

BOOK XV.

ARGUMENT.

THE FIFTH BATTLE AT THE SHIPS; AND THE ACTS OF AJAX.

Jupiter, awaking, sees the Trojans repulsed from the trenches, Hector in a swoon, and Neptune at the head of the Greeks: he is highly incensed at the artifice of Juno, who appeases him by her submissions; she is then sent to Iris and Apollo. Juno, repairing to the assembly of the gods, attempts, with extraordinary address, to incense them against Jupiter; in particular she touches Mars with a violent resentment; he is ready to take arms, but is prevented by Minerva. Iris and Apollo obey the orders of Jupiter; Iris commands Neptune to leave the battle, to which, after much reluctance and passion, he consents. Apollo reinspiras Hector with vigour, brings him back to the battle, marches before him with his aegis, and turns the fortune of the fight. He breaks down great part of the Grecian wall: the Trojans rush in, and attempt to fire the first line of the fleet, but are, as yet, repelled by the greater Ajax with a prodigious slaughter.

Now in swift flight they pass the trench profound,
And many a chief lay gasping on the ground:
Then stopp'd and panted, where the chariots lie
Fear on their cheek, and horror in their eye.
Meanwhile, awaken'd from his dream of love,

On Ida's summit sat imperial Jove:
Round the wide fields he cast a careful view,
There saw the Trojans fly, the Greeks pursue;
These proud in arms, those scatter'd o'er the plain
And, 'midst the war, the monarch of the main.
Not far, great Hector on the dust he spies,
(His sad associates round with weeping eyes,)
Ejecting blood, and panting yet for breath,
His senses wandering to the verge of death.
The god beheld him with a pitying look,
And thus, incensed, to fraudulent Juno spoke:

"O thou, still adverse to the eternal will,
For ever studious in promoting ill!
Thy arts have made the godlike Hector yield,
And driven his conquering squadrons from the field.
Canst thou, unhappy in thy wiles, withstand
Our power immense, and brave the almighty hand?
Hast thou forgot, when, bound and fix'd on high,
From the vast concave of the spangled sky,
I hung thee trembling in a golden chain,
And all the raging gods opposed in vain?
Headlong I hurl'd them from the Olympian hall,
Stunn'd in the whirl, and breathless with the fall.
For godlike Hercules these deeds were done,
Nor seem'd the vengeance worthy such a son:

When, by thy wiles induced, fierce Boreas toss'd
The shipwreck'd hero on the Coan coast,

Him through a thousand forms of death I bore,
And sent to Argos, and his native shore.

Hear this, remember, and our fury dread,
Nor pull the unwilling vengeance on thy head;
Lest arts and blandishments successless prove,
Thy soft deceits, and well-dissembled love."

The Thunderer spoke: imperial Juno mourn'd,
And, trembling, these submissive words return'd:

"By every oath that powers immortal ties,
The foodful earth and all-infolding skies;
By thy black waves, tremendous Styx! that flow
Through the drear realms of gliding ghosts below;
By the dread honours of thy sacred head,
And that unbroken vow, our virgin bed!
Not by my arts the ruler of the main
Steps Troy in blood, and ranges round the plain:
By his own ardour, his own pity sway'd,
To help his Greeks, he fought and disobey'd:
Else had thy Juno better counsels given,
And taught submission to the sire of heaven."

"Think'st thou with me? fair empress of the skies!
(The immortal father with a smile replies;)
Then soon the haughty sea-god shall obey,
Nor dare to act but when we point the way.
If truth inspires thy tongue, proclaim our will
To yon bright synod on the Olympian hill;
Our high decree let various Iris know,
And call the god that bears the silver bow.
Let her descend, and from the embattled plain
Command the sea-god to his watery reign:
While Phoebus hastes great Hector to prepare
To rise afresh, and once more wake the war:
His labouring bosom re-inspires with breath,
And calls his senses from the verge of death.
Greece chased by Troy, even to Achilles' fleet,
Shall fall by thousands at the hero's feet.
He, not untouch'd with pity, to the plain
Shall send Patroclus, but shall send in vain.
What youths he slaughters under Ilion's walls!
Even my loved son, divine Sarpedon, falls!
Vanquish'd at last by Hector's lance he lies.
Then, nor till then, shall great Achilles rise:
And lo! that instant, godlike Hector dies.
From that great hour the war's whole fortune turns,
Pallas assists, and lofty Ilion burns.
Not till that day shall Jove relax his rage,

Nor one of all the heavenly host engage
In aid of Greece. The promise of a god
I gave, and seal'd it with the almighty nod,
Achilles' glory to the stars to raise;
Such was our word, and fate the word obeys."

The trembling queen (the almighty order given)
Swift from the Idaean summit shot to heaven.
As some wayfaring man, who wanders o'er
In thought a length of lands he trod before,
Sends forth his active mind from place to place,
Joins hill to dale, and measures space with space:
So swift flew Juno to the bless'd abodes,
If thought of man can match the speed of gods.
There sat the powers in awful synod placed;
They bow'd, and made obeisance as she pass'd
Through all the brazen dome: with goblets crown'd(239)
They hail her queen; the nectar streams around.
Fair Themis first presents the golden bowl,
And anxious asks what cares disturb her soul?

