

The Return of Agamemnon

By F. Anstey

It was ten years since Agamemnon, the mighty Argive monarch, had left his kingdom (somewhat suddenly, and after a stormy interview with the Queen, as those said who had the best opportunities of knowing), with the avowed intention of going to assist at the siege of Troy.

He had never written once since, but so many reports of his personal daring and his terrible wounds had reached the palace that Clytemnestra would often observe, with a touch of annoyance, that, if not actually dead by that time, he must be nearly as full of holes as a fishing-net.

So that she was scarcely surprised when they broke the intelligence to her one day that he really had gone at last, having fallen, fighting desperately, against the most fearful odds, upon the Trojan plain; and when, a little later, she formally announced to her faithful subjects her betrothal to Ægisthus, her youngest and favourite courtier, *they* were not surprised in their turn.

They told one another, with ribald facetiousness, that they had rather expected something of the kind.

They were celebrating their Queen's betrothal day with the wildest enthusiasm, for they were a simple affectionate people, and foresaw an impetus to local trade. It had been but a dull time for Argos during those weary ten years, and the city had become well-nigh deserted, as, one by one, all her bravest and her best had left her, to seek, as they poetically put it, 'a soldier's tomb.'

Several married men, in whom no such patriotic enthusiasm had ever been previously suspected, found out that their country required their services, left their wives and their little ones, and started for the field of battle. There were many pushing Argive tradesmen, too, who abandoned their business and sought—not ostentatiously, but with the self-effacement of true heroism—the seat of war upon which their sovereign had been sitting so long; while the real extent of their devotion was seldom appreciated until long after their departure, when it was generally discovered that, in their eagerness, they had left their affairs in the greatest confusion.

And very soon almost the only young men left were mild, unwarlike youths, who were respectable and wore spectacles, while the rest of the male population was composed of equal parts of prattling infants and doddering octogenarians.

This was a melancholy state of things—but then the absent ones wrote such capital letters home, containing such graphic descriptions of camp life and the fiercer excitements of night attacks and forlorn hopes, that the recipients ought to have been amply consoled.

They were not; they only remarked that it seemed rather odd that the writers should so persistently forget to give their addresses, and that it was a singular circumstance that while each letter purported to come direct from the Grecian lines, every envelope somehow bore a different postmark. And often would the older married women (and their mothers too) wish with infinite pathos that they could only just get the missing ones home and talk to them a little—that was all!

But all anxiety was forgotten in the celebration of the betrothal, for the Argives were determined to do the thing really well. So in the principal streets they had erected triumphal arches, typifying the chief local manufactures, which were (as it is scarcely necessary to inform the scholar) soda-water and cane-bottomed chairs; and from these arches chairs and bottles were constantly dropping, like a gentle dew, upon the happy crowd which passed beneath. All the public fountains spouted a cheap dinner sherry like water—'very like water,' said some

disaffected persons; householders were graciously invited to exhibit flags and illuminations at their own expense, and in the market-place a fowl was being roasted whole for the populace.

All was gaiety, therefore, at sunset, when the citizens assembled in groups about the square in front of the palace, prepared to cheer the royal pair with enthusiasm when they deigned to show themselves upon the balcony.

The well-meaning old gentlemen who formed the Chorus (for in those days every house of any position in society maintained a chorus, and even shabby-genteel families kept a semi-chorus in buttons) were twittering in a corner, prepared to come forth by-and-by with the ill-timed allusions, melancholy and depressing forebodings, and unnecessary advice, which were all that was expected of them, and the Mayor and Corporation were fussing about distractedly with a brass band and the inevitable address.

All at once there was a stir in the crowd, and the eyes of everyone were strained towards a tall and swaying scaffold on the royal house-top, where a small black figure, outlined sharply against the saffron sky, could be seen gesticulating wildly.

‘Look at the watchman!’ they whispered excitedly; ‘what can be the matter with him?’

Now before Agamemnon left he had had fires laid upon all the mountain tops in a straight line between Argos and Troy, arranging to light the pile at the Troy end of the chain when it should become necessary to let them know at home that they might expect him back shortly.

The watchman had been put up on a scaffold to look out for the beacon, and had been there for years day and night, without being once allowed to quit his post—even on his birthday. It was expected that Clytemnestra would have let him come down for good when she was informed of Agamemnon’s death on such excellent authority, but she would not hear of such a thing. She knew people would think it very foolish and sentimental of her, she said, but to take the watchman down would seem so like giving up all hope! So she kept him up, a proof of her conjugal devotion which touched everyone—except perhaps the watchman himself.

Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, who had happened to come out while all his excitement was at its height, found themselves absolutely ignored. ‘Not a single cap off—not one solitary hurrah,’ cried the Queen with majestic anger. ‘*What* have you been doing to make yourself so unpopular with my loyal Argives?’ she demanded suspiciously.

‘I don’t think it’s anything to do with me, really,’ protested Ægisthus, feebly. ‘They’re only looking the other way just now, and—can’t you see why?’ he added suddenly, ‘*they’ve lit the beacon on the top of Arachnæus!*’

Clytemnestra looked, and started violently, as on the mountain-top in question a red tongue of flame shot up through the gathering dusk: ‘What does it mean?’ she whispered, clutching him convulsively by the arm.

‘Well,’ said Ægisthus, ‘it looks to me, do you know, rather as if your late lamented husband has changed his mind about dying, and is on his way to your arms.’

‘Then he is not dead!’ exclaimed Clytemnestra. ‘He is coming home. I shall look upon that face, hear that voice, press that hand once again! How excessively annoying!’

‘Confounded nuisance!’ he agreed heartily, but his irritation sounded slightly overdone, somehow. ‘Well, it’s all over with the betrothal after this; don’t you think it would be as well to get all the arches, and fireworks, and things out of the way? We shan’t want them *now*, you know.’

‘Why not?’ said the Queen; ‘they will all do for him; *he* won’t know. Ye gods!’ she cried, stretching out her arms with a tragic groan. ‘Must *I*, too, do for him?’

‘Any way,’ said Ægisthus, with an attempted ease, ‘you won’t want me any longer, and so, if you will kindly excuse me, I—I think I’ll retire to some quiet spot whither I can drag myself with my broken heart and bleed to death, like a wounded deer, don’t you know!’

‘You can do all that just as well here,’ she replied. ‘I wish you to stay. Who knows what may happen?’—she added, with a sinister smile, ‘We may be happy yet!’

Clytemnestra’s sinister smiles always made Ægisthus feel exactly as if something was disagreeing with him—so he stayed.

By this time the populace had also realised the turn affairs had taken, but they very sensibly determined that it was their plain duty to persevere with the merriment. They were, as has been mentioned before, a simple and affectionate people, and fond of their king; so, as his return would be even more beneficial to trade than the betrothal, they rejoiced on, and there was nothing in the least strained or hollow in their revelry.

And presently there was a fresh stir in the crowd, and then a rumbling of wheels as the covered chariot from the station rolled, amidst faint cheering, up to the palace gates, and was saluted by the one aged sentinel who stood on guard

‘It *is* Agamemnon,’ gasped the Queen; ‘he has come already—he must not find me unprepared. I will go within.’

She had just time to retire hastily, followed by Ægisthus, before a short stout man in faded regimentals and a cocked hat with a moulting plume descended from the vehicle.

The Chorus, finding it left to them to do the honours, advanced in a row, singing the ode of welcome, which they had had in rehearsal ever since the first year of the war.

‘O King,’ they chanted in their cracked old trebles, ‘offspring of Atreus, and sacker of Troy!’

‘Will you kindly count the boxes?’ interrupted the monarch, who hated sentiment; ‘there should be four—a tin cocked-hat box, two camel-hair trunks, and a carpet bag.’

But a Greek chorus was not easily suppressed, and they broke out again all together, ‘Nay, but with bursting hearts would we bid thee thrice hail!’

‘Once is ample, thank you,’ said the King, with regal politeness; ‘and I should be really distressed if any of you were to burst on my account. Has anybody such a thing as half a drachma about him?’

He heard no more of the ode, and the Mayor thought it advisable to roll up his address and take his Corporation home.

Agamemnon had succeeded in borrowing the drachma, and had just turned his back to pay the driver as Clytemnestra glided down the broad steps to the courtyard, and, striking an attitude, addressed nobody in particular in tones of rapturous joy.

‘O happy day!’ she cried very loudly, ‘on which my hero husband returns to me after a long absence, quite unexpectedly. Henceforth shall his helmet rust upon the hat-stand, and his spear repose innocuous amongst the umbrellas, and his breastplate shall he replace by a chest-protector; for a shield he shall have a sunshade, and instead of his sword he shall carry a spud. But now let me, as an exceptionally faithful wife, greet him before ye all with—Agamemnon, will you have the goodness to tell me who that young person is in the chariot?’ was her abrupt and somewhat lame conclusion.

