

## BOOK X.

### ARGUMENT.

#### THE NIGHT-ADVENTURE OF DIOMED AND ULYSSES.

Upon the refusal of Achilles to return to the army, the distress of Agamemnon is described in the most lively manner. He takes no rest that night, but passes through the camp, awaking the leaders, and contriving all possible methods for the public safety. Menelaus, Nestor, Ulysses, and Diomed are employed in raising the rest of the captains. They call a council of war, and determine to send scouts into the enemies' camp, to learn their posture, and discover their intentions. Diomed undertakes this hazardous enterprise, and makes choice of Ulysses for his companion. In their passage they surprise Dolon, whom Hector had sent on a like design to the camp of the Grecians. From him they are informed of the situation of the Trojan and auxiliary forces, and particularly of Rhesus, and the Thracians who were lately arrived. They pass on with success; kill Rhesus, with several of his officers, and seize the famous horses of that prince, with which they return in triumph to the camp.

The same night continues; the scene lies in the two camps.

All night the chiefs before their vessels lay,

And lost in sleep the labours of the day:

All but the king: with various thoughts oppress'd,(215)

His country's cares lay rolling in his breast.

As when by lightnings Jove's ethereal power

Foretels the rattling hail, or weighty shower,

Or sends soft snows to whiten all the shore,

Or bids the brazen throat of war to roar;

By fits one flash succeeds as one expires,

And heaven flames thick with momentary fires:

So bursting frequent from Atrides' breast,

Sighs following sighs his inward fears confess'd.

Now o'er the fields, dejected, he surveys

From thousand Trojan fires the mounting blaze;

Hears in the passing wind their music blow,

And marks distinct the voices of the foe.

Now looking backwards to the fleet and coast,

Anxious he sorrows for the endangered host.

He rends his hair, in sacrifice to Jove,

And sues to him that ever lives above:

Inly he groans; while glory and despair

Divide his heart, and wage a double war.

A thousand cares his labouring breast revolves;

To seek sage Nestor now the chief resolves,

With him, in wholesome counsels, to debate

What yet remains to save the afflicted state.

He rose, and first he cast his mantle round,

Next on his feet the shining sandals bound;  
A lion's yellow spoils his back conceal'd;  
His warlike hand a pointed javelin held.  
Meanwhile his brother, press'd with equal woes,  
Alike denied the gifts of soft repose,  
Laments for Greece, that in his cause before  
So much had suffer'd and must suffer more.  
A leopard's spotted hide his shoulders spread:  
A brazen helmet glitter'd on his head:  
Thus (with a javelin in his hand) he went  
To wake Atrides in the royal tent.  
Already waked, Atrides he descried,  
His armour buckling at his vessel's side.  
Joyful they met; the Spartan thus begun:  
"Why puts my brother his bright armour on?  
Sends he some spy, amidst these silent hours,  
To try yon camp, and watch the Trojan powers?  
But say, what hero shall sustain that task?  
Such bold exploits uncommon courage ask;  
Guideless, alone, through night's dark shade to go,  
And midst a hostile camp explore the foe."  
  
To whom the king: "In such distress we stand,  
No vulgar counsel our affairs demand;  
Greece to preserve, is now no easy part,  
But asks high wisdom, deep design, and art.

For Jove, averse, our humble prayer denies,  
And bows his head to Hector's sacrifice.  
What eye has witness'd, or what ear believed,  
In one great day, by one great arm achieved,  
Such wondrous deeds as Hector's hand has done,  
And we beheld, the last revolving sun  
What honours the beloved of Jove adorn!  
Sprung from no god, and of no goddess born;  
Yet such his acts, as Greeks unborn shall tell,  
And curse the battle where their fathers fell.