To whom the white-arm'd goddess thus replies:
"Enough thou know'st the tyrant of the skies,
Severely bent his purpose to fulfil,
Unmoved his mind, and unrestrain'd his will.
Go thou, the feasts of heaven attend thy call;

Bid the crown'd nectar circle round the hall:
But Jove shall thunder through the ethereal dome
Such stern decrees, such threaten'd woes to come,
As soon shall freeze mankind with dire surprise,
And damp the eternal banquets of the skies."

The goddess said, and sullen took her place;
Black horror sadden'd each celestial face.
To see the gathering grudge in every breast,
Smiles on her lips a spleenful joy express'd;
While on her wrinkled front, and eyebrow bent,
Sat stedfast care, and lowering discontent.
Thus she proceeds--"Attend, ye powers above!
But know, 'tis madness to contest with Jove:
Supreme he sits; and sees, in pride of sway.
Your vassal godheads grudgingly obey:
Fierce in the majesty of power controls;
Shakes all the thrones of heaven, and bends the poles.
Submiss, immortals! all he wills, obey:
And thou, great Mars, begin and show the way.
Behold Ascalaphus! behold him die,
But dare not murmur, dare not vent a sigh;
Thy own loved boasted offspring lies o'erthrown,
If that loved boasted offspring be thy own."

Stern Mars, with anguish for his slaughter'd son,

Smote his rebelling breast, and fierce begun:
"Thus then, immortals! thus shall Mars obey;
Forgive me, gods, and yield my vengeance way:
Descending first to yon forbidden plain,
The god of battles dares avenge the slain;
Dares, though the thunder bursting o'er my head
Should hurl me blazing on those heaps of dead."

With that he gives command to Fear and Flight
To join his rapid coursers for the fight:
Then grim in arms, with hasty vengeance flies;
Arms that reflect a radiance through the skies.
And now had Jove, by bold rebellion driven,
Discharged his wrath on half the host of heaven;
But Pallas, springing through the bright abode,
Starts from her azure throne to calm the god.
Struck for the immortal race with timely fear,
From frantic Mars she snatch'd the shield and spear;
Then the huge helmet lifting from his head,
Thus to the impetuous homicide she said:

"By what wild passion, furious! art thou toss'd?
Striv'st thou with Jove? thou art already lost.
Shall not the Thunderer's dread command restrain,
And was imperial Juno heard in vain?
Back to the skies wouldst thou with shame be driven,

And in thy guilt involve the host of heaven?
Ilion and Greece no more should Jove engage,
The skies would yield an ampler scene of rage;
Guilty and guiltless find an equal fate
And one vast ruin overwhelm the Olympian state.
Cease then thy offspring's death unjust to call;
Heroes as great have died, and yet shall fall.
Why should heaven's law with foolish man comply
Exempted from the race ordain'd to die?"

This menace fix'd the warrior to his throne;
Sullen he sat, and curb'd the rising groan.
Then Juno call'd (Jove's orders to obey)
The winged Iris, and the god of day.
"Go wait the Thunderer's will (Saturnia cried)
On yon tall summit of the fountful Ide:
There in the father's awful presence stand,
Receive, and execute his dread command."

She said, and sat; the god that gilds the day,
And various Iris, wing their airy way.
Swift as the wind, to Ida's hills they came,
(Fair nurse of fountains, and of savage game)
There sat the eternal; he whose nod controls
The trembling world, and shakes the steady poles.
Veil'd in a mist of fragrance him they found,

With clouds of gold and purple circled round.
Well-pleas'd the Thunderer saw their earnest care,
And prompt obedience to the queen of air;
Then (while a smile serenest his awful brow)
Commands the goddess of the showery bow:

"Iris! descend, and what we here ordain,
Report to yon mad tyrant of the main.
Bid him from fight to his own deeps repair,
Or breathe from slaughter in the fields of air.
If he refuse, then let him timely weigh
Our elder birthright, and superior sway.
How shall his rashness stand the dire alarms,
If heaven's omnipotence descend in arms?
Strives he with me, by whom his power was given,
And is there equal to the lord of heaven?"

The all-mighty spoke; the goddess wing'd her flight
To sacred Ilion from the Idaean height.
Swift as the rattling hail, or fleecy snows,
Drive through the skies, when Boreas fiercely blows;
So from the clouds descending Iris falls,
And to blue Neptune thus the goddess calls:

"Attend the mandate of the sire above!
In me behold the messenger of Jove:

He bids thee from forbidden wars repair
To thine own deeps, or to the fields of air.
This if refused, he bids thee timely weigh
His elder birthright, and superior sway.
How shall thy rashness stand the dire alarms
If heaven's omnipotence descend in arms?
Striv'st thou with him by whom all power is given?
And art thou equal to the lord of heaven?"

"What means the haughty sovereign of the skies?

(The king of ocean thus, incensed, replies;)

Rule as he will his portion'd realms on high;

No vassal god, nor of his train, am I.

