

other ostensible friend of Agamemnon, by nothing more than a public protest, to make them either break their intercourse or declare themselves. If any such person chose to make his profit out of the situation, they could not refuse him whatever he asked. The conduct of Strophius on the other hand, if this was what he did, though excessively base is perfectly intelligible. He got what, according to any issue which he could have anticipated, ought to have been a very advantageous position. If the kings, or either of them, came back irresistible, and Clytaemnestra fled, then Strophius was the man who had rescued the heir from danger. Even if both Agamemnon and Menelaus died abroad, still Orestes remained the eventual successor in natural course, and the possessor of his person must be treated with. But, in the incalculable and inconceivable events which happened, Strophius got nothing, except the burden of his charge. After the murder of Agamemnon, so long as Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra lived or their faction prevailed, the only way, in which Strophius could have made any profit out of Orestes, would have been to sell them his life, an act of perilous cruelty very different from the prudent and decorous fraud of which Orestes appears to accuse him. But his service to Orestes was this and nothing more, that having, for his own supposed interest, assumed the charge of him, and finding himself in the issue compelled either to maintain him for nothing or to be his murderer, he preferred to let him grow up in his house, until he was old enough to depart. The mutual indifference of the pair requires no further explanation; and the same supposition accounts for what must have been somehow accounted for in the story, the suicidal act of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra, in letting the avenger out of their hands.

It is not to be thought that these speculations can be spared, because the result of them must remain to some extent uncertain. The *Choephoroi*, like the plays of Aeschylus generally, consists of scenes from a story taken as known. Some indispensable parts of it are represented only by allusions. Others can scarcely be said to be represented at all. The history of Pylades belongs to the second class, and we will speak of it presently; that of Strophius belongs to the first. What is evident is that the author presumes us to be familiar with his conception of both, that as a fact we are not, and that our only way of approaching the play intelligently is by the assumption of some working hypothesis.

With regard to the escape of Orestes the point of chief interest is also that which rests on the broadest evidence, that according to the version of Aeschylus he was not saved purposely, and for his own sake,