

GROUP IV.

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*THE TROJAN WAR AND ULYSSES.*  
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THERE have been many translations into English verse of "The Tale of Troy Divine," as the "Iliad" of Homer has been called, since George Chapman (1557-1634), the pioneer in this field of literary effort, made the one which called forth the following famous sonnet:

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

JOHN KEATS.

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne ;  
Yet never did I breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken ;  
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific — and all his men

So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,  
 And lighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays ;  
 The long reflections of the distant fires  
 Gleam on the walls and tremble on the spires.  
 A thousand piles the dusky horrors gild,  
 And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.  
 Full fifty guards each flaming fire attend,  
 Whose umbered arms, by fits, thick flashes send ;  
 Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,  
 And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.

Cowper's translation of the same passage of the  
 "Iliad" : —

Big with great purposes and proud, they sat,  
 Not disarrayed, but in fair form disposed  
 Of even ranks, and watched their numerous fires.  
 As when around the clear bright moon, the stars  
 Shine in full splendor, and the winds are hushed,  
 The groves, the mountain tops, the headland heights  
 Stand all apparent, not a vapor streaks  
 The boundless blue, but ether opened wide  
 All glitters, and the shepherd's heart is cheerful ; —  
 So numerous seem those fires between the stream  
 Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece,  
 In prospect of all Troy ; a thousand fires,  
 Each watched by fifty warriors seated near.  
 The steeds beside the chariots stood, their corn  
 Chewing, and waiting till the golden-throned  
 Aurora should restore the light of day.

Tennyson has translated this same passage of the  
 "Iliad" as follows : —

So Hector said, and sea-like roar'd his host ;  
 Then loosed their sweating horses from the yoke

And each beside his chariot bound his own ;  
 And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep  
 In haste they drove, and honey-hearted wine  
 And bread from out the houses brought, and heap'd  
 Their firewood, and the winds from off the plain  
 Roll'd the rich vapor far into the heaven.  
 And there all night upon the bridge of war  
 Sat glorying ; many a fire before them blazed ;  
 As when in heaven the stars about the moon  
 Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,  
 And every height comes out, and jutting peak  
 And valley, and the immeasurable heavens  
 Break open to their highest, and all the stars  
 Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart :  
 So many a fire between the ships and stream  
 Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,  
 A thousand on the plain ; and close by each  
 Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire ;  
 And champing golden grain, the horses stood  
 Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn.

Compare these versions of this bit of Homer with  
 Bryant's : —

So Hector spake, and all the Trojan host  
 Applauded ; from the yoke forthwith they loosed  
 The sweaty steeds, and bound them to the cars  
 With halters ; to the town they sent in haste  
 For oxen and the fatlings of the flock,  
 And to their homes for bread and pleasant wine,  
 And gathered fuel in large store. The winds  
 Bore up the fragrant fumes from earth to heaven.  
 So high in hope, they sat the whole night through  
 In warlike lines, and many watch-fires blazed.  
 As when in heaven the stars look brightly forth

Round the clear-shining moon, while not a breeze  
 Stirs in the depths of air, and all the stars  
 Are seen, and gladness fills the shepherd's heart,  
 So many fires in sight of Ilium blazed,  
 Lit by the sons of Troy, between the ships  
 And eddying Xanthus : on the plain there shone  
 A thousand ; fifty warriors by each fire  
 Sat in the light. Their steeds beside the cars —  
 Champing their oats and their white barley — stood  
 And waited for the golden morn to rise.

## PHILOCTÈTES.

IN the second book of the "Iliad" the poet sings the commanders and the ships of the Grecian fleet. In this wonderful catalogue we find the outline of the story that Sophocles has used so effectively in his drama, in a few lines :—

"Those from Methonè and Olizon's rocks,  
 And Melibœa and Thaumacia, filled  
 Seven ships, with Philoctetes for their chief,  
 A warrior skilled to bend the bow. Each bark  
 Held fifty rowers, bowmen all, and armed  
 For stubborn battle. But their leader lay  
 Far in an island, suffering grievous pangs, —  
 The hallowed isle of Lemnos. There the Greeks  
 Left him, in torture from a venomous wound  
 Made by a serpent's fangs. He lay and pined.  
 Yet was the moment near when they who thus  
 Forsook their king should think of him again.  
 Meantime his troops were not without a chief,  
 Though greatly they desired their ancient lord ;  
 For now the base-born Medon marshalled them,  
 Son of Oileus."