Three brother deities from Saturn came,

And ancient Rhea, earth's immortal dame:

Assign'd by lot, our triple rule we know;

Infernal Pluto sways the shades below;

O'er the wide clouds, and o'er the starry plain,

Ethereal Jove extends his high domain;

My court beneath the hoary waves I keep,

And hush the roarings of the sacred deep;

Olympus, and this earth, in common lie:

What claim has here the tyrant of the sky?

Far in the distant clouds let him control,

And awe the younger brothers of the pole;

There to his children his commands be given,

The trembling, servile, second race of heaven."

"And must I then (said she), O sire of floods!
Bear this fierce answer to the king of gods?
Correct it yet, and change thy rash intent;
A noble mind disdains not to repent.
To elder brothers guardian fiends are given,
To scourge the wretch insulting them and heaven."

"Great is the profit (thus the god rejoin'd)
When ministers are blest with prudent mind:
Warn'd by thy words, to powerful Jove I yield,
And quit, though angry, the contended field:
Not but his threats with justice I disclaim,
The same our honours, and our birth the same.
If yet, forgetful of his promise given
To Hermes, Pallas, and the queen of heaven,
To favour Ilion, that perfidious place,
He breaks his faith with half the ethereal race;
Give him to know, unless the Grecian train
Lay yon proud structures level with the plain,
Howe'er the offence by other gods be pass'd,
The wrath of Neptune shall for ever last."

Thus speaking, furious from the field he strode,
And plunged into the bosom of the flood.

The lord of thunders, from his lofty height
Beheld, and thus bespoke the source of light:

"Behold! the god whose liquid arms are hurl'd
Around the globe, whose earthquakes rock the world,
Desists at length his rebel-war to wage,
Seeks his own seas, and trembles at our rage;
Else had my wrath, heaven's thrones all shaking round,
Burn'd to the bottom of his seas profound;
And all the gods that round old Saturn dwell
Had heard the thunders to the deeps of hell.
Well was the crime, and well the vengeance spared;
Even power immense had found such battle hard.
Go thou, my son! the trembling Greeks alarm,
Shake my broad aegis on thy active arm,
Be godlike Hector thy peculiar care,
Swell his bold heart, and urge his strength to war:
Let Ilion conquer, till the Achaian train
Fly to their ships and Hellespont again:
Then Greece shall breathe from toils." The godhead said;
His will divine the son of Jove obey'd.
Not half so swift the sailing falcon flies,
That drives a turtle through the liquid skies,
As Phoebus, shooting from the Idaean brow,
Glides down the mountain to the plain below.
There Hector seated by the stream he sees,

His sense returning with the coming breeze;
Again his pulses beat, his spirits rise;
Again his loved companions meet his eyes;
Jove thinking of his pains, they pass'd away,
To whom the god who gives the golden day:

"Why sits great Hector from the field so far?
What grief, what wound, withholds thee from the war?"

The fainting hero, as the vision bright
Stood shining o'er him, half unseal'd his sight:

"What blest immortal, with commanding breath,
Thus wakens Hector from the sleep of death?
Has fame not told, how, while my trusty sword
Bathed Greece in slaughter, and her battle gored,
The mighty Ajax with a deadly blow
Had almost sunk me to the shades below?
Even yet, methinks, the gliding ghosts I spy,
And hell's black horrors swim before my eye."

To him Apollo: "Be no more dismay'd;
See, and be strong! the Thunderer sends thee aid.
Behold! thy Phoebus shall his arms employ,
Phoebus, propitious still to thee and Troy.
Inspire thy warriors then with manly force,

And to the ships impel thy rapid horse:
Even I will make thy fiery coursers way,
And drive the Grecians headlong to the sea."

Thus to bold Hector spoke the son of Jove,
And breathed immortal ardour from above.
As when the pamper'd steed, with reins unbound,
Breaks from his stall, and pours along the ground;
With ample strokes he rushes to the flood,
To bathe his sides, and cool his fiery blood;
His head, now freed, he tosses to the skies;
His mane dishevell'd o'er his shoulders flies:
He snuffs the females in the well-known plain,
And springs, exulting, to his fields again:
Urged by the voice divine, thus Hector flew,
Full of the god; and all his hosts pursue.
As when the force of men and dogs combined
Invade the mountain goat, or branching hind;
Far from the hunter's rage secure they lie
Close in the rock, (not fated yet to die)
When lo! a lion shoots across the way!
They fly: at once the chasers and the prey.
So Greece, that late in conquering troops pursued,
And mark'd their progress through the ranks in blood,
Soon as they see the furious chief appear,
Forget to vanquish, and consent to fear.

