

by any human deliverer. Had there been any person thus interested in him and entitled to his gratitude, some trace of it must have appeared in the course of a play which describes his return. In this respect there is a marked contrast between Aeschylus and his two successors. In Sophocles and Euripides the child is rescued at the time of the murder by faithful friends, who also play a leading part in his restoration. In Aeschylus he is 'cast away' beforehand by the undesigned effect of a base intrigue. As elements in a romance or in a study of character, the inventions of the two later dramatists would be as much superior as they are more obvious¹. But the story of Aeschylus is not such; it is a legend of Divine Providence; and for this purpose the Aeschylean method of rescue has an advantage equally manifest. No event, not even one effected by miraculous means, has so much of the providential character, as that which comes to pass by human agency indeed, but without or against the will of the agents. And such in Aeschylus is the saving of Orestes.

We pass to a personage not perhaps more important in the story than Strophius, but nearer to the foreground in the picture of Aeschylus. Nothing in the *Choephoroi* is more curious, or more significant of the purpose with which the legend was framed, than the part assigned to Pylades. Until the double vengeance is completed by the slaying of Clytaemnestra, Pylades is inseparable from Orestes. He is present at the meeting of Orestes and his sister, he is present even during the litany which is performed at the grave by the children and slaves of Agamemnon. But during all this time not only is he himself without speech or function, but scarcely any notice is taken of him. In arranging with Electra and the others the manner in which the enemy are to be attacked, Orestes just remarks that 'this man, Pylades' will be with him²; and accordingly, along with Orestes and the rest of the pretended company of traders, Pylades re-appears, but still without function, speech, or notice. Aegisthus is slain, and Clytaemnestra is at the mercy of her son. He shrinks; he cannot take her life. But Pylades, and Pylades alone, is there, and now his voice is heard³:

What then of Loxias' word, yet unperformed? What of the Pythian oracle? And the faith of oaths, what of it? Think that the enmity of all the world is better than that of heaven.

Orestes obeys; Clytaemnestra is dragged to her death; and Pylades disappears both from the scene and the story.

¹ Pindar (*Pyth.* XI. 25) has a similar version; Orestes is saved at the time of the murder by his nurse Arsinoe.

² v. 559.

³ v. 899.