

him at Delphi. Apollo commanded him to 'snatch his righteous vengeance by stealth,' without the aid of an armed force. He then sets forth his plan. The old man is to enter the palace in the guise of a messenger sent by Phanoteus, a Phocian prince friendly to Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus. He is to announce that Orestes has been killed in a chariot-race at the Pythian games. Meanwhile Orestes and Pylades will make offerings at the tomb of Agamemnon near the palace. They will then present themselves in the house, bearing a funeral urn. They, like the old man, will pretend to be Phocians, who have brought the ashes of Orestes to Mycenae.

A female voice of lament is now heard in the house (v. 77). Orestes asks if it can be Electra's, and proposes to wait and listen; but the old man dissuades him. All three now leave the scene (v. 85).

Electra comes out of the house; she is alone, for the Chorus have not yet appeared. Greeting the 'pure sunlight and the air,' to which her sorrow has so often been uttered at dawn, she speaks of the grief which ceases not, day or night, for her father, whom the wicked pair struck down, 'as woodmen fell an oak.' She invokes the Powers of the nether world to avenge him,—and to send her brother; for her own strength is well-nigh spent.

The Chorus, composed of fifteen Mycenaean women, had entered as Electra's lament was closing. They sympathise with her; and they do not conceal their abhorrence of the deed which she mourns. But they remind her that grief cannot restore the dead to life: they urge her to be calm, trusting in the gods, and hoping for the return of Orestes. She must not aggravate her lot by waging a fruitless strife with the rulers.

Electra replies that to abandon her grief would be disloyalty. If her father is not to be avenged, there will be an end to reverence for gods or men.

The Chorus say that they spoke only for her good; she knows best, and she shall be their guide. Electra then justifies her conduct by describing what she has to see and suffer daily in the house;—Aegisthus in her father's place; her mother living with Aegisthus, and keeping the death-day of Agamem-

(θρήνος ἀπὸ
σκηνῆς:
86—120.)

Parodos:
121—250.

II. First
episode:
251—471.