Thoas with grief observed his dreadful course,
Thoas, the bravest of the Ætolian force;
Skill'd to direct the javelin's distant flight,
And bold to combat in the standing fight,
Not more in councils famed for solid sense,
Than winning words and heavenly eloquence.
"Gods! what portent (he cried) these eyes invades?
Lo! Hector rises from the Stygian shades!
We saw him, late, by thundering Ajax kill'd:
What god restores him to the frighted field;
And not content that half of Greece lie slain,
Pours new destruction on her sons again?
He comes not, Jove! without thy powerful will;
Lo! still he lives, pursues, and conquers still!
Yet hear my counsel, and his worst withstand:
The Greeks' main body to the fleet command;
But let the few whom brisker spirits warm,
Stand the first onset, and provoke the storm.
Thus point your arms; and when such foes appear,
Fierce as he is, let Hector learn to fear."

The warrior spoke; the listening Greeks obey,
Thickening their ranks, and form a deep array.

Each Ajax, Teucer, Merion gave command,

The valiant leader of the Cretan band;
And Mars-like Meges: these the chiefs excite,
Approach the foe, and meet the coming fight.
Behind, unnumber'd multitudes attend,
To flank the navy, and the shores defend.
Full on the front the pressing Trojans bear,
And Hector first came towering to the war.
Phoebus himself the rushing battle led;
A veil of clouds involved his radiant head:
High held before him, Jove's enormous shield
Portentous shone, and shaded all the field;
Vulcan to Jove the immortal gift consign'd,
To scatter hosts and terrify mankind,
The Greeks expect the shock, the clamours rise
From different parts, and mingle in the skies.
Dire was the hiss of darts, by heroes flung,
And arrows leaping from the bow-string sung;
These drink the life of generous warriors slain:
Those guiltless fall, and thirst for blood in vain.
As long as Phoebus bore unmoved the shield,
Sat doubtful conquest hovering o'er the field;
But when aloft he shakes it in the skies,
Shouts in their ears, and lightens in their eyes,
Deep horror seizes every Grecian breast,
Their force is humbled, and their fear confess'd.
So flies a herd of oxen, scatter'd wide,

No swain to guard them, and no day to guide,
When two fell lions from the mountain come,
And spread the carnage through the shady gloom.
Impending Phoebus pours around them fear,
And Troy and Hector thunder in the rear.
Heaps fall on heaps: the slaughter Hector leads,
First great Arcesilas, then Stichius bleeds;
One to the bold Boeotians ever dear,
And one Menestheus' friend and famed compeer.
Medon and Iasus, Æneas sped;
This sprang from Phelus, and the Athenians led;
But hapless Medon from Oileus came;
Him Ajax honour'd with a brother's name,
Though born of lawless love: from home expell'd,
A banish'd man, in Phylace he dwell'd,
Press'd by the vengeance of an angry wife;
Troy ends at last his labours and his life.
Mecystes next Polydamas o'erthrew;
And thee, brave Clonius, great Agenor slew.
By Paris, Deiochus inglorious dies,
Pierced through the shoulder as he basely flies.
Polites' arm laid Echius on the plain;
Stretch'd on one heap, the victors spoil the slain.
The Greeks dismay'd, confused, disperse or fall,
Some seek the trench, some skulk behind the wall.
While these fly trembling, others pant for breath,

And o'er the slaughter stalks gigantic death.
On rush'd bold Hector, gloomy as the night;
Forbids to plunder, animates the fight,
Points to the fleet: "For, by the gods! who flies,(240)
Who dares but linger, by this hand he dies;
No weeping sister his cold eye shall close,
No friendly hand his funeral pyre compose.
Who stops to plunder at this signal hour,
The birds shall tear him, and the dogs devour."
Furious he said; the smarting scourge resounds;
The coursers fly; the smoking chariot bounds;
The hosts rush on; loud clamours shake the shore;
The horses thunder, earth and ocean roar!
Apollo, planted at the trench's bound,
Push'd at the bank: down sank the enormous mound:
Roll'd in the ditch the heapy ruin lay;
A sudden road! a long and ample way.
O'er the dread fosse (a late impervious space)
Now steeds, and men, and cars tumultuous pass.
The wondering crowds the downward level trod;
Before them flamed the shield, and march'd the god.
Then with his hand he shook the mighty wall;
And lo! the turrets nod, the bulwarks fall:
Easy as when ashore an infant stands,
And draws imagined houses in the sands;
The sportive wanton, pleased with some new play,

Sweeps the slight works and fashion'd domes away:
Thus vanish'd at thy touch, the towers and walls;
The toil of thousands in a moment falls.

The Grecians gaze around with wild despair,
Confused, and weary all the powers with prayer:
Exhort their men, with praises, threats, commands;
And urge the gods, with voices, eyes, and hands.
Experienced Nestor chief obtests the skies,
And weeps his country with a father's eyes.

"O Jove! if ever, on his native shore,
One Greek enrich'd thy shrine with offer'd gore;
If e'er, in hope our country to behold,
We paid the fattest firstlings of the fold;
If e'er thou sign'st our wishes with thy nod:
Perform the promise of a gracious god!
This day preserve our navies from the flame,
And save the relics of the Grecian name."

