

of the mercenaries¹ the friends of liberty, inflamed to madness, would even have provoked their death there and then, and Aegisthus, cruel and cowardly, would have taken their challenge. But the queen, more politic as well as less base, would not suffer her hostages to be massacred. Prisoners however they remained², and thus, all power but that of the despots being dissolved, the land settled down under the adulterous tyranny until Orestes should come.

Thus, as the story was conceived at Athens in the fifth century, thus or somewhat thus was the imperial Agamemnon slain.

3. *The Structure of the Drama.*

We have now to show how the foregoing story, or a story like this in the main outline, was by Aeschylus shaped as a drama. The Byzantine story is condemned, first because it is absurd in itself, and next because, even if given, it still does not account for the construction and language of the play. The proof which we shall offer for the general truth (to no more than this ought any one in such a case to pretend) of our alternative hypothesis, is that it does explain and account for the drama with perfect simplicity.

But first it will be well to remind ourselves that it is a play of Aeschylus which we have before us, and to consider for a moment what Greek *drama* originally had been and, when Aeschylus took it in hand, was in its essence and main conception still. It is a familiar fact, that dialogue, the substance of a play as we conceive it, was first introduced into the drama by Aeschylus himself. We know also that the other literary element in the drama, the songs of the chorus, received from Aeschylus a great extension and development, so that the masses of continuous music, which he imported from the method of the choric poets proper, are criticised, as a peculiarity, by his adversary in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. Indeed to Aristophanes it seemed that the whole of 'tragedy' as a distinct style of literature ought to be referred to Aeschylus as the first inventor³; and whatever the value of this opinion, which with our little evidence we should be slow to dispute, we know that the earliest rudiments of literary tragedy could be traced no higher than Aeschylus' immediate predecessors. But what was the stock upon

¹ The character of Aegisthus' followers is sufficiently shown by *v.* 1638.

² *v.* 1656, 1659.

³ ὦ πρῶτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων πυργώσας

ρήματα σεμνὰ | καὶ κοσμήσας τραγικὸν
λήρον, says the Chorus of the *Frogs*
(1006).