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Postscript

E. H.

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between the *Electra* and the *Philoctetes*, for example, or even between the *Helena* and the *Orestes*. This being so, I am inclined to put some trust in the test of avoirdupois. But all such numerical tests are risky, and I do not flatter myself that any 'cheesemongery' will settle the question whether the *Rhesus* is by Euripides. The evidence on that question¹ is cumulative, and I am content to have added my tittle to the heap.

E. HARRISON.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

POSTSCRIPT.

When this was already in print, I came across an article on 'Porsons Gesetz' by K. Witte in *Hermes* xlix. (1914), pp. 229-245, which led me to another article with the same title by J. Král in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Klasse für Philosophie usw.*, Jahrgang 1909, ix. Král reckons the percentage of spondees in the fifth foot of the tragic trimeter at 43·4, and he has forestalled me in finding therein a partial explanation of Porson's Law. This suggestion is curtly dismissed by Witte, who sees in the predominance of iambs not a cause but a consequence of the Law.

The question is easily put to the test. From any tragedy subtract not only all trimeters that have a short syllable clearly exemplifying the Law, but (in order to avoid any questions about marginal cases) all trimeters whatsoever in which the first syllable of the fifth foot is a short final syllable or a short monosyllable: in the remaining trimeters do iambs or spondees prevail in the fifth foot? Of my eight tragedies, three (*Ag.*, *Hipp.*, *Rhes.*) still show a good balance of iambs, in two (*Supp.*, *Ant.*) iambs are about as many as spondees; and even in the other three the ratio of iambs to spondees is about 45 : 55, a ratio very different from that of the first foot or the third. Thus the predilection for iambs in the fifth foot is not due to Porson's Law. We are entitled, then, to look at the matter the other way about, and to draw from this predilection at least a partial explanation of the Law.

E. H.

¹ See W. H. Porter in *Hermathena*, xvii. (1913), pp. 348 sqq.