Thus prayed the sage: the eternal gave consent,
And peals of thunder shook the firmament.
Presumptuous Troy mistook the accepting sign,
And catch'd new fury at the voice divine.
As, when black tempests mix the seas and skies,
The roaring deeps in watery mountains rise,

Above the sides of some tall ship ascend,
Its womb they deluge, and its ribs they rend:
Thus loudly roaring, and o'erpowering all,
Mount the thick Trojans up the Grecian wall;
Legions on legions from each side arise:
Thick sound the keels; the storm of arrows flies.
Fierce on the ships above, the cars below,
These wield the mace, and those the javelin throw.

While thus the thunder of the battle raged,
And labouring armies round the works engaged,
Still in the tent Patroclus sat to tend
The good Eurypylus, his wounded friend.
He sprinkles healing balms, to anguish kind,
And adds discourse, the medicine of the mind.
But when he saw, ascending up the fleet,
Victorious Troy; then, starting from his seat,
With bitter groans his sorrows he express'd,
He wrings his hands, he beats his manly breast.
"Though yet thy state require redress (he cries)
Depart I must: what horrors strike my eyes!
Charged with Achilles' high command I go,
A mournful witness of this scene of woe;
I haste to urge him by his country's care
To rise in arms, and shine again in war.
Perhaps some favouring god his soul may bend;

The voice is powerful of a faithful friend."

He spoke; and, speaking, swifter than the wind
Sprung from the tent, and left the war behind.
The embodied Greeks the fierce attack sustain,
But strive, though numerous, to repulse in vain:
Nor could the Trojans, through that firm array,
Force to the fleet and tents the impervious way.
As when a shipwright, with Palladian art,
Smooths the rough wood, and levels every part;
With equal hand he guides his whole design,
By the just rule, and the directing line:
The martial leaders, with like skill and care,
Preserved their line, and equal kept the war.
Brave deeds of arms through all the ranks were tried,
And every ship sustained an equal tide.
At one proud bark, high-towering o'er the fleet,
Ajax the great, and godlike Hector meet;
For one bright prize the matchless chiefs contend,
Nor this the ships can fire, nor that defend:
One kept the shore, and one the vessel trod;
That fix'd as fate, this acted by a god.
The son of Clytius in his daring hand,
The deck approaching, shakes a flaming brand;
But, pierced by Telamon's huge lance, expires:
Thundering he falls, and drops the extinguish'd fires.

Great Hector view'd him with a sad survey,
As stretch'd in dust before the stern he lay.
"Oh! all of Trojan, all of Lycian race!
Stand to your arms, maintain this arduous space:
Lo! where the son of royal Clytius lies;
Ah, save his arms, secure his obsequies!"

This said, his eager javelin sought the foe:
But Ajax shunn'd the meditated blow.
Not vainly yet the forceful lance was thrown;
It stretch'd in dust unhappy Lycophron:
An exile long, sustain'd at Ajax' board,
A faithful servant to a foreign lord;
In peace, and war, for ever at his side,
Near his loved master, as he lived, he died.
From the high poop he tumbles on the sand,
And lies a lifeless load along the land.
With anguish Ajax views the piercing sight,
And thus inflames his brother to the fight:

"Teucer, behold! extended on the shore
Our friend, our loved companion! now no more!
Dear as a parent, with a parent's care
To fight our wars he left his native air.
This death deplored, to Hector's rage we owe;
Revenge, revenge it on the cruel foe.

Where are those darts on which the fates attend?
And where the bow which Phoebus taught to bend?"

Impatient Teucer, hastening to his aid,
Before the chief his ample bow display'd;
The well-stored quiver on his shoulders hung:
Then hiss'd his arrow, and the bowstring sung.
Clytus, Pisenor's son, renown'd in fame,
(To thee, Polydamas! an honour'd name)
Drove through the thickest of the embattled plains
The startling steeds, and shook his eager reins.
As all on glory ran his ardent mind,
The pointed death arrests him from behind:
Through his fair neck the thrilling arrow flies;
In youth's first bloom reluctantly he dies.
Hurl'd from the lofty seat, at distance far,
The headlong coursers spurn his empty car;
Till sad Polydamas the steeds restrain'd,
And gave, Astynous, to thy careful hand;
Then, fired to vengeance, rush'd amidst the foe:
Rage edged his sword, and strengthen'd every blow.

Once more bold Teucer, in his country's cause,
At Hector's breast a chosen arrow draws:
And had the weapon found the destined way,
Thy fall, great Trojan! had renown'd that day.

But Hector was not doom'd to perish then:
The all-wise disposer of the fates of men
(Imperial Jove) his present death withstands;
Nor was such glory due to Teucer's hands.
At its full stretch as the tough string he drew,
Struck by an arm unseen, it burst in two;
Down dropp'd the bow: the shaft with brazen head
Fell innocent, and on the dust lay dead.
The astonish'd archer to great Ajax cries;
"Some god prevents our destined enterprise:
Some god, propitious to the Trojan foe,
Has, from my arm unfailing, struck the bow,
And broke the nerve my hands had twined with art,
Strong to impel the flight of many a dart."