‘Oh, there you are, eh?’ said Agamemnon, turning round and presenting a forefinger. ‘How de do, my love; how de do?’ (‘I shan’t give you another obol!’ he said to the driver, who seemed still unsatisfied.) ‘So, you’re quite well, eh?’ he resumed to his wife; ‘plenty to say for yourself as usual. Gad, I feel as if I hadn’t been away a week—till I look at you . . . Well, we can’t

expect to be always young, can we? So you want to know my little friend here? Allow me to present her to you. One moment.'

And hustling up to the chariot, he assisted from it a maiden with a pale face, great, wild, roving eyes, and hair of tawny gold, and led her back to his wife.

'The Princess Cassandra of Troy—my wife, Queen Clytemnestra. They tell me this young lady can prophesy very prettily, my dear,' he remarked.

Clytemnestra bowed coldly, and said she was sure it would be vastly amusing. Did the Princess intend giving any public entertainments?

'She is our visitor,' Agamemnon put in warningly; while Cassandra smiled satirically, and said nothing at all.

Clytemnestra hoped she might be able to induce her to stay longer, a week was such a very short time.

'She has kindly consented to stay on a little longer, my love,' said Agamemnon—'all her life,' in fact.'

The Queen was charmed to hear it; it was so very nice and kind of her, particularly as strangers were apt to find the neighbourhood an unhealthy one.

And as Ægisthus joined them just then, she presented him to the King, with the remark that he had been the most faithful and devoted of courtiers during the whole period of the King's absence; to which Agamemnon replied, with the slightest of scowls, that he was delighted to make the acquaintance of Mr. Ægisthus; and after that no one seemed to know exactly what to say for a minute or two.

At last Ægisthus hazarded a supposition that the royal warrior had found it warm over at Troy.

'It varied, sir,' said the monarch, uncomfortably; 'the climate varied. I used to get very warm fighting sometimes.'

Ægisthus agreed that a battle must be hot work, and Clytemnestra suddenly exclaimed that her husband was wearing the very same dear shabby old uniform he had on when he went away.

'The very same,' said Agamemnon, smiling. 'I wore it all through the campaign. Your true warrior is no dandy!'

'We were given to understand you were wounded,' remarked Ægisthus.

'Oh,' said the King, 'yes; I was considerably wounded—all over the chest and arms. But what cared I?'

'Exactly,' said Ægisthus; 'and, curiously enough, the weapons don't seem to have pierced your coat at all. I observe there are no patches.'

'No,' the King replied; 'so you noticed that, eh? Well, the reason of that is that those fellows out there have a peculiar sort of way of cutting and slashing, so as to—'

And he explained this by some elaborate illustrations with his sheathed sword, until Ægisthus said that he thought he understood how it was done.

But Clytemnestra suddenly, with a kitten-like girliness that sat but ill upon her, pounced playfully upon the weapon. 'I want to see it drawn,' she cried; 'I want to look upon the keen flashing blade which has penetrated the inmost recesses of so many of our country's foes. Oh, it won't come out,' she added, as she attempted to pull it out of the scabbard; 'do make it come out!'

The King tried, but the blade stuck half way, and what was visible of it seemed thickly coated with rust; but Agamemnon said it was gore, and his orderly must have forgotten to clean his accoutrements after the fall of Troy. He added that it was the effect of the sea air.

'Troy really has fallen then?' asked Ægisthus. 'I suppose you stayed to see the thing out?'

‘I did, sir,’ answered the monarch proudly; ‘I sacked the most fashionable quarters myself. I expect my booty will be forwarded—shortly. Didn’t you know Troy was taken?’ he asked suspiciously. ‘Couldn’t you see the beacon I lighted just before I started?’

The courtier murmured that it was wonderful to find so long and tedious a journey accomplished in such capital time.

‘What do you mean by that? How do you know how long it took?’ demanded Agamemnon.

‘Don’t you see?’ said Clytemnestra. ‘Why, you say you had the fire lighted at Ida when you started; then, of course, they would see it directly over at Lemnos, and light theirs; and then at Athos, and then—’

‘You are not a time-table, my love,’ interrupted the monarch, coldly. ‘I won’t trouble you for all these details. Come to the point.’