"Now speed thy hasty course along the fleet,  
There call great Ajax, and the prince of Crete;  
Ourself to hoary Nestor will repair;  
To keep the guards on duty be his care,  
(For Nestor's influence best that quarter guides,  
Whose son with Merion, o'er the watch presides.)"  
To whom the Spartan: "These thy orders borne,  
Say, shall I stay, or with despatch return?"  
"There shall thou stay, (the king of men replied,)  
Else may we miss to meet, without a guide,  
The paths so many, and the camp so wide.  
Still, with your voice the slothful soldiers raise,  
Urge by their fathers' fame their future praise.  
Forget we now our state and lofty birth;  
Not titles here, but works, must prove our worth.

To labour is the lot of man below;  
And when Jove gave us life, he gave us woe."

This said, each parted to his several cares:  
The king to Nestor's sable ship repairs;  
The sage protector of the Greeks he found  
Stretch'd in his bed with all his arms around  
The various-colour'd scarf, the shield he rears,  
The shining helmet, and the pointed spears;  
The dreadful weapons of the warrior's rage,  
That, old in arms, disdain'd the peace of age.  
Then, leaning on his hand his watchful head,  
The hoary monarch raised his eyes and said:

"What art thou, speak, that on designs unknown,  
While others sleep, thus range the camp alone;  
Seek'st thou some friend or nightly sentinel?  
Stand off, approach not, but thy purpose tell."

"O son of Neleus, (thus the king rejoin'd,)  
Pride of the Greeks, and glory of thy kind!  
Lo, here the wretched Agamemnon stands,  
The unhappy general of the Grecian bands,  
Whom Jove decrees with daily cares to bend,  
And woes, that only with his life shall end!  
Scarce can my knees these trembling limbs sustain,

And scarce my heart support its load of pain.  
No taste of sleep these heavy eyes have known,  
Confused, and sad, I wander thus alone,  
With fears distracted, with no fix'd design;  
And all my people's miseries are mine.  
If aught of use thy waking thoughts suggest,  
(Since cares, like mine, deprive thy soul of rest,)  
Impart thy counsel, and assist thy friend;  
Now let us jointly to the trench descend,  
At every gate the fainting guard excite,  
Tired with the toils of day and watch of night;  
Else may the sudden foe our works invade,  
So near, and favour'd by the gloomy shade."

To him thus Nestor: "Trust the powers above,  
Nor think proud Hector's hopes confirm'd by Jove:  
How ill agree the views of vain mankind,  
And the wise counsels of the eternal mind!  
Audacious Hector, if the gods ordain  
That great Achilles rise and rage again,  
What toils attend thee, and what woes remain!  
Lo, faithful Nestor thy command obeys;  
The care is next our other chiefs to raise:  
Ulysses, Diomed, we chiefly need;  
Meges for strength, Oileus famed for speed.  
Some other be despatch'd of nimbler feet,

To those tall ships, remotest of the fleet,  
Where lie great Ajax and the king of Crete.(216)  
To rouse the Spartan I myself decree;  
Dear as he is to us, and dear to thee,  
Yet must I tax his sloth, that claims no share  
With his great brother in his martial care:  
Him it behoved to every chief to sue,  
Preventing every part perform'd by you;  
For strong necessity our toils demands,  
Claims all our hearts, and urges all our hands."

To whom the king: "With reverence we allow  
Thy just rebukes, yet learn to spare them now:  
My generous brother is of gentle kind,  
He seems remiss, but bears a valiant mind;  
Through too much deference to our sovereign sway,  
Content to follow when we lead the way:  
But now, our ills industrious to prevent,  
Long ere the rest he rose, and sought my tent.  
The chiefs you named, already at his call,  
Prepare to meet us near the navy-wall;  
Assembling there, between the trench and gates,  
Near the night-guards, our chosen council waits."

"Then none (said Nestor) shall his rule withstand,  
For great examples justify command."