"Since heaven commands it (Ajax made reply)
Dismiss the bow, and lay thy arrows by:
Thy arms no less suffice the lance to wield,
And quit the quiver for the ponderous shield.
In the first ranks indulge thy thirst of fame,
Thy brave example shall the rest inflame.
Fierce as they are, by long successes vain;
To force our fleet, or even a ship to gain,
Asks toil, and sweat, and blood: their utmost might
Shall find its match--No more: 'tis ours to fight."

Then Teucer laid his faithless bow aside;
The fourfold buckler o'er his shoulder tied;
On his brave head a crested helm he placed,
With nodding horse-hair formidably graced;
A dart, whose point with brass refulgent shines,
The warrior wields; and his great brother joins.

This Hector saw, and thus express'd his joy:
"Ye troops of Lycia, Dardanus, and Troy!
Be mindful of yourselves, your ancient fame,
And spread your glory with the navy's flame.
Jove is with us; I saw his hand, but now,
From the proud archer strike his vaunted bow:
Indulgent Jove! how plain thy favours shine,
When happy nations bear the marks divine!
How easy then, to see the sinking state
Of realms accursed, deserted, reprobate!
Such is the fate of Greece, and such is ours:
Behold, ye warriors, and exert your powers.
Death is the worst; a fate which all must try;
And for our country, 'tis a bliss to die.
The gallant man, though slain in fight he be,
Yet leaves his nation safe, his children free;
Entails a debt on all the grateful state;
His own brave friends shall glory in his fate;
His wife live honour'd, all his race succeed,

And late posterity enjoy the deed!"

This roused the soul in every Trojan breast:

The godlike Ajax next his Greeks address'd:

"How long, ye warriors of the Argive race,
(To generous Argos what a dire disgrace!)
How long on these cursed confines will ye lie,
Yet undetermined, or to live or die?
What hopes remain, what methods to retire,
If once your vessels catch the Trojan fire?
Make how the flames approach, how near they fall,
How Hector calls, and Troy obeys his call!
Not to the dance that dreadful voice invites,
It calls to death, and all the rage of fights.
'Tis now no time for wisdom or debates;
To your own hands are trusted all your fates;
And better far in one decisive strife,
One day should end our labour or our life,
Than keep this hard-got inch of barren sands,
Still press'd, and press'd by such inglorious hands."

The listening Grecians feel their leader's flame,

And every kindling bosom pants for fame.

Then mutual slaughters spread on either side;

By Hector here the Phocian Schedius died;

There, pierced by Ajax, sunk Laodamas,
Chief of the foot, of old Antenor's race.
Polydamas laid Otus on the sand,
The fierce commander of the Epeian band.
His lance bold Meges at the victor threw;
The victor, stooping, from the death withdrew;
(That valued life, O Phoebus! was thy care)
But Croesmus' bosom took the flying spear:
His corpse fell bleeding on the slippery shore;
His radiant arms triumphant Meges bore.
Dolops, the son of Lampus, rushes on,
Sprung from the race of old Laomedon,
And famed for prowess in a well-fought field,
He pierced the centre of his sounding shield:
But Meges, Phyleus' ample breastplate wore,
(Well-known in fight on Selle's winding shore;
For king Euphetes gave the golden mail,
Compact, and firm with many a jointed scale)
Which oft, in cities storm'd, and battles won,
Had saved the father, and now saves the son.
Full at the Trojan's head he urged his lance,
Where the high plumes above the helmet dance,
New ting'd with Tyrian dye: in dust below,
Shorn from the crest, the purple honours glow.
Meantime their fight the Spartan king survey'd,
And stood by Meges' side a sudden aid.

Through Dolops' shoulder urged his forceful dart,
Which held its passage through the panting heart,
And issued at his breast. With thundering sound
The warrior falls, extended on the ground.
In rush the conquering Greeks to spoil the slain:
But Hector's voice excites his kindred train;
The hero most, from Hicetaon sprung,
Fierce Melanippus, gallant, brave, and young.
He (ere to Troy the Grecians cross'd the main)
Fed his large oxen on Percote's plain;
But when oppress'd, his country claim'd his care,
Return'd to Ilion, and excell'd in war;
For this, in Priam's court, he held his place,
Beloved no less than Priam's royal race.
Him Hector singled, as his troops he led,
And thus inflamed him, pointing to the dead.

"Lo, Melanippus! lo, where Dolops lies;
And is it thus our royal kinsman dies?
O'ermatch'd he falls; to two at once a prey,
And lo! they bear the bloody arms away!
Come on--a distant war no longer wage,
But hand to hand thy country's foes engage:
Till Greece at once, and all her glory end;
Or Ilion from her towery height descend,
Heaved from the lowest stone; and bury all

In one sad sepulchre, one common fall."

Hector (this said) rush'd forward on the foes:

With equal ardour Melanippus glows:

Then Ajax thus--"O Greeks! respect your fame,

Respect yourselves, and learn an honest shame:

Let mutual reverence mutual warmth inspire,

And catch from breast to breast the noble fire,

On valour's side the odds of combat lie;

The brave live glorious, or lamented die;

The wretch that trembles in the field of fame,

Meets death, and worse than death, eternal shame."

