

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. At the close of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the situation is briefly this. By the fact of the guilt which has been brought home to him Oedipus is tacitly considered to have forfeited the throne. His two sons being still young boys, their maternal uncle, Creon, succeeds to the direction of affairs. The self-blinded Oedipus, in his first agony of horror and despair, beseeches Creon to send him away from Thebes. Let him no longer pollute it by his presence: let him perish in the wilds of Cithaeron, as his parents would have had it. Creon replies that he cannot assume the responsibility of acceding to the wish of Oedipus: the oracle at Delphi must be consulted. If Apollo says that Oedipus is to be sent away from Thebes, then it shall be done.

Sophocles supposes a long interval—some twenty years, perhaps—between the two dramas of which Oedipus is the hero. As the exile himself says, 'Tis little to uplift old age, when youth was ruined.' We have to make out the events of this interval, as best we can, from stray hints in the *Coloneus*¹.

¹ The Greek title of the play is *Οἰδίπους ἐπὶ Κολωνῶν*,—the prep. meaning 'at,' as in such phrases as *ἐπ' ἐσχάτῃ* (*Od.* 7. 160), *ἐπὶ θύραις*, etc. It is cited by the authors of the Arguments as *ὁ ἐπὶ Κολωνῶν Οἰδίπους* (pp. 3 ff.). The earlier play was doubtless called simply *Οἰδίπους* by Sophocles,—*Τύραννος* having been a later addition (cp. *O. T.* p. 4): but the second play required a distinguishing epithet, and the words *ἐπὶ Κολωνῶν* must be ascribed to the poet himself. The traditional Latin title, 'Oedipus Coloneus,' is from Cicero (*Cat. ma. seu De Sen.* 7. § 21), whose use of the accusative case, *Oedipum Coloneum*, proves that he meant the adjective to represent *Κολώνειος*, not *Κολωνεύς*. In the nom. this would not have been certain, since in *Tusc. Disp.* 5. 12. 34 he has *Zeno Citiæus* = *Κιτιεύς*, for which Gellius uses *Citiensis*, and in *De Div.* 2. 42 § 88 *Scylax Halicarnasseus* = *Ἀλικαρνασσεύς*, for which Livy uses *Halicarnassensis* and Tacitus *Halicarnassius*. His retention of such Greek forms in *εὖς* is parallel with that of forms in *ιτης* or *ιάτης*, as *De Nat.* 1. 23

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