With that, the venerable warrior rose;  
The shining greaves his manly legs enclose;  
His purple mantle golden buckles join'd,  
Warm with the softest wool, and doubly lined.  
Then rushing from his tent, he snatch'd in haste  
His steely lance, that lighten'd as he pass'd.  
The camp he traversed through the sleeping crowd,  
Stopp'd at Ulysses' tent, and call'd aloud.  
Ulysses, sudden as the voice was sent,  
Awakes, starts up, and issues from his tent.  
"What new distress, what sudden cause of fright,  
Thus leads you wandering in the silent night?"  
"O prudent chief! (the Pylia sage replied)  
Wise as thou art, be now thy wisdom tried:  
Whatever means of safety can be sought,  
Whatever counsels can inspire our thought,  
Whatever methods, or to fly or fight;  
All, all depend on this important night!"  
He heard, return'd, and took his painted shield;  
Then join'd the chiefs, and follow'd through the field.  
Without his tent, bold Diomed they found,  
All sheathed in arms, his brave companions round:  
Each sunk in sleep, extended on the field,  
His head reclining on his bossy shield.  
A wood of spears stood by, that, fix'd upright,  
Shot from their flashing points a quivering light.



A bull's black hide composed the hero's bed;  
A splendid carpet roll'd beneath his head.  
Then, with his foot, old Nestor gently shakes  
The slumbering chief, and in these words awakes:

"Rise, son of Tydeus! to the brave and strong  
Rest seems inglorious, and the night too long.  
But sleep'st thou now, when from yon hill the foe  
Hangs o'er the fleet, and shades our walls below?"

At this, soft slumber from his eyelids fled;  
The warrior saw the hoary chief, and said:  
"Wondrous old man! whose soul no respite knows,  
Though years and honours bid thee seek repose,  
Let younger Greeks our sleeping warriors wake;  
Ill fits thy age these toils to undertake."

"My friend, (he answered,) generous is thy care;  
These toils, my subjects and my sons might bear;  
Their loyal thoughts and pious love conspire  
To ease a sovereign and relieve a sire:  
But now the last despair surrounds our host;  
No hour must pass, no moment must be lost;  
Each single Greek, in this conclusive strife,  
Stands on the sharpest edge of death or life:  
Yet, if my years thy kind regard engage,  
Employ thy youth as I employ my age;

Succeed to these my cares, and rouse the rest;  
He serves me most, who serves his country best."

This said, the hero o'er his shoulders flung  
A lion's spoils, that to his ankles hung;  
Then seized his ponderous lance, and strode along.  
Meges the bold, with Ajax famed for speed,  
The warrior roused, and to the entrenchments lead.

And now the chiefs approach the nightly guard;  
A wakeful squadron, each in arms prepared:  
The unwearied watch their listening leaders keep,  
And, couching close, repel invading sleep.  
So faithful dogs their fleecy charge maintain,  
With toil protected from the prowling train;  
When the gaunt lioness, with hunger bold,  
Springs from the mountains toward the guarded fold:  
Through breaking woods her rustling course they hear;  
Loud, and more loud, the clamours strike their ear  
Of hounds and men: they start, they gaze around,  
Watch every side, and turn to every sound.  
Thus watch'd the Grecians, cautious of surprise,  
Each voice, each motion, drew their ears and eyes:  
Each step of passing feet increased the affright;  
And hostile Troy was ever full in sight.  
Nestor with joy the wakeful band survey'd,

And thus accosted through the gloomy shade.  
"Tis well, my sons! your nightly cares employ;  
Else must our host become the scorn of Troy.  
Watch thus, and Greece shall live." The hero said;  
Then o'er the trench the following chieftains led.  
His son, and godlike Merion, march'd behind  
(For these the princes to their council join'd).  
The trenches pass'd, the assembled kings around  
In silent state the consistory crown'd.  
A place there was, yet undefiled with gore,  
The spot where Hector stopp'd his rage before;  
When night descending, from his vengeful hand  
Reprieved the relics of the Grecian band:  
(The plain beside with mangled corps was spread,  
And all his progress mark'd by heaps of dead:)  
There sat the mournful kings: when Neleus' son,  
The council opening, in these words begun:  
  
"Is there (said he) a chief so greatly brave,  
His life to hazard, and his country save?  
Lives there a man, who singly dares to go  
To yonder camp, or seize some straggling foe?  
Or favour'd by the night approach so near,  
Their speech, their counsels, and designs to hear?  
If to besiege our navies they prepare,  
Or Troy once more must be the seat of war?"

