

measure to a fortunate accident. Dion, surnamed the golden-mouthed, eminent as a rhetorician and essayist, was born at Prusa in Bithynia about the middle of the first century, and eventually settled at Rome, where he enjoyed the favour of Nerva and of Trajan. The eighty 'discourses' (λόγοι) extant under his name are partly orations, partly short pieces in the nature of literary essays,—many of them very slight, and written in an easy, discursive style. In one of these (no. LII.) he describes how he spent a summer afternoon in reading the story of Philoctetes at Lemnos, as dramatised by Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles. He reflects that, even if he had lived at Athens in their time, he could not have enjoyed precisely this treat,—of hearing the three masters, one after another, on the same theme. And, as the result of his perusal, he declares that, if he had been a sworn judge in the Dionysiac theatre, it would have puzzled him to award the prize. After such a preface, it is rather disappointing that he does not tell us more about the two plays which are lost. However, his little essay, which fills scarcely seven octavo pages, throws light on several points of interest; and in another of his short pieces (LIX.) he gives a prose paraphrase of the opening scene in the *Philoctetes* of Euripides. Apart from these two essays of Dion, the fragments of the plays themselves would not help us far. From the Aeschylean play, less than a dozen lines remain; from the Euripidean, about thirty-five. Such, then, are the principal materials for a comparison.

The  
*Philoctetes*  
of Aeschylus.

§ 7. In the play of Aeschylus, the task of bringing Philoctetes from Lemnos to Troy was undertaken, not by Diomedes,—as in the epic version,—but by Odysseus. This change at once strikes the key-note of the theme, as Tragedy was to handle it. Odysseus was the man of all others whom Philoctetes detested; no envoy more repulsive to him could have been found. On the other hand, the choice of that wily hero for the mission implies that its success was felt to depend on the use of stratagem. As Dion shows us, Aeschylus boldly brought Odysseus face to face with Philoctetes, and required the spectators to believe that Philoctetes did not recognise his old enemy. The excuse which Dion suggests for this improbability is not that the appearance