‘The point is,’ she explained sweetly, ‘that we have only just seen the beacon flame arrive here at Arachnæus, after leaping from height to height across lake and plain; so that you, my dearest, must have made the distance with almost equal celerity

‘I came with the beacon,’ said Agamemnon, coughing; ‘perhaps that disposes of the difficulty?’

‘Perhaps,’ said the Queen; ‘I mean *quite*. And now,’ she continued, after a rapid exchange of glances with Ægisthus, ‘you will come indoors and have a nice cup of coffee and a warm bath before you do anything else, won’t you?’

He almost thought he would, he said; fighting for ten long years without intermission was a dusty, tiring occupation, and he was accordingly about to enter, when his eye fell on the awnings and flags and the red stair carpet, which had been prepared for the betrothal festivities, and he frowned.

‘Now, my dear, this sort of thing is all very well, no doubt; but I don’t care about it I’m a plain, honest ruler of men, and I hate flummery and flattery—particularly when it all comes out of *my* pocket! Why, you’ve laid down the drugget from the Throne-Room over all this gravel. Take it up directly; I decline to walk over it. Do you hear? This wasteful extravagance is positively sinful. Take it up!’

Clytemnestra assured him earnestly that they had had no intention of annoying him with it—which was literally true; and suggested meekly that for the King to stay out in the court-yard until all the decorations were removed might be a tedious and even a ridiculous proceeding. ‘If,’ she added, ‘he was merely unwilling to spoil the drugget, he might easily remove his boots, which were extremely muddy—for a monarch’s.’

‘Well, well, my dear, be it so,’ said the King; ‘I did not intend to chide you. It is only that I have grown so accustomed to the frugal, hardy life of a camp, that I have imbibed a soldier’s contempt for luxury.’

And, removing his boots, he followed the Queen into the Palace, as she led the way with a baleful expression upon her dark and inscrutable face.

As the pair passed up the steps and between the lofty pillars, the hounds howled from the royal kennels at the back of the Palace, and—a stranger portent still—a meteor shot suddenly through the growing gloom and burst in a rain of coloured stars above the housetop, while, shortly after, a staff fell from above upon the head of one of the Chorus—and was shivered to fragments!

Ægisthus had strolled away under the colonnade, and Cassandra was left alone with the Chorus. She stood apart, mystic, moody, and impenetrable, letting down her flowing back hair.

‘You prophesy, do you not?’ said the kind old men at length, wishing to make her feel at home; ‘might we beg you to favour us with a prediction—just a little one?’

Cassandra made excuses at first, as was proper, she had a cold, and was feeling the effects of the journey. She was really not inspired just then, she protested, and besides, she had not touched a tripod for ages.

But, upon being pressed, she gave way at last, after declaring with a little giggle that she was perfectly certain nobody would believe a single word she said.

‘I see before me,’ she began, in a weird, sepulchral tone which she found it impossible to keep up for many sentences, ‘a proud and stately pile—but enter not. See ye yon ghoul among the chimneypots, yon amphisbœna in the back garden? And the scent of gore pervades it!’

‘It is no happy home that is thus described!’ the Chorus threw in professionally.

‘But the Finger of Fate is slowly unwound, and the Hand of Destiny steps in to pace the marble halls with heavy tramp. And know, old men, that the Inevitable is not wholly unconnected with the Probable!’

At this even their politeness could not restrain a gesture of incredulity, but she heeded it not, and continued:

‘Who is this that I see next—this regal warrior bounding over the blazing battlements in brazen panoply?’

(‘That must be Agamemnon,’ cried the Chorus; ‘the despatches mentioned him bounding like that. Wonderful!’)

‘I see him,’ she resumed, ‘pale and prostrate—a prey to the pangs within him, scanning the billows from his storm-tossed ship. Now he has reached his native city. Hark! how they greet him I And, behold, a stately matron meets him with a honeyed smile, inviting him to enter. He yields. And then—’

Here Cassandra stopped, with the remark that that was all—as there were limits even to the marvellous faculty of second-sight.

The Chorus were not unimpressed, for they had never seen a prediction and its literal fulfilment in quite such close conjunction before, and their own attempts always came wrong; but although they were agreed that the prophecy was charming as far as it went, they began to feel slightly afraid of the prophetess, and were secretly relieved when Ægisthus happened to come up shortly afterwards with an offer to show her such places of interest as Argos boasted.