This could he learn, and to our peers recite,  
And pass unharm'd the dangers of the night;  
What fame were his through all succeeding days,  
While Phoebus shines, or men have tongues to praise!  
What gifts his grateful country would bestow!  
What must not Greece to her deliverer owe?  
A sable ewe each leader should provide,  
With each a sable lambkin by her side;  
At every rite his share should be increased,  
And his the foremost honours of the feast."

Fear held them mute: alone, untaught to fear,  
Tydides spoke--"The man you seek is here.  
Through yon black camps to bend my dangerous way,  
Some god within commands, and I obey.  
But let some other chosen warrior join,  
To raise my hopes, and second my design.  
By mutual confidence and mutual aid,  
Great deeds are done, and great discoveries made;  
The wise new prudence from the wise acquire,  
And one brave hero fans another's fire."

Contending leaders at the word arose;  
Each generous breast with emulation glows;  
So brave a task each Ajax strove to share,  
Bold Merion strove, and Nestor's valiant heir;

The Spartan wish'd the second place to gain,  
And great Ulysses wish'd, nor wish'd in vain.  
Then thus the king of men the contest ends:  
"Thou first of warriors, and thou best of friends,  
Undaunted Diomed! what chief to join  
In this great enterprise, is only thine.  
Just be thy choice, without affection made;  
To birth, or office, no respect be paid;  
Let worth determine here." The monarch spake,  
And inly trembled for his brother's sake.

"Then thus (the godlike Diomed rejoin'd)  
My choice declares the impulse of my mind.  
How can I doubt, while great Ulysses stands  
To lend his counsels and assist our hands?  
A chief, whose safety is Minerva's care;  
So famed, so dreadful, in the works of war:  
Bless'd in his conduct, I no aid require;  
Wisdom like his might pass through flames of fire."

"It fits thee not, before these chiefs of fame,  
(Replied the sage,) to praise me, or to blame:  
Praise from a friend, or censure from a foe,  
Are lost on hearers that our merits know.  
But let us haste--Night rolls the hours away,  
The reddening orient shows the coming day,

The stars shine fainter on the ethereal plains,  
And of night's empire but a third remains."

Thus having spoke, with generous ardour press'd,  
In arms terrific their huge limbs they dress'd.  
A two-edged falchion Thrasymed the brave,  
And ample buckler, to Tydides gave:  
Then in a leathern helm he cased his head,  
Short of its crest, and with no plume o'erspread:  
(Such as by youths unused to arms are worn:)  
No spoils enrich it, and no studs adorn.  
Next him Ulysses took a shining sword,  
A bow and quiver, with bright arrows stored:  
A well-proved casque, with leather braces bound,  
(Thy gift, Meriones,) his temples crown'd;  
Soft wool within; without, in order spread,(217)  
A boar's white teeth grinn'd horrid o'er his head.  
This from Amyntor, rich Ormenus' son,  
Autolycus by fraudulent rapine won,  
And gave Amphidamas; from him the prize  
Molus received, the pledge of social ties;  
The helmet next by Merion was possess'd,  
And now Ulysses' thoughtful temples press'd.  
Thus sheathed in arms, the council they forsake,  
And dark through paths oblique their progress take.  
Just then, in sign she favour'd their intent,

A long-wing'd heron great Minerva sent:  
This, though surrounding shades obscured their view.  
By the shrill clang and whistling wings they knew.  
As from the right she soar'd, Ulysses pray'd,  
Hail'd the glad omen, and address'd the maid:

"O daughter of that god whose arm can wield  
The avenging bolt, and shake the dreadful shield!  
O thou! for ever present in my way,  
Who all my motions, all my toils survey!  
Safe may we pass beneath the gloomy shade,  
Safe by thy succour to our ships convey'd,  
And let some deed this signal night adorn,  
To claim the tears of Trojans yet unborn."

