

on the worn face; but there is a certain nobleness in his look and bearing which tempers the beholder's sense of pity or repulsion. The old man is tired with a long day's journey; they have heard from people whom they met on the way that they are near Athens, but they do not know the name of the spot at which they have halted. Antigone seats her father on a rock which is just within the limits of the sacred grove. As she is about to go in search of information, a man belonging to Colonus appears. Oedipus is beginning to accost him, when the stranger cuts his words short by a peremptory command to come off the sacred ground. 'To whom is it sacred?' Oedipus asks. To the Eumenides, is the reply. On hearing that name, Oedipus invokes the grace of those goddesses, and declares that he will never leave the rest which he has found. He begs the stranger to summon Theseus, the king of Athens, 'that by a small service he may find a great gain.' The stranger, who is struck by the noble mien of the blind old man, says that he will go and consult the people of Colonus; and meanwhile he tells Oedipus to stay where he is.

Left alone with Antigone, Oedipus utters a solemn and very beautiful prayer to the Eumenides, which discloses the motive of his refusal to leave the sacred ground. In his early manhood, when he inquired at Delphi concerning his parentage, Apollo predicted the calamities which awaited him; but also promised him rest, so soon as he should reach '*a seat of the Awful Goddesses.*' There he should close his troubled life; and along with the release, he should have this reward,—power to benefit the folk who sheltered him, and to hurt the folk who had cast him out. And when his end was near, there should be a sign from the sky. Apollo and the Eumenides themselves have led him to this grove: he prays the goddesses to receive him, and to give him peace.

Hardly has his prayer been spoken, when Antigone hears footsteps approaching, and retires with her father into the covert of the grove.

The elders of Colonus, who form the Chorus, now enter the orchestra. They have heard that a wanderer had entered the grove, and are in eager search for the perpetrator of so

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