

situation to show precisely how in the union of Agamemnon's enemies Love and Hatred

ξυνωμότησαν, ὄντες ἔχθιστοι τὸ πρὶν.

But the analysis of the passions was no part of the Aeschylean drama, and the apportionment of the two motives is left undetermined, the less intimate and sentimental being placed in the foreground.

But the guilty coalition of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra was so far from securing the punishment of their common enemy, that it was scarcely so much as a step towards it. It is needless to enquire, and perhaps the poet could scarcely have told us, exactly what institutions he represented to himself as the 'free and lawful government' of ancient Argos¹. Doubtless some such limited monarchy, supported and balanced by the influence of privileged councillors and by the popular will, as the Athenians attributed to their own Theseus, such as their stage exhibits, for example, in the *Oedipus at Colonus*, and as their historian asserts to have been the primitive model all over Hellas². But at any rate in no state, not even the rudest despotism,—and that the Argos of this drama is not a despotism, we are expressly told³—could the alliance of the queen-regent with a broken exile give her the power, any more than the right, to assail with impunity the person or throne of the monarch, whether present or absent, so long as his subjects were loyal to him. A speedy success at Troy and a triumphant return would have made Agamemnon safe. But the vengeance of Heaven was not to be thus eluded. At the setting forth of the army it was prophesied, that though for the sin of Paris Troy was destined to fall, yet by the evil genius of the Atridae her fall should be long delayed⁴. It was the length of the war which wrought the king's ruin, and made at last an opening through which his enemies struck home.

In two ways marked by the dramatist the authority of the royal brothers in Argos was shaken by this protracted contest. First, by the mere change of persons. The departing army left behind them those too old for war and those too young, the elders and the boys. During the ten years the elders were passing away or sinking into dotage, the boys were growing up, and all to the disadvantage of the house of Atreus. Among the elders naturally was to be found most personal devotion to the princes and most attachment to established power. It is this party, if we may so call them, Agamemnon's natural friends and

¹ ἐλευθερία ἀρχαί τε πολισσονόμοι. πατρικαὶ βασιλείαι.
Cho. 863. See also Ag. 835 foll. ³ v. 1353.

² Thuc. i. 13, ἦσαν ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς γέρασι ⁴ vv. 125—145.