here making all this noise, on this mountain covered with green woods full of animals? Have you got yourselves a new job? You used to bring joy to your master, who would put on a fawn skin and carry a thyrsus in his hands. You would dance around the god shouting "Evoe," along with the nymphs, who are his family, and a crowd of children. But now I don't know what you're doing. Where is this whirlwind of new craziness taking you? I heard something odd: first, nearby, orders like you'd give to hunting dogs when they get near a wild animal's den in a thicket; then, at the same time, stretched out from the mouth to the thief. Then announcement. After that they went away, feet stomping, and a confused sound came from nearby. It would be different if so I heard the sounds of wrong notes you sick you did to a nymph that had nothing to do with it?

SCENE: CHORUS

They sing.

Deep-girdled nymph, don't be angry. No one's starting a war with you, nor has any unfriendly or trifling word touched my tongue. Please don't threaten me, but graciously tell me what I need: who is it who seems to speak in a wonderful, inspired voice from below the earth?

SCENE: CYLLENE Speaking.

That's better: you sound gentler now. You would learn more by hunting rather than from a coward's great deeds or a nymph's ordeal. I won't put up with your loud, quarrelsome words. But calm down and tell me what it is you

need.

SCENE: CHORUS

Mighty Cyllene, lady of this land, I'll tell you in a moment why I've come. But first tell us about that scraping noise and who's making it.

SCENE: CYLLENE

First of all, understand this: if you say one word of what I'm about to tell you, you'll be in trouble. This business is a secret even among the gods, so that no news of it may come to Hera. You see, Zeus came secretly to Atlas' house to the deep-girdled goddess and in a cave begot a single son. I am bringing him up myself, for his mother's strength is shaken by sickness as if by a storm. So I stay by his crib and take care of his food and drink and rest, all day and all night. He grows, day by day, in a very unusual way, and I'm astounded and afraid. It's not even six days since he was born, and he already stands as tall as a young man. His growth spurt hasn't wasted any time coming. That's the kind of child that's in my treasure-house. His father has ensured he would be difficult to find.

He has a hidden machine that makes the sound you're asking about, that so surprised you. It's a box full of pleasure that he made in just one day from a dead animal he found, and he's down there shaking it.

SCENE: CHORUS Singing.

unspeakable child of a cow amazed prey speaking voice to make such sounds from a dead animal.

SCENE: CYLLENE

Don't be so skeptical: for a goddess is speaking trusty words to you.

SCENE: CHORUS

How should I believe that a dead animal's voice can roar like that?

SCENE: CYLLENE

Believe it: it speaks now it's dead, though it had no voice when it was alive.

SCENE: CHORUS

What did it look like? Long, curved, short?

SCENE: CYLLENE

Short, like a pitcher, and covered with a colorful hide.

SCENE: CHORUS

Was it like a cat, or rather a leopard?

SCENE: CYLLENE

In between, really: it's round with short legs.

SCENE: CHORUS

Closer to a ferret, then, or a crab?

SCENE: CYLLENE

No, that's not it; try something else.

SCENE: CHORUS

Is it like one of the horned beetles that live on Aetna?

SCENE: CYLLENE

Now you're getting closer to the beast

SCENE: CHORUS

And which part makes the sound, the inside or the outside?

SCENE: CYLLENE

first cousin to a potsherd.

SCENE: CHORUS

What name do you call it? Tell me, if you know any more.

SCENE: CYLLENE

The boy calls the animal a "tortoise" and the instrument a "lyre."

SCENE: CHORUS

property

SCENE: CYLLENE

and this is his only consolation or cure for sorrow. He enjoys idly singing along; he coaxes Aeolian tunes from the lyre. Thus the boy made himself a voice from a dead animal.

SCENE: CHORUS

Singing; this strophe has an antistrophe at .

A loud voice extends over the place, flitting around like a bee over the flowers. As for the other matter, I am getting closer. Know this, goddess: whoever contrived this is none other than the thief. But don't be angry or upset that I say this.

SCENE: CYLLENE

What delusion has come over you? Who are you blaming as a thief?

SCENE: CHORUS

Not you, by Zeus; I don't want to upset you, my lady.

