

lawry, for it cut him off from the worship of the temple and of the hearth, and, indeed, from all intercourse with god-fearing men. It made his hope depend on submission to a religion representing the highest spiritual influence which ever became widely operative among the people of pagan Hellas.

The ritual of Apollo the Purifier had already a place in the Cyclic epic called the *Aethiopsis*¹, said to have been composed by Arctînus of Miletus, about 776 B.C. More than a century elapsed after that date before Lyric poetry was matured; and meanwhile the worship of the Pythian Apollo, with its ritual of purification from blood, was diffused throughout the Greek world. It was to be expected, therefore, that, when the story of Orestes began to receive lyric treatment, the influence of Delphi should be apparent. If, in avenging his father, Orestes killed Clytaemnestra as well as Aegisthus, the Pythian priesthood had a text than which they could desire none more impressive. For, according to the immemorial and general belief of Hellenes, Orestes did well to avenge Agamemnon. If, however, he slew his mother, the Erinyes were necessarily called into activity. Who, then, was to vindicate the avenger? Who was to assert, even against the Erinyes, that his deed was righteous? Who but Apollo, the supreme judge of purity? And then it was only another step to represent Apollo himself as having prescribed the vengeance. A Greek vase-painting² portrays him in the act of doing so. The scene is in the temple at Delphi. Apollo, laurel-crowned, is sitting on the omphalos; in his left hand is a lyre; with the stem of a laurel-branch, held in his right, he is touching the sheathed sword of Orestes, who stands in a reverent attitude before him; he thus consecrates it to the work of retribution. Behind Apollo, the Pythia sits upon the tripod, holding a diadem for the brows of Orestes, when he shall have done the deed³; and near her is Pylades.

¹ The *Aethiopsis* took up the war of Troy where the *Iliad* left off. It included the death of Achilles; also the contest for his arms between Ajax and Odysseus.

² On an amphora found in South Italy (Lucania), and now in the Naples Museum. It is reproduced by Baumeister, p. 1110 (from Rochette, *Mon. inéd.*, pl. 37), and by Michaelis in Jahn's *Electra*, p. 37 (cp. *ib.* p. vii).

³ Cp. Eur. *El.* 872, where Electra greets Orestes after his slaying of Aegisthus:—
στέψω τ' ἀδελφοῦ κράτα τοῦ νικηφόρου.