

should find to their cost. Not a word of thanks, not a word, even after the wide-spread calamity just announced, of compassion¹. Nothing could better lead up to the final stroke prepared by Clytaemnestra.

Advancing from the palace, she addressed her husband in a strain of extravagant and rapturous adulation, and then, bidding her attendants to strew rich tapestries over the approach, invited him to accept in the presence of the assembly the signs of that adoration which befitted the conqueror of Troy. Agamemnon, in great anger, replied to the address with a stern rebuke and would gladly have escaped the malicious honour. But the queen by insistence and almost by violence compelled him to proceed, all the multitude beholding his act and many not aware of his reluctance. Thus with the symbol and show of an Asiatic tyrant did the victim of the new tyranny pass finally into the toils².

The fate of Cassandra, though of immense importance in the tragedy, not only for its own pathos but as giving another direction to the compassion which would otherwise have centred, contrary to the purpose, upon the murdered king, is to the mere machinery of the story insignificant³. She perished with her enslaver and possessor, whose death was now near and inevitable. When he had gone within, his soldiers departed or dispersed through the fortress, and the throng broke up. But the elders, already unconscious prisoners, had no mind to go away. The strange events of the morning had produced in them, though they could not seize the clue, a vague but invincible sense of danger. Already repenting their reticence and consoling themselves as best they could with the hope of the feeble that 'something will intervene', they waited in perplexity to see what would happen⁴.

¹ *vv.* 801—845.

² Surely it is impossible to reconcile this scene with the supposition, that Agamemnon had no suspicion of his wife's honour. What other motive could explain his brutality? He gives her no greeting, he will not even mention her title or her name. His language is full of insinuation. It is the daring and above all the resources of Clytaemnestra, which are unsuspected by Agamemnon, not her unfaithfulness. The sarcastic ἀπουσία μὲν εἶπας εἰκότως ἐμῇ· μακρὰν γὰρ ἐξέτεινας, the husband's *sole* reply to his wife's affectionate greeting after a separation of ten years, is described by Enger as 'a mild reproof.' If this is mildness, what

would be severity?

Whether in the end Agamemnon willingly consents to the use of the tapestry may be questioned. I see no trace in his words that his mind is changed about it at all. The other view seems to prevail. But the question is of little importance. The tapestry is a mere detail, introduced chiefly for spectacular effect.

³ See the last words of Cassandra (*vv.* 1326—1329), which expressly declare the part which she plays in the economy of the piece.

⁴ *vv.* 966—1018. Perhaps no passage in the play is more completely irreconcilable with the current theory of the story than this. If Aegisthus is living, by