SCENE: CYLLENE

Surely you're not calling the son of Zeus a thief?

SCENE: CHORUS

this very theft.

SCENE: CYLLENE

if what you say is true.

SCENE: CHORUS

I speak truth. stolen the cattle it fits cut

SCENE: CYLLENE

I understand finally laughing at my foolishness nothing, delight for the child. You can be reassured about me from now on, and laugh at me if you get some joy or profit from it. But do not mock the son of Zeus, making childish remarks about the child. For he did not inherit a thief's nature from his father, nor does thievery hold sway in his mother's family. If there is any theft here, look for a poor man as your thief; but this boy's house is hardly poor. Consider his family, and fit bad deeds to bad men; it's hardly appropriate to him. But you are always a child, even though you're a young man and your beard grows on your face like a goat's. Stop stretching up your smooth bald head for caresses. I tell you this: if you think the gods are foolish or laughable, you will soon be crying.

SCENE: CHORUS

Singing; this is the antistrophe corresponding to the strophe at .

Turn and twist the words however you want, to find a clever story. You won't convince me that the sewn-together hides are any others than the ones from the stolen cows of Loxias . Don't try to turn me aside.

SCENE: CHORUS

Because Zeus

SCENE: CYLLENE

The child is no thief.

SCENE: CHORUS

If he does bad things, then he is bad.

SCENE: CYLLENE

I don't like to hear bad things about Zeus' son.

SCENE: CHORUS

But if it's the truth, then I have to say it.

SCENE: CYLLENE

Don't say

SCENE: CYLLENE

Where are the cattle pastured?

SCENE: CHORUS

Most of them now

SCENE: CYLLENE

Who has them, wretch? Who

SCENE: CHORUS

The boy has closed them up inside.

SCENE: CYLLENE

Stop saying bad things about Zeus' son!

SCENE: CHORUS

I would stop, if someone would bring out the cattle.

SCENE: CYLLENE

You're choking me, you and those cows of yours.

SCENE: CHORUS

left drive them out

SCENE: CHORUS

Hey! Oh! what she said he didn't

SCENE: SILENUS

Silenus has come back, and Cyllene has presumably left.

Hey!

SCENE: CHORUS

Oh Loxias, of the cows

SCENE: Apollo probably enters in response to the chorus' calls.

APOLLO

Cows are rewarded free. [?] Uncertain meaning.

MINOR FRAGMENTS

Translated by E. H Plumptre

11

HAST thou done fearful evil? Thou must bear
Evil as fearful; and the holy light
Of righteousness shines clearly.

12

Kings wisdom gain, consorting with the wise.

13

Man is but breath and shadow, nothing more.

14

The mightiest and the wisest in their minds
Thou may'st see like to him who standeth here,
Giving good counsel to a man distressed;
But when God's will shall send the scourge on one
Who lived till then as fortune's favourite,
All his fine phrases vanish utterly.

35

'Neath every stone there lies a scorpion hid.

58

Hark! some one cries — Or do I vainly call?
The man who fears hears noise on every side.

59

Be sure, no lie can ever reach old age.

61

A maiden too, and one of Argive race,
Whose glory lies in fewest words or none.

62

Short speech becomes the wise of heart and good
To parents who begat and bore and bred.

63

Be of good cheer, O lady: dangers oft,
Though blowing dreams by night, are lulled by day.

64

None cleave to life so fondly as the old.

65

Life, O my son, is sweetest boon of all:
It is not given to men to taste death twice.

66

The living should not glory o'er the dead,
As knowing well that he himself must die.

67

How all men seek to shun the tyrant's face!

88

A soul with good intent and purpose just
Discerns far more than lecturer can teach.

89

Much wisdom often goes with fewest words.

90

A man whose whole delight is still to talk
Knows not how much he vexes all his friends.

91

If thou art noble, as thou say'st thyself,
Tell me from whence thou'rt sprung. No speech stain
What comes of noble nature, nobly born.

92

Thy speech is worthy, not too harshly said;
A noble stock that bears the test of proof,
Will still gain fair repute beyond all blame.

