

now prays that she and Ismene may be sent to Thebes: perhaps they may yet be in time to avert death from their brothers. Theseus consents; and the elders of Colonus say farewell to the Theban maidens in words which speak of submission to the gods: 'Cease lamentation, lift it up no more; for verily these things stand fast.'

§ 3. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* a man is crushed by the discovery that, without knowing it, he has committed two crimes, parricide and incest. At the moment of discovery he can feel nothing but the double stain: he cries out that 'he has become most hateful to the gods.' He has, indeed, broken divine laws, and the divine Power has punished him by bringing his deeds to light. This Power does not, in the first instance, regard the intention, but the fact. It does not matter that his unconscious sins were due to the agency of an inherited curse, and that he is morally innocent. He has sinned, and he must suffer.

Relation  
of the  
*Coloneus*  
to the *Ty-*  
*rannus*.

In the *Oedipus Coloneus* we meet with this man again, after the lapse of several years. In a religious aspect he still rests under the stain, and he knows this. But, in the course of time, he has mentally risen to a point of view from which he can survey his own past more clearly. Consciousness of the stain is now subordinate to another feeling, which in his first despair had not availed to console him. He has gained a firm grasp, not to be lost, on the fact of his moral innocence. He remembers the word of Apollo long ago, which coupled the prediction of his woes with a promise of final rest and reward; and he believes that his moral innocence is recognised by the Power which punished him. Thinking, then, on the two great facts of his life, his defilement and his innocence, he has come to look upon himself as neither pure nor yet guilty, but as a person set apart by the gods to illustrate their will,—as sacred. Hence that apparently strange contrast which belongs to the heart of the *Oedipus Coloneus*. He declines to pollute his benefactor, Theseus, by his touch,—describing himself as one with whom 'all stain of sin hath made its dwelling' (1133). Yet, with equal truth and sincerity, he can assure the Athenians that he has come to them