

The *Odyssey* tells the story as follows. Agamemnon, before going to Troy, charged a certain minstrel (*ᾠοιδός*) to watch over¹ Clytaemnestra at Mycenae. The precaution implies a sense of possible danger, but not necessarily distrust of Clytaemnestra. Presently a tempter came to the lonely wife in the person of her husband's first-cousin, Aegisthus, son of Thyestes, who, while his kinsmen were fighting at Troy, dwelt 'at peace, in the heart of Argos².' For some time Clytaemnestra 'refused the shameful deed; for she had a good understanding³.' Meanwhile the gods themselves, by their messenger Hermes, warned Aegisthus against the course of crime upon which he was entering. But Hermes spoke in vain⁴. Aegisthus removed the minstrel to a desert island, and there left him, a prey to dogs and birds. He then took the 'willing' Clytaemnestra to his home; while he sought to propitiate the gods by burnt-offerings on their altars, and by hanging up in their temples 'many gifts of embroidery and gold⁵.'

Agamemnon, after a stormy voyage from Troy, landed on the coast of Argolis at a point not far from the dwelling of Aegisthus; who, apprised by a watcher, came in his chariot, and invited the king to a banquet; after which he slew him, 'as a man slays an ox at the manger⁶.'

In this narrative (given by Menelaüs to Telemachus) Clytaemnestra is not even named; though Menelaüs had previously spoken of her 'guile' as aiding the crime⁷. It is only in a part of the *Odyssey* which is of later origin than the 'Telemachy' in books I—IV,—viz., the *Nέκνυια* in the eleventh book,—that Clytaem-

¹ *εἶρυσθαι ἄκουτω*, *Od.* 3. 268. Nothing could better illustrate the social consideration enjoyed by the Homeric *ᾠοιδός*, or the reverence felt for his office. Athenaeus (p. 14 B) conceives this guardian minstrel of Clytaemnestra as a sort of cultivated domestic chaplain, whose function was not merely to keep her mind agreeably occupied, but also to edify her with examples of female excellence (*ἀρετὰς γυναικῶν διερχόμενος*).

² *Od.* 3. 263.

³ *ib.* 265 f. *ἢ δ' ἢ τοι τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀναίνετο ἔργον ἀεικές, | διὰ Κλυταιμνήστρη· φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσι.*

⁴ *Od.* 1. 35—43.

⁵ *Od.* 3. 269 ff.

⁶ *Od.* 4. 514—535.

⁷ *Od.* 4. 92 (Aegisthus slays Agamemnon) *λάθρη, ἀνωιστί, δόλω οὐλομένης ἀλόχοιο.*