Plumptre's translation of the drama of Philoctetes is prefaced by the following argument : "Philoctetes, son of Pœas, king of the Melians of Cœta in Thessaly, having been one of the suitors of Helen, the daughter of Tyndareus, and being bound by an oath to defend her in case of wrong (as were all the other suitors), joined the great expedition of the Greeks against Troy. And as he landed at Chryse, treading rashly on the sacred ground of the nymph from whom the island took its name, he was bitten in the foot by a serpent ; the wound became so noisome, and the cries of his agony so sharp, that the host could not endure his presence, and sent him in charge of Odysseus to Lemnos, and there he was left. And nine years passed away, and Achilles had died, and Hector and Aias (Ajax), and yet Troy was not taken. But the Greeks took prisoner Helenos, a son of Priam, who had the gift of prophecy, and they learnt from him that it was decreed that it should never be taken but by the son of Achilles and with the bow of Heracles. Now this bow was in the hands of Philoctetes, for Heracles loved him because he found him faithful ; and when he died on Cœta, it was Philoctetes who climbed up the hill with him, and prepared the funeral pyre, and kindled it : therefore Heracles gave him his bow and arrows.

"When the Greeks heard this prophecy they first sent to Skyros to fetch Neoptolemos, the son of Achilles, and then, when he had arrived, they despatched him with Odysseus to bring Philoctetes from Lemnos."

NOTE.—Throughout this play the Greek proper names are used, as Odysseus for Ulysses, Heracles for Hercules.

## PHILOCTÈTES.

SOPHOCLES. [PLUMPTRE'S TRANSLATION.]

SCENE. — *The shore of Lemnos.*

*Odysseus.* Here, then, we reach this shore of sea-girt isle,  
Of Lemnos, by the foot of man untrod,  
Without inhabitant, where, long ago,  
I set on shore the Melian, Pœas' son,  
His foot all ulcerous with an eating sore,  
Sent on this errand by the chiefs that rule;  
For never were we able tranquilly  
To join in incense-offerings, nor to pour  
Libations, but with clamor fierce and wild  
He harassed all the encampment, shouting loud,  
And groaning low. What need to speak of this?  
It is no time for any length of speech,  
Lest he should hear of my approach, and I  
Upset the whole contrivance wherewithal  
I think to take him. But thy task it is  
To do thine office now, and search out well  
Where lies a cavern here with double mouth,  
Where in the winter twofold sunny side  
Is found to sit in, while in summer heat  
The breeze sends slumber through the tunnelled vault.  
And just below, a little to the left,  
Thou may'st, perchance, a stream of water see,  
If it still flow there. Go, and show in silence  
If he is dwelling in this self-same spot,  
Or wanders elsewhere, that in all that comes  
Thou may'st give heed to me, and I may speak,  
And common counsels work for good from both.

*Neoptolemos.* O King Odysseus, no far task thou giv'st,  
For such a cave, methinks, I see hard by.

*Odys.* Clearly the man is dwelling in this spot,  
And is not distant. How could one so worn  
With that old evil in his foot go far?  
But either he is gone in search of food,  
Or knows, perchance, some herb medicinal;  
And therefore send this man to act the scout,  
Lest he should come upon me unawares,  
For he would rather seize on me than take  
All other Argives. [Exit attendant.]

*Neop.* He is gone to watch  
The path. If aught thou needest, speak again.

*Odys.* Now should'st thou prove thyself Achilles' son,  
Stout-hearted for the task for which thou cam'st,  
Not in thy body only, but if thou  
Should'st hear strange things, by thee unknown till now,  
Still give thy help as subaltern to me.

*Neop.* What dost thou bid me?

*Odys.* Thou must cheat and trick  
The heart of Philoctetes with thy words;  
And when he asks thee who and what thou art,  
Say thou'rt Achilles' son (that hide thou not),  
And that thou sailest homeward, leaving there  
The Achæans' armament; with bitter hate  
Hating them all, who having sent to beg  
Thy coming with their prayers, as having this  
Their only way to capture Ilion's towers,  
Then did not deign to grant thee, seeking them  
With special claims, our great Achilles' arms,  
But gave them to Odysseus. What thou wilt,  
Say thou against me to the utmost ill;  
In this thou wilt not grieve me; but if thou  
Wilt not do this, on all the Argive host  
Thou wilt bring sorrow; for, unless we get  
His bow and arrows, it will not be thine  
To sack the plain of Dardanos. And how

I cannot have, and thou may'st have access  
 To him both safe and trustworthy, learn this ;  
 For thou hast sailed as bound by oath to none,  
 Not by constraint, nor with the earlier host,  
 But none of all these things can I deny ;  
 So, if he sees me while he holds his bow,  
 I perish, and shall cause thy death as well.  
 But this one piece of craft thou needs must work,  
 That thou may'st steal those arms invincible.  
 I know, O boy, thy nature is not apt  
 To speak such things, nor evil guile devise ;  
 But sweet it is to gain the conqueror's prize ;  
 Therefore be bold. Hereafter once again,  
 We will appear in sight of all as just.  
 But now for one short day give me thyself,  
 And cast off shame, and then in time to come,  
 Be honored, as of all men most devout.