93

Who can count man's prosperity as great,
Or small and lowly, or of no account?
None of all this continues in one stay.

94

Strange is it that the godless, who have sprung
From evil-doers, should fare prosperously,
While good men, born of noble stock, should be
By adverse fortune vexed. It was ill done
For the Gods thus to order lives of men.
What ought to be is this, that godly souls
Should from the Gods gain some clear recompense,
And the unjust pay some clear penalty;
So none would prosper who are base of soul.

98

Then does men's life become one vast disease,
When once they seek their ills by ills to cure.

99

Not easy is it to resist the just.

100

Deceit is base, unfit for noble souls,

101

A righteous tongue has with it mightiest strength.

102

Hush, boy! for silence brings a thousand gains.

103

Why tellest thou thy tale of many words?
Superfluous speech is irksome everywhere.

104

In some things be not anxious to inquire:
Far better is it oft to leave them hid.

105

I know not how to answer to these things.
When good men by the base
Are overcome in strife,
What city could endure such deeds as this?

106

No one, I trow; yet take good heed to this,
Lest it be better, e'en by godless deeds,
To triumph over foes than as a slave
To yield obedience.

107

Cease thou. Enough for me the name of son
Of such a father, if indeed I 'm his:
And if I be not, small the injury;
Repute oft triumphs o'er the truth itself.

108

The bastard is as strong as lawful sons;
Goodness still claims a rank legitimate.

109

Riches gain friends, gain honours, — further still,
Gain highest sovereignty for those who sit
In low estate. The rich have no men foes;
And if they have, these still conceal their hate.
A wondrous power has wealth to wind its way
Or on plain ground, or heights that none may tread,
Where one that's poor, although 'twere close at hand
Would fail to gain the thing his heart desires.
The form unsightly and of no esteem
It makes both wise of speech and fair to see:
It only has the power of joy or grief,
It only knows the art of hiding ill.

162

A pleasant ill is this disease of love,
And 'twere not ill to sketch its likeness thus:

When sharp cold spreads through all the aether clear,
And children seize a crystal icicle,
At first they firmly hold their new-found joy;
But in the end the melting mass nor cares
To slip away, nor is it good to keep:
So those that love, the self-same strong desire
Now leads to action, now to idleness.

202

What virtue gains alone abides with us.

203

The hearts of good men are not quickly bowed.

204

Still where the right of free, true speech is gone,
And the worse counsel in a state prevails,
Blunders make shipwreck of security.

205

And how can I, a mortal, fight with fate
That comes from heaven, when danger presses hard,
And hope helps not?

206

Since age is on thee, keep its fair repute from evil speech

209

The tongue is held in honour by such men
As reckon words of more account than deeds.

235

Come, let us quickly go: it cannot be
That any blame should fall on righteous haste.

236

It brings some pain, I know, but one must try,
As best one may, to bear the ills of life.
Needs must we find some healing from these things.

237

Some pleasure is there found even in words,
When with them comes forgetfulness of ills.

238

Though I be old, yet with advance of age
Comes reason's growth, and skill to counsel well.

239

There stretcheth by the sea
A fair Eubœan shore, and o'er it creeps
The vine of Bacchos, each day's growth complete.
In morning brightness all the land is green
With tendrils fair and spreading. Noontide comes,
And then the unripe cluster forms apace:
The day declines, and purple grow the grapes;
At eve the whole bright vintage is brought in,
And the mixed wine poured out.

255

I own it true. Right well the proverb runs,
That smallest things make known a man's true bent.

284

Wherefore conceal thou nothing. Time that sees
And heareth all things bringeth all to light.

288

No good e'er comes of leisure purposeless;
And Heaven ne'er helps the men who will not act.

298

'Tis only in God's garden men may reap
True joy and blessing.

302

Chance never helps the men who do not work.

304

He who neglects the Muses in his youth
Has wasted all the past, and lost true life
For all the future.

311

A mortal man should think things fit for men.

321

This is most grievous, when it might be ours
To set things straight, and we by our own act
Will bring fresh woe and trouble on our heads.

322

But he who dares to look at danger straight,
His speech is clear, his spirit falters not.