But they were great authorities upon all points of etiquette and morality, and they all remarked (when she had gone) that she displayed an unbecoming readiness in accepting the escort of a courtier who had not been formally introduced to her. ‘That may be the custom in *Troy*,’ they said, wagging their beards, ‘but if she means to behave like that here—*well!*’

And now the last gleam of the sunset had faded, and the stars straggled out in the pale green sky, whilst the Chorus walked up and down to keep warm, for the evening was growing chilly.

Suddenly a loud cry broke the silence—a scream as of a strong man in mortal agony! It struck all of them that the voice was uncommonly like Agamemnon’s, but none liked to say so, and they only observed with a forced composure that really the cats were becoming quite a nuisance.

The cry came again, louder this time, and more distinct; it seemed to come from the direction of the royal bath-room. ‘*Hi, here, somebody—help! They’ve turned on the hot water, and I can’t turn it off again!*’

After this there could be no possible doubt that there was something the matter far more serious than cats. Agamemnon, the king of men, was apparently in difficulties, and it was only too probable that this was Clytemnestra’s fell work.

They all ran about and fell over one another in the general flurry and confusion, and then as they recovered their presence of mind they began to consult upon the best course to pursue under

the circumstances. Some were of opinion that it would not be a quite unpardonable breach of court etiquette if they were to rush into the bathroom and pull the royal sufferer out; others, more cautious, asked for precedents in a case of such delicacy, and they almost quarrelled, until the wisest of them all reminded his fellows that, at all events, it was too late to interfere then, as the monarch must certainly be hard-boiled by that time—which relieved them from all responsibility in the happiest manner.

At this point the Queen appeared at the head of the marble steps, down which she glided cautiously and came towards them, evidently in a condition of suppressed excitement.

‘What a beautiful evening!’ said the Chorus in unison, for they considered it better taste not to appear to have noticed anything at all unusual.

‘Agamemnon is with his ancestors,’ she replied in a fierce whisper; ‘I sewed up the sleeves of his bathing-gown and I drugged his coffee, and then from afar I turned on the hot water. And he is boiled, and it serves him right, and I’m glad of it—so now! But tell me, ye aged ones,’ she added with one of her quick transitions, ‘have I done well?’

Now the Chorus were distinctly disgusted at her want of tact and reserve, and would have greatly preferred not to be admitted into confidences of so purely domestic a description, but they were not the men to flinch from their duty.

‘In our opinion, O Queen,’ they replied coldly, ‘the deed was a hasty one, and accomplished without sufficient consideration.’

‘Ha!’ she exclaimed angrily, ‘so ye would rate me like a girl! Am I not your sovereign mistress? Guard, seize these insolents!’

And the superannuated old sentinel left his box and tottered up to seize as many of them as he could lay hold of at once, telling the remainder to consider themselves under arrest, which they did directly.

‘Summon the populace,’ Clytemnestra next commanded, and the Argives left the fireworks obediently and assembled before the steps.

‘Citizens! Argives!’ she cried in a loud clear voice, ‘I am sure you will all be very sorry and disappointed to hear that your beloved sovereign, so lately restored to us’ (here she broke down with the naturalness of a great artist)—‘that our beloved sovereign is—by a most deplorable and unaccountable lack of precaution—

‘Alive!’ interrupted a voice from behind the Queen, and someone pushed aside the hangings before the door of the Palace, and began to descend the steps. It was Agamemnon himself.

Clytemnestra shrieked as she turned slowly, and Confronted him in silence for some moments; the situation was intensely dramatic, and the Argives, a simple and affectionate people, fully appreciated this, and never once regretted the fireworks they had abandoned.

The Queen was the first to speak: ‘So,’ she said, pale and panting, ‘you—you’ve—had your bath?’

‘Well—no,’ said Agamemnon mildly; ‘I happened to observe that someone had thoughtfully sewn up the armholes of my dressing-gown, and that the coffee had a particularly nasty smell in it, and so, somehow, I thought I would rather wait. And then the boiling water came rushing in, and I saw there had been a little mistake somewhere. So it occurred to me that I too would dissemble and see what came of it, and I shouted for help. I think I see it all now.’

And then he took a higher moral tone; his manner was no longer cynical; he was not angry even—only deeply wounded, and there was something fine and striking in the stern sadness of his brow.

