

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no tragedy of Euripides that has in recent times so severely exercised critical ingenuity as the *Iphigeneia at Aulis*. On few Greek plays have more or longer disquisitions been written. As these disquisitions have dealt in the main with the imperfections of parts of the text, its editors would seem to have claimed for it the same sort of respect that Dogberry does for himself when he says he is "a fellow that hath had losses". Its notoriety however was not always of this unenviable kind. The tone of references in ancient authors shows the *Iphigeneia at Aulis* to have been among the best known and best liked of Greek tragedies, while in modern literature and art it is linked in various ways with such names as Erasmus, Racine, Glück, and Schiller. We may conclude therefore that in it we have a work of excellence and beauty, and if we can discover these first, the main outlines, as it were, of the picture will not be obscured by our perplexity about some of its details. At the same time we shall be more willing to give some effort to the consideration whether any of these difficulties can be removed.

It will be well then in the first place to turn a deaf ear to the discordant voices of the critics—to pass by all disputed points in the attempt to get a clear idea of the play as we have it—its main action, its personages, and the character of its principal scenes.

Outline of the Action.

The action opens at Aulis, on the Boeotian coast of the Euripus, where has assembled the Greek force that is to sail to Troy. The object of the expedition is to recover Helen and punish the barbarian who has carried her off. Though the Greek fleet has found at Aulis a convenient meeting-place, and a safe anchorage, further progress has