*Neop.* The things, O son of Lartios, which I grieve  
 To hear in words, those same I hate to do.  
 I was not born to act with evil arts,  
 Nor I myself, nor, as they say, my sire.  
 Prepared I am to take the man by force,  
 And not by fraud ; for he with one weak foot  
 Will fail in strength to master force like ours ;  
 And yet, being sent thy colleague, I am loth  
 To get the name of traitor ; but I wish,  
 O King, to miss my mark in acting well,  
 Rather than conquer, acting evilly.

*Odys.* O son of noble sire, I, too, when young,  
 Had a slow tongue and ready-working hand ;  
 But now, by long experience, I have found  
 Not deeds, but words prevail at last with men.

*Neop.* But what is all thou bid'st me say but lies ?

*Odys.* I bid thee Philoctetes take with guile.

Odysseus finally persuades Neoptolemos that though he is destined to take Troy, he cannot do it without the bow and arrows of Philoctetes. When Neoptolemos realizes this he says :—

“Come then, I'll do it, casting off all shame.”

The chorus then advances, and in the strophe and antistrophe that follow, Neoptolemos learns all about the habits of Philoctetes and the wretched life he leads in this desolate place.

[*Enter PHILOCTETES, in worn and tattered raiment.*]

Ho, there, my friends !  
 Who are ye that have come to this, our shore,  
 And by what chance ! for neither is it safe  
 To anchor in, nor yet inhabited.  
 What may I guess your country and your race ?  
 Your outward guise and dress of Hellas speak,  
 To me most dear, and yet I fain would hear  
 Your speech ; and draw not back from me indeed,  
 As fearing this my wild and savage look,  
 But pity one unhappy, left alone,  
 Thus helpless, friendless, worn with many ills.  
 Speak, if it be ye come to me as friends :  
 Nay, answer me, it is not meet that I  
 Should fail of this from you, nor ye from me.

*Neop.* Know this then first, O stranger, that we come,  
 Of Hellas all ; for this thou seek'st to know.

*Phil.* O dear-loved sound ! Ah me ! what joy it is  
 After long years to hear a voice like thine !  
 What led thee hither, what need brought thee here ?  
 Whither thy voyage, what blest wind bore thee on ?  
 Tell all, that I may know thee who thou art.

*Neop.* By birth I come from sea-girt Skyros' isle,  
And I sail homeward, I, Achilles' son,  
Named Neoptolemos. Now know'st thou all.

*Phil.* O son of dearest father, much-loved land,  
Thou darling boy of Lycomedes old,  
Whence sailing, whither bound, hast thou steered hither?

*Neop.* At present I from Ilion make my voyage.

*Phil.* What say'st thou? Thou wast surely not with us  
A sailor when the fleet to Ilion came?

*Neop.* What? Did'st thou, too, share that great enterprise?

*Phil.* And know'st thou not, O boy, whom thou dost see?

*Neop.* How can I know a man I ne'er beheld?

*Phil.* And did'st thou never hear my name, nor fame  
Of these my ills, in which I pined away?

*Neop.* Know that I nothing know of what thou ask'st.

*Phil.* O crushed with many woes and of the gods  
Hated am I, of whom in this my woe,  
No rumor travelled homeward, nor went forth  
Through any clime of Hellas! But the men  
Who cast me out in scorn of holiest laws  
Laugh in their sleeve, and this my sore disease  
Still grows apace, and passes into worse.  
My son, O boy that call'st Achilles sire,  
Lo! I am he of whom perchance thou heard'st,  
That I possess the arms of Heracles,  
The son of Pœas, Philoctetes, whom  
Our generals twain and Kephallene's king  
Basely cast forth, thus desolate, worn out  
Through fierce disease, with bite of murderous snake,  
Fierce bite, sore smitten; and with that, O boy,  
Thus desolate they left me, when they touched  
From sea-girt Chryse in their armament;  
And when they saw me, tired and tempest-worn,  
Asleep in vaulted cave upon the shore,  
Gladly they went, and left me, giving me

