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EXTRACT FROM THE PROMETHEUS CHAINED OF AESCHYLUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK.

[In this play, the wild and vigorous genius of the Father of Tragedy is displayed in all its energy and magnificence. To punish Prometheus for his contempt of the gods, and especially for stealing fire from heaven, Jupiter sentenced him to be chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus, for a period of thirty thousand years. There, as the fable runs, exposed to the fury of the elements, and to a vulture that preys daily on his vitals; suspended, as it were, between earth and heaven; and surrounded with all that can inspire awe and terror, he breaks forth in the following apostrophe.]

PROMETHEUS.

Celestial air, ye winds, that sweep
On swiftest pinions o'er the deep;
Ye fountains of the streams;
Ye countless ripples of the wavy sea;
All-bearing earth, you I invoke; and thee,
Orb of all-seeing beams.
Behold what pains I suffer, though a god!
What blows endure from Jove's avenging rod!
Such cruel bonds the new-made lord of heaven,
In his unseemly wrath, to me has given.

Alas! present and future I bemoan.
When will these torments end?
Why question thus? full well to me are known
The woes that Jove will send.
And I must bear, as best I may,
The rigors of this rueful state;
For e'en immortals must obey
Unconquerable fate.
But to be silent, or complain,
The one impossible, and both are vain.

For kindly gifts on men bestowed,
I'm yoked to misery's crushing load;—
Hid in a reed, the fount of fire,
Rich favor, to the earth I brought;
To me, the source of mischiefs dire;
To mortals, every art it taught.
Such is the crime for which I lie
Confined beneath the open sky;
Chained to this wild and savage rock,
Torn by the vulture's beak, scathed by the lightning's shock.
Ah me! what sound, what voiceless odor flies
So softly toward me through the sleeping air?
Say, are ye gods, or heroes from the skies,
Or men that come to look on my despair?
Ye see me bound, the enemy of Jove;
Hated by all that tread his courts above.
Because I loved too well the mortal race,
Ye see me fettered in this fearful place.

But hark! again the sound I hear
Of busy pinions rustling near;
Naught but grim forms, terrific to my sight,
To this remotest cliff direct their flight.

[The Chorus, composed of sea-nymphs, daughters of Oceanus and Thetis, now approach and address Prometheus.]

CHORUS.
Fear not: we come, a friendly train,
On well-poised wings athwart the waves;
Our sire's consent we scarce could gain,
When echoing through our coral caves,
The clanking of thy fetters came;
Sent by the winds, though red with shame,
Unsanded, to thy drear abode,
We swiftly thus in winged chariots rode.

PROMETHEUS.
Daughters of Thetis, offspring of the sea,
That flows the unmeasured earth around,
In restless current, look on me;
See with what chain of iron bound,
On this rough mountain's highest steep,
My ceaseless watch I sadly keep.

CHORUS.
I see, Prometheus, and like night,
A cloud comes o'er my aching sight;
Tearful I see thy withered form
Racked by the whirlwind and the storm;
Bound with that adamantine chain,
I see thee writhe in hopeless pain.
Such the decree; for subjugated heaven
Obey the laws its new-made chief hath given.

PROMETHEUS.
Oh that beneath the ground,
In chains indissoluble bound,
Below the sombre regions of the dead,
Where wide the gulf of Tartarus is spread,
He'd thrust me! Then my scornful foes
Had not rejoiced to see my woes;
But pendent now, between the sky and earth,
I hang, a spectacle, for their insulting mirth.

CHORUS.
Has any god such heart of steel,
With joy to see thee suffer so?
Lives one, save Jove, who does not feel
Compassion for thy torturing woe?
But he, for aye, his vengeful ire maintains
His tyrant arm the god-like race constrains;
Nor will he cease, till glutted be his hate,
Or stratagem subvert his force-defying state.

PROMETHEUS.
Though smarting thus in chains, yet he
Shall need and ask a boon from me;
For the new plot that threats his throne
Can be revealed by me alone.
But though smooth-tongued persuasion lend
Her charms, or menace stern her rage,
By hope or fear, my stubborn will to bend
To show the secret of a future age;
Yet will I not the fatal word disclose,
Till he shall loose my bonds, and sorrow for my woes.

CHORUS.
Thy soul, with resolution strung,
To punishment disdains to bow;
Defiance sits upon thy tongue,
Unawed and dauntless is thy brow.
But trembling fear my bosom thrills,
Lest on thee fall severer ills;
For Jove, intractable, will scorn to melt;
His hard, relentless heart compassion never felt.

PROMETHEUS.
His stern severity I know;
I feel the rigor of his power;
But even he shall softer grow,
When fate and vengeance o'er him lower;
Then shall his pride, his cruel fury cease;
Submissive shall he bow, and humbly sue for peace.