

PREFACE.

IT will be a sufficient reward for much thought and labour if this edition is accepted by competent critics as throwing some new light on a play of great and varied beauty. The reception given to the *Oedipus Tyrannus* has been an encouragement to believe that not a few scholars, both at home and abroad, are in sympathy with one distinctive aim which is proposed to the present edition of Sophocles. That aim is thoroughness of interpretation, in regard alike to the form and to the matter. Such exegesis is in no way opposed to the proper use of conjectural emendation, but seeks to control conjecture by a clear apprehension of the author's meaning and by a critical appreciation of his language. Rash conjecture constantly arises from defective understanding.

The *Oedipus Coloneus* has its share of textual problems, as the following pages will show. But, for the modern student, it is more especially a play which demands exegesis. There are two reasons for this. One is the nature of the fable. The other is the circumstance that, of all extant Greek tragedies, this is the most intimately Attic in thought and feeling. Both these characteristics are illustrated by the Introduction and the Commentary.

I must content myself here with a brief acknowledgment of several valuable criticisms with which my first volume has been