Some wretched rags that might a beggar suit,  
And some small store of food they chanced to have.  
And thou, my son, what kind of waking up  
Think'st thou I had, when I arose from sleep,  
And found them gone, — what bitter tears I wept,  
What groans of woe I uttered? when I saw  
The ships all gone, with which till then I sailed,  
And no man on the spot to give me aid,  
Nor help me, struggling with my sore disease;  
And, looking all around, I nothing found  
But pain and torment, and of this, my son,  
Full plenteous store. And so the years went on,  
Month after month, and in this lonely cell  
I needs must wait upon myself. My bow  
Found what my hunger needed, striking down  
The swift-winged doves, but whatsoever the dart,  
Sent from the string, might hit, to that, poor I  
Must wend my way, and drag my wretched foot,  
Even to that; and if I wanted drink,  
Or, when the frost was out in winter-time  
Had need to cleave my firewood, this poor I  
Crept out, and fetched. And then no fire had I,  
But rubbing stone with stone I brought to light,  
Not without toil, the spark deep hid within;  
And this e'en now preserves me; for a cell  
To dwell in, if one has but fire, provides  
All that I need, except release from pain.  
And now, my son, learn thou this island's tale:  
No sailor here approaches willingly,  
For neither is there harbor, nor a town,  
Where sailing he may profit gain, or lodge.  
No men of prudence make their voyage here;  
Yet some, perchance, may come against their will;  
(Such things will happen in the lapse of years;)  
And these, my son, when they do come, in words

Show pity on me, and perchance they give  
Some food in their compassion, and some clothes ;  
But none is willing when I mention that,  
To take me safely home, but here poor I  
Wear out my life, for nine long years and more,  
In hunger and distress this eating sore  
Still nursing. Such the deeds the Atreidæ did,  
And great Odysseus. May the Olympian gods  
Give them to bear like recompense for this !

*Neop.* And I myself am witness to thy words,  
And know that they are true, for I have found  
The Atreidæ and the great Odysseus base.

*Phil.* What ! Hast thou too a grudge against those vile ones ?  
The Atreidæ, that thy wrongs have stirred thy rage ?

*Neop.* I'll tell thee, Pœas' son, though scarce I can,  
What I endured of outrage at their hands ;  
For when the Fates decreed Achilles' death, —

*Phil.* Ah me ! Speak nothing further till I learn  
This first ; and is the son of Peleus dead ?

*Neop.* Dead is he, not by any man shot down,  
But by a god, — by Phœbus, as they say.

*Phil.* Well, noble he that slew, and he that fell ;  
And I, my son, am much in doubt, if first  
To ask thy sufferings, or to mourn for him.

*Neop.* Thine own misfortunes are enough, I trow ;  
Thou need'st not sorrow o'er thy neighbor's lot.

*Phil.* Thou sayest well, and therefore tell again  
That business in the which they outraged thee.

Neoptolemos then tells Philoctetes a long story about the disposal of his father's arms, which had been given to Odysseus, and which Neoptolemos claimed. He expresses the strongest hatred for the injustice of Odysseus ; and Philoctetes, believing everything evil of the

latter, still wonders that Ajax, the elder, should have seen these things and borne them.

Neoptolemos tells him that Aias (Ajax) is dead, and then he inquires for the aged Nestor and his son Antilochus. Hearing that the latter is also dead, he asks for Patroclus, whom Achilles loved so well. When told of his death, also, he wonders that war can take such men as these and spare such scoundrels as Odysseus.

Neoptolemos then tells him that he is going to his ship to set sail for rocky Skyros, where for the future he will take his ease at home.

Now to my ship I go. And thou, O son  
Of Pœas, fare thee well, good luck be thine,  
And may the gods release thee from thy pain,  
As thou desirest ! Now then let us start ;  
When god fair weather gives us, then we sail.

*Phil.* And do ye start already ?

*Neop.* Yes ; the time  
Bids us our voyage think near, and not far off.

*Phil.* By thy dear sire and mother, I, my son,  
Implore thee as a suppliant, by all else  
To thee most dear, thus lonely leave me not,  
Abandoned to these evils which thou see'st,  
With which thou hearest that I still abide ;  
But think of me as thrown on you by chance :  
Right well I know how noisome such a freight ;  
Yet still do thou endure it. Noble souls  
Still find the base is hateful, and the good  
Is full of glory. And for thee, my son,  
Leaving me here comes shame that is not good ;  
But doing what I ask thee thou shalt have  
Thy meed of greatest honor, should I reach