

and, for prevention of her beautiful lips, to stop the voice that might curse his house with the dumb cruel violence of the gag.

And she, as she let fall to earth her saffron robe, smote each one of the sacrificers with glance of eye that sought their pity, and seemed like as in a painting, fain to speak: for oft had she sung where men were met at her father's noble board, with pure voice virginally doing dear honour to the grace and blessing that crowned her father's feast.

What followed I saw not, neither do I tell. The rede of Calchas doth not lack fulfilment. Yet is it the law that only to experience knowledge should fall: when the future comes, then thou mayest hear of it; ere that, I care not for the hearing, which is but anticipating sorrow; it will come clear enough, and with it the proof of the rede itself. Enough: let us pray for such immediate good, as the present matter needs. Here is our nearest concern, this fortress, sole protection of the Argive land.

[*Enter* CLYTAEMNESTRA, CONSPIRATORS, *etc.*]

I am come, Clytaemnestra, in observance of thy command. 'Tis right to render obedience to the sovereign and queen, when the husband's throne is empty. Now whether tidings good or not good have moved thee by this ceremony to announce good hope, I would gladly learn from thee: though if thou would'st keep the secret, I am content.

*Clytaemnestra.* For 'good', as says the proverb, may the kind morn announce it from her kind mother night. But 'hope' is something short of the joy thou art to hear. The Argive army hath taken Priam's town.

*An Elder.* How sayest thou? I scarce caught the words, so incredible they were.

*Cl.* I said that Troy is ours. Do I speak clear?

*Eld.* 'Tis joy that surprises me and commands its tear.

*Cl.* Yes, 'tis a loyal gladness of which thine eye accuses thee.

*Eld.* And what then is the proof? Hast thou evidence for this?

*Cl.* I have indeed, if miracle deceive me not.

*Eld.* Is it a dream-sign that commands thine easy credence?

*Cl.* Not sight-proof would I accept from a brain bemused.

*Eld.* Yet canst thou have taken cheer from some uncertified presage?

*Cl.* Thou holdest my sense as low as it were a babe's.

*Eld.* And what sort of time is it since the city fell?

*Cl.* It fell, I say, in the night whence yonder light is this moment born.

*Eld.* But what messenger could arrive so quick?