Then godlike Diomed preferr'd his prayer:  
"Daughter of Jove, unconquer'd Pallas! hear.  
Great queen of arms, whose favour Tydeus won,  
As thou defend'st the sire, defend the son.  
When on Æsopus' banks the banded powers  
Of Greece he left, and sought the Theban towers,  
Peace was his charge; received with peaceful show,  
He went a legate, but return'd a foe:  
Then help'd by thee, and cover'd by thy shield,  
He fought with numbers, and made numbers yield.  
So now be present, O celestial maid!

So still continue to the race thine aid!  
A youthful steer shall fall beneath the stroke,  
Untamed, unconscious of the galling yoke,  
With ample forehead, and with spreading horns,  
Whose taper tops refulgent gold adorns."  
The heroes pray'd, and Pallas from the skies  
Accords their vow, succeeds their enterprise.  
Now, like two lions panting for the prey,  
With dreadful thoughts they trace the dreary way,  
Through the black horrors of the ensanguined plain,  
Through dust, through blood, o'er arms, and hills of slain.

Nor less bold Hector, and the sons of Troy,  
On high designs the wakeful hours employ;  
The assembled peers their lofty chief enclosed;  
Who thus the counsels of his breast proposed:

"What glorious man, for high attempts prepared,  
Dares greatly venture for a rich reward?  
Of yonder fleet a bold discovery make,  
What watch they keep, and what resolves they take?  
If now subdued they meditate their flight,  
And, spent with toil, neglect the watch of night?  
His be the chariot that shall please him most,  
Of all the plunder of the vanquish'd host;  
His the fair steeds that all the rest excel,



And his the glory to have served so well."

A youth there was among the tribes of Troy,  
Dolon his name, Eumedes' only boy,  
(Five girls beside the reverend herald told.)  
Rich was the son in brass, and rich in gold;  
Not bless'd by nature with the charms of face,  
But swift of foot, and matchless in the race.  
"Hector! (he said) my courage bids me meet  
This high achievement, and explore the fleet:  
But first exalt thy sceptre to the skies,  
And swear to grant me the demanded prize;  
The immortal coursers, and the glittering car,  
That bear Pelides through the ranks of war.  
Encouraged thus, no idle scout I go,  
Fulfil thy wish, their whole intention know,  
Even to the royal tent pursue my way,  
And all their counsels, all their aims betray."

The chief then heaved the golden sceptre high,  
Attesting thus the monarch of the sky:  
"Be witness thou! immortal lord of all!  
Whose thunder shakes the dark aerial hall:  
By none but Dolon shall this prize be borne,  
And him alone the immortal steeds adorn."

Thus Hector swore: the gods were call'd in vain,  
But the rash youth prepares to scour the plain:  
Across his back the bended bow he flung,  
A wolf's grey hide around his shoulders hung,  
A ferret's downy fur his helmet lined,  
And in his hand a pointed javelin shined.  
Then (never to return) he sought the shore,  
And trod the path his feet must tread no more.  
Scarce had he pass'd the steeds and Trojan throng,  
(Still bending forward as he coursed along,)  
When, on the hollow way, the approaching tread  
Ulysses mark'd, and thus to Diomed;

"O friend! I hear some step of hostile feet,  
Moving this way, or hastening to the fleet;  
Some spy, perhaps, to lurk beside the main;  
Or nightly pillager that strips the slain.  
Yet let him pass, and win a little space;  
Then rush behind him, and prevent his pace.  
But if too swift of foot he flies before,  
Confine his course along the fleet and shore,  
Betwixt the camp and him our spears employ,  
And intercept his hoped return to Troy."