His generous sense he not in vain imparts;

It sunk, and rooted in the Grecian hearts:

They join, they throng, they thicken at his call,

And flank the navy with a brazen wall;

Shields touching shields, in order blaze above,

And stop the Trojans, though impell'd by Jove.

The fiery Spartan first, with loud applause.

Warms the bold son of Nestor in his cause.

"Is there (he said) in arms a youth like you,

So strong to fight, so active to pursue?

Why stand you distant, nor attempt a deed?

Lift the bold lance, and make some Trojan bleed."

He said; and backward to the lines retired;
Forth rush'd the youth with martial fury fired,
Beyond the foremost ranks; his lance he threw,
And round the black battalions cast his view.
The troops of Troy recede with sudden fear,
While the swift javelin hiss'd along in air.
Advancing Melanippus met the dart
With his bold breast, and felt it in his heart:
Thundering he falls; his falling arms resound,
And his broad buckler rings against the ground.
The victor leaps upon his prostrate prize:
Thus on a roe the well-breath'd beagle flies,
And rends his side, fresh-bleeding with the dart
The distant hunter sent into his heart.
Observing Hector to the rescue flew;
Bold as he was, Antilochus withdrew.
So when a savage, ranging o'er the plain,
Has torn the shepherd's dog, or shepherd's swain,
While conscious of the deed, he glares around,
And hears the gathering multitude resound,
Timely he flies the yet-untasted food,
And gains the friendly shelter of the wood:
So fears the youth; all Troy with shouts pursue,
While stones and darts in mingled tempest flew;
But enter'd in the Grecian ranks, he turns
His manly breast, and with new fury burns.

Now on the fleet the tides of Trojans drove,
Fierce to fulfil the stern decrees of Jove:
The sire of gods, confirming Thetis' prayer,
The Grecian ardour quench'd in deep despair;
But lifts to glory Troy's prevailing bands,
Swells all their hearts, and strengthens all their hands.
On Ida's top he waits with longing eyes,
To view the navy blazing to the skies;
Then, nor till then, the scale of war shall turn,
The Trojans fly, and conquer'd Ilium burn.
These fates revolved in his almighty mind,
He raises Hector to the work design'd,
Bids him with more than mortal fury glow,
And drives him, like a lightning, on the foe.
So Mars, when human crimes for vengeance call,
Shakes his huge javelin, and whole armies fall.
Not with more rage a conflagration rolls,
Wraps the vast mountains, and involves the poles.
He foams with wrath; beneath his gloomy brow
Like fiery meteors his red eye-balls glow:
The radiant helmet on his temple burns,
Waves when he nods, and lightens as he turns:
For Jove his splendour round the chief had thrown,
And cast the blaze of both the hosts on one.
Unhappy glories! for his fate was near,

Due to stern Pallas, and Pelides' spear:
Yet Jove deferr'd the death he was to pay,
And gave what fate allow'd, the honours of a day!

Now all on fire for fame, his breast, his eyes
Burn at each foe, and single every prize;
Still at the closest ranks, the thickest fight,
He points his ardour, and exerts his might.
The Grecian phalanx, moveless as a tower,
On all sides batter'd, yet resists his power:
So some tall rock o'erhangs the hoary main,(241)
By winds assail'd, by billows beat in vain,
Unmoved it hears, above, the tempest blow,
And sees the watery mountains break below.
Girt in surrounding flames, he seems to fall
Like fire from Jove, and bursts upon them all:
Bursts as a wave that from the cloud impends,
And, swell'd with tempests, on the ship descends;
White are the decks with foam; the winds aloud
Howl o'er the masts, and sing through every shroud:
Pale, trembling, tired, the sailors freeze with fears;
And instant death on every wave appears.
So pale the Greeks the eyes of Hector meet,
The chief so thunders, and so shakes the fleet.

As when a lion, rushing from his den,

Amidst the plain of some wide-water'd fen,
(Where numerous oxen, as at ease they feed,
At large expatiate o'er the ranker mead)
Leaps on the herds before the herdsman's eyes;
The trembling herdsman far to distance flies;
Some lordly bull (the rest dispersed and fled)
He singles out; arrests, and lays him dead.
Thus from the rage of Jove-like Hector flew
All Greece in heaps; but one he seized, and slew:
Mycenian Periphes, a mighty name,
In wisdom great, in arms well known to fame;
The minister of stern Eurystheus' ire
Against Alcides, Copreus was his sire:
The son redeem'd the honours of the race,
A son as generous as the sire was base;
O'er all his country's youth conspicuous far
In every virtue, or of peace or war:
But doom'd to Hector's stronger force to yield!
Against the margin of his ample shield
He struck his hasty foot: his heels up-sprung;
Supine he fell; his brazen helmet rung.
On the fallen chief the invading Trojan press'd,
And plunged the pointed javelin in his breast.
His circling friends, who strove to guard too late
The unhappy hero, fled, or shared his fate.

Chased from the foremost line, the Grecian train
Now man the next, receding toward the main:
Wedge'd in one body at the tents they stand,
Wall'd round with sterns, a gloomy, desperate band.
Now manly shame forbids the inglorious flight;
Now fear itself confines them to the fight:
Man courage breathes in man; but Nestor most
(The sage preserver of the Grecian host)
Exhorts, adjures, to guard these utmost shores;
And by their parents, by themselves implores.

