

PREFACE TO VOL. II.

THIS volume was in preparation, when I was called upon to produce a second edition of Vol. I. The delay thus occasioned has given me the opportunity of comparing my notes, in revising them, with those of Professor Paley upon the same four plays, Ajax, Electra, Trachiniae, Philoctetes.

It is reassuring to find that one who has lived with the Greek Tragic writers so intimately and for so long, agrees in upholding the general soundness of the traditional text of Sophocles, and in rejecting many recent alterations. There has seemed to be a danger lest the brilliant adventures of Bentley and Porson in 'conjectural criticism' might lead their successors to extend the so-called art beyond the narrow limits which are prescribed for it by the nature of language and the laws of probability. But the considerate judgment, which rarely forsook those great men, and is the best part of our inheritance from them, remains amongst their countrymen, and sometimes refuses to be imposed upon by fancies which assume the garb of logic.

Professor Paley has spoken of the previous portion of my work in terms which are deeply gratifying to me, as coming from a scholar of his experience: he has also made continual reference to the small edition, by Mr. Evelyn Abbott and myself, of the plays contained in this volume, especially of the Ajax, Electra, and Trachiniae. Although his manner of doing so is always friendly, yet it has not made me a convert to the practice of referring frequently to other commentators in explanatory notes. For (1) as Mr. Abbott's