With that they stepp'd aside, and stoop'd their head,  
(As Dolon pass'd,) behind a heap of dead:

Along the path the spy unwary flew;  
Soft, at just distance, both the chiefs pursue.  
So distant they, and such the space between,  
As when two teams of mules divide the green,  
(To whom the hind like shares of land allows,)  
When now new furrows part the approaching ploughs.  
Now Dolon, listening, heard them as they pass'd;  
Hector (he thought) had sent, and check'd his haste,  
Till scarce at distance of a javelin's throw,  
No voice succeeding, he perceived the foe.  
As when two skilful hounds the leveret wind;  
Or chase through woods obscure the trembling hind;  
Now lost, now seen, they intercept his way,  
And from the herd still turn the flying prey:  
So fast, and with such fears, the Trojan flew;  
So close, so constant, the bold Greeks pursue.  
Now almost on the fleet the dastard falls,  
And mingles with the guards that watch the walls;  
When brave Tydides stopp'd; a gen'rous thought  
(Inspired by Pallas) in his bosom wrought,  
Lest on the foe some forward Greek advance,  
And snatch the glory from his lifted lance.  
Then thus aloud: "Whoe'er thou art, remain;  
This javelin else shall fix thee to the plain."  
He said, and high in air the weapon cast,  
Which wilful err'd, and o'er his shoulder pass'd;

Then fix'd in earth. Against the trembling wood  
The wretch stood propp'd, and quiver'd as he stood;  
A sudden palsy seized his turning head;  
His loose teeth chatter'd, and his colour fled;  
The panting warriors seize him as he stands,  
And with unmanly tears his life demands.

"O spare my youth, and for the breath I owe,  
Large gifts of price my father shall bestow:  
Vast heaps of brass shall in your ships be told,  
And steel well-temper'd and refulgent gold."

To whom Ulysses made this wise reply:  
"Whoe'er thou art, be bold, nor fear to die.  
What moves thee, say, when sleep has closed the sight,  
To roam the silent fields in dead of night?  
Cam'st thou the secrets of our camp to find,  
By Hector prompted, or thy daring mind?  
Or art some wretch by hopes of plunder led,  
Through heaps of carnage, to despoil the dead?"

Then thus pale Dolon, with a fearful look:  
(Still, as he spoke, his limbs with horror shook:)  
"Hither I came, by Hector's words deceived;  
Much did he promise, rashly I believed:  
No less a bribe than great Achilles' car,

And those swift steeds that sweep the ranks of war,  
Urged me, unwilling, this attempt to make;  
To learn what counsels, what resolves you take:  
If now subdued, you fix your hopes on flight,  
And, tired with toils, neglect the watch of night."

"Bold was thy aim, and glorious was the prize,  
(Ulysses, with a scornful smile, replies,  
Far other rulers those proud steeds demand,  
And scorn the guidance of a vulgar hand;  
Even great Achilles scarce their rage can tame,  
Achilles sprung from an immortal dame.  
But say, be faithful, and the truth recite!  
Where lies encamp'd the Trojan chief to-night?  
Where stand his coursers? in what quarter sleep  
Their other princes? tell what watch they keep:  
Say, since this conquest, what their counsels are;  
Or here to combat, from their city far,  
Or back to Ilion's walls transfer the war?"

Ulysses thus, and thus Eumedes' son:  
"What Dolon knows, his faithful tongue shall own.  
Hector, the peers assembling in his tent,  
A council holds at Ilus' monument.  
No certain guards the nightly watch partake;  
Where'er yon fires ascend, the Trojans wake:

Anxious for Troy, the guard the natives keep;  
Safe in their cares, the auxiliar forces sleep,  
Whose wives and infants, from the danger far,  
Discharge their souls of half the fears of war."

"Then sleep those aids among the Trojan train,  
(Inquired the chief,) or scattered o'er the plain?"  
To whom the spy: "Their powers they thus dispose  
The Paeons, dreadful with their bended bows,  
The Carians, Caucons, the Pelasgian host,  
And Leleges, encamp along the coast.  
Not distant far, lie higher on the land  
The Lycian, Mysian, and Maeonian band,  
And Phrygia's horse, by Thymbras' ancient wall;  
The Thracians utmost, and apart from all.  
These Troy but lately to her succour won,  
Led on by Rhesus, great Eioneus' son:  
I saw his coursers in proud triumph go,  
Swift as the wind, and white as winter-snow;  
Rich silver plates his shining car infold;  
His solid arms, refulgent, flame with gold;  
No mortal shoulders suit the glorious load,  
Celestial panoply, to grace a god!  
Let me, unhappy, to your fleet be borne,  
Or leave me here, a captive's fate to mourn,  
In cruel chains, till your return reveal

The truth or falsehood of the news I tell."

