

PREFACE.

A NEW edition of the *Supplices* of Aeschylus has long been required. I could wish that some more experienced hand had produced it. Though full of beauties of thought and expression, the play has the reputation of being unusually corrupt, and is therefore comparatively little read. But it is cause for some wonder, that so few scholars of eminence seem to have thought it a duty to emend and explain a work which is so important for a proper comprehension of Aeschylus.

It is a fact not seldom commented upon, that critical study, especially with English scholars, is apt to confine itself to certain narrow fields, which it ploughs over and over again, while it leaves *sentā situ* domains of literature which might be reclaimed to great advantage. If this concentration were the consequence of a paucity of labourers, or if such ἀναπόλησις produced more profit than progressive reclamation can do, there could be no objection to the practice. The former excuse no one will urge. Nor can it be maintained that the literary value of the *Supplices* is small. Conington, led by his poetic instinct, was much attracted to a special study of the play; and Mr Morshead, in his scholarly translation, quotes in its praise critics 'as competent and as diverse' as Keble, Browning and Swinburne. The first-named calls it truly 'dulcissimae illae Ἰκετίδες,' and the last asserts that it is neglected 'for no fault but its misfortune.' An editor of the *Supplices* is not engaged in an attempt to galvanise a dead thing into life. When the play receives its due share of attention it can trust to its own lively virtues, to the unequalled beauty and sweetness of its choral odes, the simplicity and grace

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