

have no counterpart in the grim simplicity of the Oedipus myth, as it appears in its earliest known shape.

Homeric
Poems.

§ 2. The *Iliad*, which knows the war of Polyneices and his allies against Thebes (4. 378), once glances at the tale of Oedipus—where Mecisteus, father of Euryalus, is said to have visited Thebes in order to attend the funeral games which were celebrated after the death of Oedipus (23. 679 f.) :—

ὅς ποτε Θήβασδ' ἦλθε δεδουπότος Οἰδιπόδαο
εἰς τάφον,—

—‘who came to Thebes of yore, when Oedipus had fallen, to his burying.’

The word *δεδουπότος* plainly refers to a violent death in fight, or at the hand of an assassin ; it would not be in accord with the tone of epic language to understand it as a figurative phrase for a sudden fall from greatness. But more than this the *Iliad* does not tell. The poet of the 23rd book imagines Oedipus as having died by violence, and received burial at Thebes, in the generation before the Trojan war.

The *Nekyia* in the *Odyssey* gives the earliest sketch of an integral story (11. 271 ff.) :—

Μητέρα τ' Οἰδιπόδαο ἴδον, καλήν Ἐπικάστην,
ἣ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεξεν αἰδρείησι νόοιο
γημαμένη ᾧ υἱεῖ ὃ δ' ὄν πατέρ' ἐξεναρίζας
γῆμεν ἄφαρ δ' ἀνάπυστα θεοὶ θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν.
ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν ἐν Θήβῃ πολυηράτῳ ἄλγεα πάσχων
Καδμείων ἤνασσε θεῶν ὀλοῖς διὰ βουλὰς·
ἣ δ' ἔβη εἰς Ἄϊδαο πυλάρταο κρατεροῖο,
ἀψαμένη βρόχον αἰπὺν ἀρ' ὑψηλοῖο μελάθρου,
ᾧ ἄχει σχομένη τῷ δ' ἄλγεα κάλλιπ' ὀπίσσω
πολλὰ μάλ', ὅσα τε μητρὸς Ἐρινύες ἐκτελέουσιν.

‘And I saw the mother of Oedipodes, fair Epicastè, who wrought a dread deed with unwitting mind, in that she wedded her son ; but he had slain his father ere he wedded her ; and presently the gods made these things known among men. Yet he still ruled over the Cadmeans in lovely Thebes, suffering anguish by the dire counsels of the gods ; but she went to the house of Hades, the strong warder, when she had fastened a noose on high from the roof-beam, possessed by her pain ;