To this Tydides, with a gloomy frown:

"Think not to live, though all the truth be shown:

Shall we dismiss thee, in some future strife

To risk more bravely thy now forfeit life?

Or that again our camps thou may'st explore?

No--once a traitor, thou betray'st no more."

Sternly he spoke, and as the wretch prepared

With humble blandishment to stroke his beard,

Like lightning swift the wrathful falchion flew,

Divides the neck, and cuts the nerves in two;

One instant snatch'd his trembling soul to hell,

The head, yet speaking, mutter'd as it fell.

The furry helmet from his brow they tear,

The wolf's grey hide, the unbended bow and spear;

These great Ulysses lifting to the skies,

To favouring Pallas dedicates the prize:

"Great queen of arms, receive this hostile spoil,

And let the Thracian steeds reward our toil;

Thee, first of all the heavenly host, we praise;

O speed our labours, and direct our ways!"

This said, the spoils, with dropping gore defaced,

High on a spreading tamarisk he placed;

Then heap'd with reeds and gathered boughs the plain,  
To guide their footsteps to the place again.

Through the still night they cross the devious fields,  
Slippery with blood, o'er arms and heaps of shields,  
Arriving where the Thracian squadrons lay,  
And eased in sleep the labours of the day.

Ranged in three lines they view the prostrate band:  
The horses yoked beside each warrior stand.  
Their arms in order on the ground reclined,  
Through the brown shade the fulgid weapons shined:  
Amidst lay Rhesus, stretch'd in sleep profound,  
And the white steeds behind his chariot bound.

The welcome sight Ulysses first descries,  
And points to Diomed the tempting prize.  
"The man, the coursers, and the car behold!  
Described by Dolon, with the arms of gold.  
Now, brave Tydides! now thy courage try,  
Approach the chariot, and the steeds untie;  
Or if thy soul aspire to fiercer deeds,  
Urge thou the slaughter, while I seize the steeds."

Pallas (this said) her hero's bosom warms,  
Breathed in his heart, and strung his nervous arms;  
Where'er he pass'd, a purple stream pursued  
His thirsty falchion, fat with hostile blood,



Bathed all his footsteps, dyed the fields with gore,  
And a low groan remurmur'd through the shore.  
So the grim lion, from his nightly den,  
O'erleaps the fences, and invades the pen,  
On sheep or goats, resistless in his way,  
He falls, and foaming rends the guardless prey;  
Nor stopp'd the fury of his vengeful hand,  
Till twelve lay breathless of the Thracian band.  
Ulysses following, as his partner slew,  
Back by the foot each slaughter'd warrior drew;  
The milk-white coursers studious to convey  
Safe to the ships, he wisely cleared the way:  
Lest the fierce steeds, not yet to battles bred,  
Should start, and tremble at the heaps of dead.  
Now twelve despatch'd, the monarch last they found;  
Tydides' falchion fix'd him to the ground.  
Just then a deathful dream Minerva sent,  
A warlike form appear'd before his tent,  
Whose visionary steel his bosom tore:  
So dream'd the monarch, and awaked no more.(218)

Ulysses now the snowy steeds detains,  
And leads them, fasten'd by the silver reins;  
These, with his bow unbent, he lash'd along;  
(The scourge forgot, on Rhesus' chariot hung;)  
Then gave his friend the signal to retire;

But him, new dangers, new achievements fire;  
Doubtful he stood, or with his reeking blade  
To send more heroes to the infernal shade,  
Drag off the car where Rhesus' armour lay,  
Or heave with manly force, and lift away.  
While unresolved the son of Tydeus stands,  
Pallas appears, and thus her chief commands:

"Enough, my son; from further slaughter cease,  
Regard thy safety, and depart in peace;  
Haste to the ships, the gotten spoils enjoy,  
Nor tempt too far the hostile gods of Troy."