‘So this,’ he said, ‘was to have been my fate? I was to return, a war-worn warrior, to the hearth and home from which I had been absent so long—so long—to be ruthlessly parboiled the very moment after my arrival, by the partner of my throne! Was this kind—was this wifely, Clytemnestra?’

‘That comes so well from you, does it not?’ she retorted.

‘Why—why—what do you mean?’ he stammered.

‘You know very well what I mean,’ she said. ‘Bah! why play the hypocrite with me?’

‘Is it possible,’ he cried, ‘that you can suspect me of not having been near Troy all this time—tell me, Clytemnestra—is this monstrous thing possible?’

‘Quite,’ she replied; ‘I know you haven’t!’

‘What—when I tell you that there is a poet, a fellow called Homer or something, who has got a sort of reputation already by putting the campaign into verses, rather long, but quite readable (you must order them); well, there’s a lot about me in them.’

‘Did Homer see you there?’

‘Now that’s a most ridiculous question,’ he protested, with a feeling that she was coming round, and that he should convince her directly; ‘the poet’s blind, Clytemnestra, quite blind. But I will not argue—you must be content with a warrior’s assurance.’

She laughed. ‘I’m afraid,’ she said, ‘that even a warrior’s assurance will find it difficult to account satisfactorily for this—and this—and these!’ And as she spoke, she handed him a variety of articles: a folding hat, a guide to Corinth, a conversation manual, several unused tourist tickets, one or two theatre programmes, a green veil, some supper bills, a correct card for the Olympian races, with the names of probable starters, and three little jointed wooden dolls.

Agamemnon took them all helplessly; all his virtuous indignation had evaporated, and he looked very red and foolish as he said with a kind of nervous laugh, ‘You’ve been looking in my pockets!’

‘I have,’ she said, ‘and now what have you to say for yourself? I don’t believe there is any such place as Troy.’

‘There is indeed,’ he pleaded; ‘I can show it to you on the map!’

‘Well,’ she said, ‘if there is, *you* never went near it!’

‘Send those people away,’ he said, ‘and I will tell you all!’

And when they had gone, he confessed everything, explaining that he really had meant to go to Troy at first, and how, as he got nearer, he found himself less and less inclined for fighting—until at last he determined to travel about and see life instead, and, as he expressed it, ‘pick up a little character.’

‘Well,’ said Clytemnestra, ‘I will have no little characters in my palace, Agamemnon.’

But he protested that she had not understood him ‘And if I have erred, my love,’ he suggested humbly, ‘excuse me, but I cannot help thinking that the means devised for my correction were unnecessarily severe!’

‘They were nothing of the sort,’ she said; ‘you deserved it all—and worse!’

Upon this Agamemnon made haste to assure her that she had shown a very proper spirit, and he respected her the more for it. ‘And now,’ he put it to her, ‘why not let bygones be bygones?’ But Clytemnestra’s reply was that she would be quite willing to permit this when they were bygones, which, at present, she added, they were very far from being.

The King was in despair, until beneficent nature came to his assistance; a faint chirrup was heard from a neighbouring bush, a circumstance which he turned to admirable account.

‘You hear it?’ he asked tenderly, ‘the dulcet strain? Know ye the note? Ah, Clytemnestra, ’tis the owl—the blithe and tuneful owl! Owls sang on our bridal night—can you hear their melody now and be unmoved? No, I did but wrong ye . . . a tear trembles on that eyelash, a smile flickers upon that lip! I am pardoned. Clytemnestra—wife, embrace me . . . we both have much to forgive!’

This speech (which was not unlike some he had heard in thrilling dramas at the ‘Hæmabronteion,’ Corinth, where the prophetess Cassandra had been greatly admired in her impersonations of persecuted and distracted heroines) touched Clytemnestra’s heart, in which, hard as it was, there was a strain of sentiment—and she fell sobbing into her husband’s arms.

And so all was forgotten and forgiven in the most satisfactory manner, the Chorus (who had been considering themselves arrested until the intellectual strain had proved almost too much for them) were released, while it was found on inquiry that both Ægisthus and Cassandra were missing, and no trace of either of them was ever found again; but it was generally understood that, with a delicate unselfishness, they had been unwilling to remain where their presence would lead to inevitable complications.

And from that night—until the fatal day, some six short weeks afterwards, when each, by an unfortunate oversight, partook of a mixture which had been carefully prepared for the other—there was not a happier royal couple in all Argos than Clytemnestra and Agamemnon.