

assisting. The narration given in Book xi by the ghost of Agamemnon also introduces the presence and death of the captive Cassandra. Now we have but to read these references to see at once, that the rhapsodists in their construction of the story were principally occupied with the question, how such a thing could possibly come about, how the king could arrive at the house of Aegisthus uninformed of his wife's infidelity, and why his death was not prevented or instantly avenged by his companions in arms. The two most elaborate recitals, those in the Third and the Fourth Books, relate almost entirely to these points; and in the Third Book the problem is formally propounded. 'How,' asks Telemachus of Nestor very pertinently, 'was the imperial Agamemnon slain? Where was Menelaus? And by what cunning did Aegisthus contrive the death of one far mightier than himself?' The first question, how the king came to be at the moment comparatively helpless, is thereupon answered by Nestor, who relates how a storm divided and in great part destroyed the returning host. Of this we need say little now, as this part of the story is adopted by Aeschylus and will appear presently in its place. The second and principal question, what means Aegisthus used and how they came to be successful, is answered by the narrative of Proteus in the Fourth Book. There we learn that Aegisthus after the seduction, lest Agamemnon should reach home unobserved and learning the facts should fall upon the seducer by surprise, set a watch to look out for him, whose vigilance was prompted by a great bribe. He continued to watch for a year before the king returned, when an accident rewarded this precaution with undesigned and extraordinary success. The same storm, which scattered the fleet, so carried the king's ship out of its course, that he was thankful to land not at home but upon Aegisthus' domain, near the very castle to which he had carried Clytaemnestra. (It is plain, that in the circumstances supposed by Homer this accident offers the only condition under which Agamemnon could possibly be taken unawares.) Aegisthus, apprised by his watchman and seizing the opportunity, invited the king and his companions to a pretended feast of welcome, at which they were treacherously slain. It is noteworthy that the bard, so full is he of the feeling that to fall upon the veterans of Troy, with whatever advantage, was a hazardous feat, after saying that not one of the king's followers was left, adds grimly that not one of the assassins was left either.

Now between Homer and Aeschylus the story, as we see, has essentially changed. In Aeschylus the murder takes place at the king's house where the queen is still ruling, and it is she who plays the deceptive part. Much has been said, and much that is true, on the moral and