

that conviction about his mistress which he shared with the rest of the world¹.

Such was the situation in Argos, when 'about the setting of the Pleiads', by our calendar in the month of November, Troy was at last taken². The occurrence of the event at this season was the beginning of the conspirators' good fortune. The seas were closed. Even in the historic times of ancient Hellas few voyages were undertaken in the winter; and according to poetical tradition no one expected after the 'setting of the Pleiads' to sail at all. Ordinary communication being thus suspended, the party preparing for the attack had the full advantage of their preparation. What precisely were their arrangements for obtaining information respecting the army does not appear in the play, nor was it at all necessary (the story being known) that it should. There would be no insuperable difficulty in getting information for those with whom to be the first informed was a matter of life and death. To bring any exhibition of the means within the time covered by the action upon the stage would have been very difficult, and useless. For the purpose of the play it suffices that information was obtained: and this much is exhibited clearly enough. We have already seen that Clytaemnestra, at the very moment of receiving, as she pretends, the first news of the triumph, is acquainted not only with the outrages since committed in Troy by the victorious army, but with the disaster at sea which they have suffered in consequence³.

Once more, the reckless and cruel pride of Agamemnon had betrayed him to his ruin. Not content with the stern vengeance which the justice of Hellenic war would have sanctioned, he had utterly ravaged and literally destroyed the captive city, sparing not even the sacred places⁴. It was probably not unnoticed by the narrator that by this brutality and sacrilege the Greek army also destroyed the last possibility of remaining where they were till a more favourable season, and forced themselves to tempt the risks of the winter passage even while they forfeited the protection of heaven. The neighbouring country they had already eaten up⁵. They set sail at any rate, and fared as they had deserved. One fearful night of storm scattered the armament to the winds; and

¹ See the prologue, in which the relevant points in the character of the watchman are given with extraordinary skill and force.

² *v.* 817.

³ *vv.* 332—362.

⁴ *vv.* 353 foll., 530 foll. etc. The attribution of these sentiments to heroic antiquity is of course an anachronism, but so is the whole play.

⁵ *v.* 133.