323

It is not good to lie; but when the truth
Brings on a man destruction terrible,
He may be pardoned though not good his speech.

325

And wonder not, O prince, that thus I cling
So close to gain; for they whose life is long
Still cleave to profit with their might and main,
And men count all things else as less than wealth;
And though there be that praise a life kept free
From all disease, to me no poor man seems
In that blest state, but sick continually.

326

The noblest life is that of righteousness;
The best, one free from sickness; sweetest far
To have each day the fill of all we wish.

342

Now in the gates Æneas, Goddess-born,
Is seen, and on his shoulders bears his sire,
Who lets his byssine mantle fall in folds

On back where smote the fiery levin-flash,
And gathers round him all his band of slaves;
Beyond all hope, the multitude draws near
Of Phrygians who would fain be emigrants.

343

But little count we make of toil gone by.

358

For those who fare but ill 'tis very sweet
E'en for a moment to forget their ills.

359

None has no sorrow; happiest who has least.

379

He 'twas that taught the Argive army first
To build their walls, and found inventions strange
Of measures, weights, and numbers; he the first
To plan the ten that upward rise from one,
And from the tens to fifties pass, and so
From thence to thousands. He alone devised
The army's beacon-lights and nightly watch,
And signals of the morning, and made clear
What he did not devise. He brought to sight
The measures and the motions of the stars,
And all their order, and the heavenly signs,
And for the men who guide their ships on sea,
The Great Bear's circle, and the Dog's cold setting.

380

Did he not drive away the famine from them;
And, with God's help, discover pastimes wise,
As they sat down, after long toil at sea —
Draughts, and dice too, sweet help for idleness?

419

But when an oath is added, then the soul
Is made more careful, having then to shun
Both blame of friends and sin against the Gods.

434

The aged man becomes a child again.

436

'Tis better not to be than vilely live.

498

War ever takes our young men in its net.

499

A weary life is that the sailors lead,
To whom no gift from Heaven or Fortune sent
Could offer worthy recompense. Poor souls,
Adventuring traffic far on slender chance,
They save, or gain, or lose all utterly.

500

All evil things are found in length of years;
Sense gone, work useless, thoughts and counsels vain.

501

If men by tears could heal their several ills,
And by their weeping bring the dead to life,
Then gold would be of far less price than tears.

512

Greedy of gain is every barbarous tribe.

513

Be not afraid: speak thou the truth, and then
Thou shalt not fail.

514

What man soe'er, in troubles waxing wroth,
Will use a cure that's worse than the disease,
Is no physician skilled to deal with grief.

517

I by myself am nought; yea, oftentimes
So look I upon all our womankind,
That we are nothing. Young, we lead a life
Of all most joyous, in our father's house,
For want of knowledge is our kindly nurse;
But when we come to marriageable years,
Then are we pushed and bartered for away
From household gods and from our parents dear —
Some unto alien husbands, some to men
Of stranger race, and some to homes full strange,
Or full of turmoil: and when one night binds us,
We needs must bear, and think of it as right.

518

Among mankind we all are born alike
Of father and of mother. None excels
Another in his nature, but the fate
Of evil chance holds some of us, and some
Good fortune favours, and necessity
Holds some in bondage.

520

Praise no man much until thou see his death.

535

Within the tablets of thy mind write this
That I have said to thee.

563

Well, well, what greater joy could'st thou receive
Than touching land, and then, beneath a roof,
With slumbering mind to hear the pelting storm?

572

We should not speak of one that prospers well
As happy, till his life have run its course,
And reached its goal. An evil spirit's gift
In shortest time has oft laid low the state

Of one full rich in great prosperity,
When the change comes, and so the Gods appoint.

582

No one who sins against his will is base.
Tell not to many what Fate sends on thee:
'Tis comelier far in silence to lament.

588

I mourn for those my locks as young mare doth,
Who, caught by shepherds, in the stable stands,
And with rough hands has all her chestnut mane
Cropped off, and then is led in meadow fair,
Which clear streams water, and when thus she sees
Her likeness, with her hair thus foully cropped,
Ah, one hard-hearted wall might pity her,
Crouching in shame, as maddened with disgrace,
Mourning and weeping o'er the mane that's gone.