The voice divine confess'd the martial maid;  
In haste he mounted, and her word obey'd;  
The coursers fly before Ulysses' bow,  
Swift as the wind, and white as winter-snow.

Not unobserved they pass'd: the god of light  
Had watch'd his Troy, and mark'd Minerva's flight,  
Saw Tydeus' son with heavenly succour bless'd,  
And vengeful anger fill'd his sacred breast.  
Swift to the Trojan camp descends the power,  
And wakes Hippocoon in the morning-hour;  
(On Rhesus' side accustom'd to attend,  
A faithful kinsman, and instructive friend;)

He rose, and saw the field deform'd with blood,  
An empty space where late the coursers stood,  
The yet-warm Thracians panting on the coast;  
For each he wept, but for his Rhesus most:  
Now while on Rhesus' name he calls in vain,  
The gathering tumult spreads o'er all the plain;  
On heaps the Trojans rush, with wild affright,  
And wondering view the slaughters of the night.

Meanwhile the chiefs, arriving at the shade  
Where late the spoils of Hector's spy were laid,  
Ulysses stopp'd; to him Tydides bore  
The trophy, dropping yet with Dolon's gore:  
Then mounts again; again their nimbler feet  
The coursers ply, and thunder towards the fleet.

Old Nestor first perceived the approaching sound,  
Bespeaking thus the Grecian peers around:  
"Methinks the noise of trampling steeds I hear,  
Thickening this way, and gathering on my ear;  
Perhaps some horses of the Trojan breed  
(So may, ye gods! my pious hopes succeed)  
The great Tydides and Ulysses bear,  
Return'd triumphant with this prize of war.  
Yet much I fear (ah, may that fear be vain!)  
The chiefs outnumber'd by the Trojan train;

Perhaps, even now pursued, they seek the shore;  
Or, oh! perhaps those heroes are no more."

Scarce had he spoke, when, lo! the chiefs appear,  
And spring to earth; the Greeks dismiss their fear:  
With words of friendship and extended hands  
They greet the kings; and Nestor first demands:

"Say thou, whose praises all our host proclaim,  
Thou living glory of the Grecian name!  
Say whence these coursers? by what chance bestow'd,  
The spoil of foes, or present of a god?  
Not those fair steeds, so radiant and so gay,  
That draw the burning chariot of the day.  
Old as I am, to age I scorn to yield,  
And daily mingle in the martial field;  
But sure till now no coursers struck my sight  
Like these, conspicuous through the ranks of fight.  
Some god, I deem, conferred the glorious prize,  
Bless'd as ye are, and favourites of the skies;  
The care of him who bids the thunder roar,  
And her, whose fury bathes the world with gore."

"Father! not so, (sage Ithacus rejoin'd,)  
The gifts of heaven are of a nobler kind.  
Of Thracian lineage are the steeds ye view,

Whose hostile king the brave Tydides slew;  
Sleeping he died, with all his guards around,  
And twelve beside lay gasping on the ground.  
These other spoils from conquer'd Dolon came,  
A wretch, whose swiftness was his only fame;  
By Hector sent our forces to explore,  
He now lies headless on the sandy shore."

Then o'er the trench the bounding coursers flew;  
The joyful Greeks with loud acclaim pursue.  
Straight to Tydides' high pavilion borne,  
The matchless steeds his ample stalls adorn:  
The neighing coursers their new fellows greet,  
And the full racks are heap'd with generous wheat.  
But Dolon's armour, to his ships convey'd,  
High on the painted stern Ulysses laid,  
A trophy destin'd to the blue-eyed maid.

Now from nocturnal sweat and sanguine stain  
They cleanse their bodies in the neighb'ring main:  
Then in the polished bath, refresh'd from toil,  
Their joints they supple with dissolving oil,  
In due repast indulge the genial hour,  
And first to Pallas the libations pour:  
They sit, rejoicing in her aid divine,  
And the crown'd goblet foams with floods of wine.