

purpose. Clytaemnestra's language is here less impassioned than in the preceding scene, when she was under the full excitement of her new discovery, but it is more dignified. For the purposes of the action this scene is more important than the preceding. The alternative there left open—was the sacrifice to be averted by persuasion or force?—is here settled. Persuasion has done its utmost in vain.

Fourthly, in the 5th scene of the Exodus—*vv.* 1368—1466—we have Iphigeneia's resolution to sacrifice herself, and the justification from her own lips of the purpose, which throughout the play has given rise to such anxious discussion, and heated dissension,—thus putting an end, in the only way possible, to both.

Minor Scenes.

We have now reviewed the three turning-points in the action, and the scenes which form, as it were, the steps by which it proceeds. If we read these four scenes by themselves, we feel that we have had too much debating. But we are not left with these alone. In the pauses of the action come scenes which though not directly affecting the developement of events, are of the first importance as revelations of the characters of the interlocutors. Of these there are two which I think dwell in our minds more than any others in the play. The first is the *stichomuthia* between Agamemnon and Iphigeneia on their meeting—*vv.* 640—677. The second is the meeting of Achilles and Clytaemnestra at *vv.* 819—854. It would be hard to find, in any drama whatever, two characters portrayed with more vivid individuality than are those of Iphigeneia and Achilles in these two short scenes. In the former the heroine's tender playfulness makes dissimulation an evident torture to her father, while it heightens for the spectator the pathos of her fate. In the latter we cannot witness without sympathy, nor altogether without amusement, the "biting jest" of which Fortune makes the stately queen the butt. Both the queen's chagrin and the humour of the situation are heightened by the fact that it is Achilles who inflicts the rebuff. All men looked up to this heaven-born prince, and Clytaemnestra was specially inclined to credit him with every virtue of conduct and demeanour. He shows in this scene, it is true, a little brusqueness and impatience, but though blunt he is not discourteous. In such company, and dealt by such a hand, the full force of the blow to the queen is clearly felt. Like Malvolio, she has indeed been "most notoriously abused".