606

Ne'er can a state be well and safely ruled,
In which all justice and all purity
Are trampled under foot, and brawling knave
With cruel goad drives the poor state to death.

607

Not mortal men alone does Love assail,
No, nor yet women, but it leaves its stamp
Upon the souls of Gods, and passes on
To mighty ocean. Zeus omnipotent
Is powerless to avert it, and submits
And yields full willingly.

608

No greater evil can a man endure
Than a bad wife, nor find a greater good
Than one both good and wise; and each man speaks

As judging by the experience of his life.

609

Forgive me, and be silent, patiently;
For that which to us women bringeth shame
One ought in women's presence to conceal.

610

Would'st thou count up the roll of happy men,
Thou shalt not find one mortal truly blest.

611

Ah, women! no one can escape disgrace
On whom Zeus sendeth ills in armed array;
And heaven-sent plagues we still must bear perforce.

612

Sons are the anchors of a mother's life.

622

Thou art but young; and thou hast much to learn,
And many things to hear and understand:
Seek still to add fresh knowledge profitable.

626

Death comes, the last great healer of all ills.

649

Ah, boy! 'tis just the noble and the good
That Ares loves to slay. The bold in tongue,
Shunning all pain, are out of danger's reach;
For Ares careth not for coward souls.

657

Time, stripping off the veil, brings all to light.

658

Time, even Time, in all the vast expanse
Of this our human life,
Finds plenteous wisdom for the souls that seek.

659

But when the Gods would hide the things of heaven,
Thou can'st not learn, although thou travel far.

660

One wise man is no match for many fools.

661

A good man still will succour the distressed.

662

True wisdom ranks among the Gods most high.

663

They that fare ill become not only deaf,
But, even though they gaze, they see not clear
What lies before them.
Sore evil still, and all unmanageable,
Is want of knowledge. Folly proves itself
Of wickedness true sister.

664

We cannot speak good words of deeds not good.

665

We should not joy in pleasures that bring shame.

666

Fortune ne'er helps the man whose courage fails.

667

Shame brings but little help in evil things;
Your silence is the talker's best ally.
What means this praise? The man who yields to wine
Is void of understanding, slave to wrath,
And wont, though babbling many words and vain,
To hear full loth what eagerly he spoke.

669

When one is found as taken in the act
Of fraud and wrong, whate'er his skill of speech,
The only course for him is silence then;
Yet that is hard to bear for one who feels

Conscious of innocence.

670

In vows, forsooth, a woman shuns the pangs
And pains of childbirth; but the evil o'er,
Once more she comes within the self-same net,
O'ercome by that strong passion of her soul.

671

No oath weighs aught on one of scoundrel soul.

672

When trouble ceases e'en our troubles please.

674

Where fathers are by children overcome,
That is no city of the wise and good,
'Tis best, where'er we are, to follow still
The customs of the country.

675

He to whom men pay honour's noble meed
Has need of noble deeds innumerable,
And out of easy conflict there can come
But little glory.

676

Counsels are mightier things than strength of hands.

677

My body is enslaved, my mind is free.

678

Not Kyprian only, children, is she called,
Who rules o'er Kypros, but bears many names.
Hades is she, and Might imperishable,
And raving Madness, and untamed Desire,
And bitter Lamentation. All is hers,
Or earnest, or in calm, or passionate;
For still where'er is life she winds within

The inmost heart. Where finds this Goddess not
Her easy prey? She masters all the tribe
Of fish that swim the waters, she prevails
O'er all four-footed beasts that walk the earth.
Her wing directs the course of wandering birds,
Mighty o'er beasts, and men, and Gods above.
What God in wrestling throws she not thrice o'er?
Yea, if 'twere lawful to speak all the truth,
She sways the breast of Zeus. All weaponless,
Without or spear or sword, the Kyprian queen
Cuts short the schemes of mortals or of Gods.

679

What house hath ever gained prosperity,
How swoln soe'er with pride, without the grace
Of woman's nobler nature.

680

But when bereavement falls upon her house,
A woman has the purpose of a man.