"Oh friends! be men: your generous breasts inflame
With mutual honour, and with mutual shame!
Think of your hopes, your fortunes; all the care
Your wives, your infants, and your parents share:
Think of each living father's reverend head;
Think of each ancestor with glory dead;
Absent, by me they speak, by me they sue,
They ask their safety, and their fame, from you:
The gods their fates on this one action lay,
And all are lost, if you desert the day."

He spoke, and round him breathed heroic fires;
Minerva seconds what the sage inspires.
The mist of darkness Jove around them threw
She clear'd, restoring all the war to view;

A sudden ray shot beaming o'er the plain,
And show'd the shores, the navy, and the main:
Hector they saw, and all who fly, or fight,
The scene wide-opening to the blaze of light,
First of the field great Ajax strikes their eyes,
His port majestic, and his ample size:
A ponderous mace with studs of iron crown'd,
Full twenty cubits long, he swings around;
Nor fights, like others, fix'd to certain stands
But looks a moving tower above the bands;
High on the decks with vast gigantic stride,
The godlike hero stalks from side to side.
So when a horseman from the watery mead
(Skill'd in the manage of the bounding steed)
Drives four fair coursers, practised to obey,
To some great city through the public way;
Safe in his art, as side by side they run,
He shifts his seat, and vaults from one to one;
And now to this, and now to that he flies;
Admiring numbers follow with their eyes.

From ship to ship thus Ajax swiftly flew,
No less the wonder of the warring crew.
As furious, Hector thunder'd threats aloud,
And rush'd enraged before the Trojan crowd;
Then swift invades the ships, whose beaky proes

Lay rank'd contiguous on the bending shores;
So the strong eagle from his airy height,
Who marks the swans' or cranes' embodied flight,
Stoops down impetuous, while they light for food,
And, stooping, darkens with his wings the flood.
Jove leads him on with his almighty hand,
And breathes fierce spirits in his following band.
The warring nations meet, the battle roars,
Thick beats the combat on the sounding proes.
Thou wouldst have thought, so furious was their fire,
No force could tame them, and no toil could tire;
As if new vigour from new fights they won,
And the long battle was but then begun.
Greece, yet unconquer'd, kept alive the war,
Secure of death, confiding in despair:
Troy in proud hopes already view'd the main
Bright with the blaze, and red with heroes slain:
Like strength is felt from hope, and from despair,
And each contends, as his were all the war.

"Twas thou, bold Hector! whose resistless hand
First seized a ship on that contested strand;
The same which dead Protesilaus bore,(242)
The first that touch'd the unhappy Trojan shore:
For this in arms the warring nations stood,
And bathed their generous breasts with mutual blood.

No room to poise the lance or bend the bow;
But hand to hand, and man to man, they grow:
Wounded, they wound; and seek each other's hearts
With falchions, axes, swords, and shorten'd darts.
The falchions ring, shields rattle, axes sound,
Swords flash in air, or glitter on the ground;
With streaming blood the slippery shores are dyed,
And slaughter'd heroes swell the dreadful tide.

Still raging, Hector with his ample hand
Grasps the high stern, and gives this loud command:

"Haste, bring the flames! that toil of ten long years
Is finished; and the day desired appears!
This happy day with acclamations greet,
Bright with destruction of yon hostile fleet.
The coward-counsels of a timorous throng
Of reverend dotards check'd our glory long:
Too long Jove lull'd us with lethargic charms,
But now in peals of thunder calls to arms:
In this great day he crowns our full desires,
Wakes all our force, and seconds all our fires."

He spoke--the warriors at his fierce command
Pour a new deluge on the Grecian band.
Even Ajax paused, (so thick the javelins fly,)

Stepp'd back, and doubted or to live or die.
Yet, where the oars are placed, he stands to wait
What chief approaching dares attempt his fate:
Even to the last his naval charge defends,
Now shakes his spear, now lifts, and now protends;
Even yet, the Greeks with piercing shouts inspires,
Amidst attacks, and deaths, and darts, and fires.

"O friends! O heroes! names for ever dear,
Once sons of Mars, and thunderbolts of war!
Ah! yet be mindful of your old renown,
Your great forefathers' virtues and your own.
What aids expect you in this utmost strait?
What bulwarks rising between you and fate?
No aids, no bulwarks your retreat attend,
No friends to help, no city to defend.
This spot is all you have, to lose or keep;
There stand the Trojans, and here rolls the deep.
'Tis hostile ground you tread; your native lands
Far, far from hence: your fates are in your hands."

Raging he spoke; nor further wastes his breath,
But turns his javelin to the work of death.
Whate'er bold Trojan arm'd his daring hands,
Against the sable ships, with flaming brands,
So well the chief his naval weapon sped,

The luckless warrior at his stern lay dead:
Full twelve, the boldest, in a moment fell,
Sent by great Ajax to the shades of hell.