



AGAMEMNON

AESCHYLUS

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AGAMEMNON

BY
AESCHYLUS

TRANSLATED BY GILBERT MURRAY

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Agamemnon By Aeschylus.

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The Agamemnon

Punishment. Each year arrives, waxes great, commits the sin of Hubris and must therefore die. It is the way of all Life. As an early philosopher expresses it, "All things pay retribution for their injustice one to another according to the ordinance of Time."¹

To me this consideration actually increases the interest and beauty of the *Oresteia*, because it increases its greatness. The majestic art, the creative genius, the instinctive eloquence of these plays—that eloquence which is the mere despair of a translator—are all devoted to the expression of something which Aeschylus felt to be of tremendous import. It was not his discovery; but it was a truth of which he had an intense realization. It had become something which he must with all his strength bring to expression before he died, not in a spirit of self-assertion or of argument, like a discoverer, but as one devoted to something higher and greater than himself, in the spirit of an interpreter or prophet.

¹ See my *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 47. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, Chapter I. See also the fine pages on the Agamemnon in the same writer's *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, pp. 144, ff. (E. Arnold 1907). G. M.

That waved in flame beyond the promontory
 Rock-ridged, that watches the Saronian sea,
 Kindling the night: then one short swoop to catch
 The Spider's Crag, our city's tower of watch;
 Whence hither to the Atreidae's roof it came,
 A light true-fathered of Idaean flame.
 Torch-bearer after torch-bearer, behold
 The tale thereof in stations manifold,
 Each one by each made perfect ere it passed,
 And Victory in the first as in the last.
 These be my proofs and tokens that my lord
 From Troy hath spoke to me a burning word.

LEADER.

Woman, speak on. Hereafter shall my prayer
 Be raised to God; now let me only hear,
 Again and full, the marvel and the joy.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now, even now, the Achaian holdeth Troy!
 Methinks there is a crying in her streets
 That makes no concord. When sweet unguent meets
 With vinegar in one phial, I warrant none
 Shall lay those wranglers lovingly at one.
 So conquerors and conquered shalt thou hear,
 Two sundered tones, two lives of joy or fear.
 Here women in the dust about their slain,
 Husbands or brethren, and by dead old men
 Pale children who shall never more be free,
 For all they loved on earth cry desolately.
 And hard beside them war-stained Greeks, whom stark
 Battle and then long searching through the dark
 Hath gathered, ravenous, in the dawn, to feast
 At last on all the plenty Troy possessed,
 No portion in that feast nor ordinance,

But each man clutching at the prize of chance.
 Aye, there at last under good roofs they lie
 Of men spear-quelled, no frosts beneath the sky,
 No watches more, no bitter moony dew....
 How blessed they will sleep the whole night through!
 Oh, if these days they keep them free from sin
 Toward Ilion's conquered shrines and Them within
 Who watch unconquered, maybe not again
 The smiter shall be smit, the taker ta'en.
 May God but grant there fall not on that host
 The greed of gold that maddeneth and the lust
 To spoil inviolate things! But half the race
 Is run which windeth back to home and peace.
 Yea, though of God they pass unchallengèd,
 Methinks the wound of all those desolate dead
 Might waken, groping for its will....

Ye hear

A woman's word, belike a woman's fear.
 May good but conquer in the last incline
 Of the balance! Of all prayers that prayer is mine.

LEADER.

O Woman, like a man faithful and wise
 Thou speakest. I accept thy testimonies
 And turn to God with praising, for a gain
 Is won this day that pays for all our pain.

[CLYTEMNESTRA returns to the Palace. The CHORUS take up their position for the Second Stasimon.]

AN ELDER.

o Zeus, All-ruler, and Night the Aid,
 Gainer of glories, and hast thou thrown
 Over the towers of Ilion
 Thy net close-laid,
 That none so nimble and none so tall

