



Book of Illustrations: Ancient Tragedy (Classic Reprint)

Richard Green Moulton

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The Sacred Legends touched by this Trilogy would be familiar, in outline, to the Auditors: e.g.: The woes of the House of Atreus: the foundation of them laid by Atreus when, to take vengeance on his brother Thyestes, he served up to himself at a banquet the flesh of his own sons; His grandsons were Agamemnon and Menelaus: Menelaus wife, Helen, was stolen by a guest, Paris of Troy, which caused the great Trojan war. Agamemnon, who commanded the Greek nations in that war, fretting at the contrary winds which delayed the setting out of the fleet, was persuaded by the Seers to slay his own daughter Iphigenia, to appease the Deities; Her mother Clytemnestra treasured up this wrong all through the ten years war, and slew Agamemnon on his return, in the moment of victory, slew him while in his bath by casting a net over him and smiting him to death with her own arm; Then she reigned in triumph with Egisthus her paramour (himself one of the fatal house), till Orestes her son, who had escaped as an infant when his father was slaughtered, returned at last, and slew the guilty pair; For this act of matricide, though done by the command of Apollo, Orestes was given up to the Furies, and driven over the earth, a madman, till in Athens, on Mars Hill they say, he was cleansed and healed. Cassandra too was involved in the fall of Agamemnon: the Trojan maiden beloved of Apollo, who bestowed upon her the gift of prophecy; when she slighted the God's love, Apollo for no gift of a god can be recalled left her a prophetess, with the doom that her true forebodings should ever be disbelieved. She, having thus vainly sought to save Troy, with its fall fell into captivity, and to the lot of Agamemnon, with whom she died. The name of Orestes would suggest the proverbial friendship of Orestes and Pylades, formed in Orestes' trouble and never broken.

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