681

No small disease is poverty for those
Who boast of wealth; than poverty no foe
Is found more hostile.

682

O race of mortal men oppressed with care!
What nothings are we, like to shadows vain,
Cumbering the ground, and wandering to and fro!

683

None but the Gods may live untouched by ill.

684

O God, we mortals find no way to flee
From evils deeply-rooted, sent from Heaven.

685

Would one might live, and give the present hour
Its fill of pleasure, while the future creeps
For ever unforeseen.

686

The skilful gamester still should make the best
Of any throw, and not bemoan his luck.

687

Tis hope that feeds the larger half of men.

688

Ne'er can the wise grow old, in whom there dwells
A soul sustained with light of Heaven's own day:
Great gain to men is forethought such as theirs.

689

He who in midst of woes desireth life,
Is either coward or insensible.

690

A. — Now he is dead, I yearn to die with him.
B. — Why such hot haste? Thou needs must meet thy fate.
Truth evermore surpasseth words in might.

694

A woman's oaths I write upon the waves.

701

To drink against one's will
Is not less evil than unwilling thirst.

702

If thou should'st bring all wisdom of the wise
To one who thirsts, thou could'st not please him
Than giving him to drink.

703

Most basely wilt thou die by doom of Heaven,
Who, being as thou art, dost still drain off
Thy pottle-deep potations.

705

This wanton insolence
Is never brought to self-control in youth,
But still among the young bursts out, and then
Tames down and withers.

707

I know that God is ever such as this,
Darkly disclosing counsels to the wise;
But to the simple, speaking fewest words,
Plain teacher found.

709

Thou shalt find a God
Who knoweth not of charity or grace.
But loves strict justice, that and that alone.

711

Whoso will enter in a monarch's house
Is but his bond-slave, though he come as free.

713

In many a turning of the wheel of God
My fate revolves and changes all its mood;
E'en as the moon's face never keepeth still
For but two nights in one position fixed,
But from its hiding-place first comes as new,
With brightening face, and thenceforth waxeth full
And when it gains its noblest phase of all,
Wanes off again, and comes to nothingness.

714

Counsel of evil travelleth all too quick.

715

If any man beginneth all things well,
The chances are his ends agree thereto.

717

Words that are false bring forth no fruit at all.

718

Though one be poor, his fame may yet stand high.
Not one whit worse the poor whose heart is wise.
What profit is there from our many goods,
If care, with evil thoughts,
Is still the nurse of fair prosperity?

719

Thrice happy they, who, having seen these rites,
Then pass to Hades: there to these alone
Is granted life, all others evil find.

723

What may be taught I learn; what may be found
That I still seek for; what must come by prayer,
For that I asked the Gods.

724

Go forth, ye people strong of hand, to work,
Who with your balanced baskets of first-fruits
Worship the Working Goddess, child of Zeus,
Whose eyes are dread to look on.

725

And dost thou mourn the death of mortal man,
Not knowing if the future bringeth gain?

727

Thou waxest wanton, like a high-fed colt;
For maw and mouth are gluttoned with excess.

732

Searching out all things, thou in most men's acts
Wilt find but baseness.

739

Unlooked-for things must once for all begin.

741

Those who lose such friends lose them to their joy,
And they who have them for deliverance pray.

749

This is the gift of God, and what the Gods
Shall give, we men, my child, should never shun.

762

An old man's wrath is like ill-tempered scythe,
Sharp to begin, but quickly blunted off.
The dice of Zeus have ever lucky throws..

772

Be pitiful, O Sun,
Whom the wise name as father of the Gods,
Author of all things.

779

Since we have rightly made our prayer to God,
Let us now go, O boys, to where the wise
Impart their knowledge of the Muses' arts.
Each day we need to take some forward step,
Till we gain power to study nobler things.
Evil a boy will learn without a guide,
With little labour, learning from himself;
But good, not even with his teacher near,
Dwells in his soul, but is full hardly gained:
Let us then, boys, be watchful, and work hard,
Lest we should seem with men untaught to rank
The children of a father far from home.

780

The gratitude of one whose memory fails
Is quickly gone.