

BOOK XVI.

ARGUMENT

THE SIXTH BATTLE, THE ACTS AND DEATH OF PATROCLUS

Patroclus (in pursuance of the request of Nestor in the eleventh book) entreats Achilles to suffer him to go to the assistance of the Greeks with Achilles' troops and armour. He agrees to it, but at the same time charges him to content himself with rescuing the fleet, without further pursuit of the enemy. The armour, horses, soldiers, and officers are described. Achilles offers a libation for the success of his friend, after which Patroclus leads the Myrmidons to battle. The Trojans, at the sight of Patroclus in Achilles' armour, taking him for that hero, are cast into the uttermost consternation; he beats them off from the vessels, Hector himself flies, Sarpedon is killed, though Jupiter was averse to his fate. Several other particulars of the battle are described; in the heat of which, Patroclus, neglecting the orders of Achilles, pursues the foe to the walls of Troy, where Apollo repulses and disarms him, Euphorbus wounds him, and Hector kills him, which concludes the book.

So warr'd both armies on the ensanguined shore,
While the black vessels smoked with human gore.
Meantime Patroclus to Achilles flies;
The streaming tears fall copious from his eyes

Not faster, trickling to the plains below,
From the tall rock the sable waters flow.
Divine Pelides, with compassion moved.
Thus spoke, indulgent, to his best beloved:(243)

"Patroclus, say, what grief thy bosom bears,
That flows so fast in these unmanly tears?
No girl, no infant whom the mother keeps
From her loved breast, with fonder passion weeps;
Not more the mother's soul, that infant warms,
Clung to her knees, and reaching at her arms,
Than thou hast mine! Oh tell me, to what end
Thy melting sorrows thus pursue thy friend?

"Griev'st thou for me, or for, my martial band?
Or come sad tidings from our native land?
Our fathers live (our first, most tender care),
Thy good Menoetius breathes the vital air,
And hoary Peleus yet extends his days;
Pleased in their age to hear their children's praise.
Or may some meaner cause thy pity claim?
Perhaps yon relics of the Grecian name,
Doom'd in their ships to sink by fire and sword,
And pay the forfeit of their haughty lord?
Whate'er the cause, reveal thy secret care,
And speak those sorrows which a friend would share."

A sigh that instant from his bosom broke,
Another follow'd, and Patroclus spoke:

"Let Greece at length with pity touch thy breast,
Thyself a Greek; and, once, of Greeks the best!
Lo! every chief that might her fate prevent,
Lies pierced with wounds, and bleeding in his tent:
Eurypylos, Tydides, Atreus' son,
And wise Ulysses, at the navy groan,
More for their country's wounds than for their own.
Their pain soft arts of pharmacy can ease,
Thy breast alone no lenitives appease.
May never rage like thine my soul enslave,
O great in vain! unprofitably brave!
Thy country slighted in her last distress,
What friend, what man, from thee shall hope redress?
No--men unborn, and ages yet behind,
Shall curse that fierce, that unforgiving mind.

"O man unpitying! if of man thy race;
But sure thou spring'st not from a soft embrace,
Nor ever amorous hero caused thy birth,
Nor ever tender goddess brought thee forth:
Some rugged rock's hard entrails gave thee form,
And raging seas produced thee in a storm,
A soul well suiting that tempestuous kind,

So rough thy manners, so untamed thy mind.

"If some dire oracle thy breast alarm,
If aught from Jove, or Thetis, stop thy arm,
Some beam of comfort yet on Greece may shine,
If I but lead the Myrmidonian line:
Clad in thy dreadful arms if I appear,
Proud Troy shall tremble, and desert the war;
Without thy person Greece shall win the day,
And thy mere image chase her foes away.
Press'd by fresh forces, her o'erlabour'd train
Shall quit the ships, and Greece respire again."
Thus, blind to fate! with supplicating breath,
Thou begg'st his arms, and in his arms thy death.
Unfortunately good! a boding sigh
Thy friend return'd; and with it, this reply:
"Patroclus! thy Achilles knows no fears;
Nor words from Jove nor oracles he hears;
Nor aught a mother's caution can suggest;
The tyrant's pride lies rooted in my breast.
My wrongs, my wrongs, my constant thought engage,
Those, my sole oracles, inspire my rage:
I made him tyrant: gave him power to wrong
Even me: I felt it; and shall feel it long.
The maid, my black-eyed maid, he forced away,
Due to the toils of many a well-fought day;

Due to my conquest of her father's reign;
Due to the votes of all the Grecian train.
From me he forced her; me, the bold and brave,
Disgraced, dishonour'd, like the meanest slave.
But bear we this--the wrongs I grieve are past;
'Tis time our fury should relent at last:
I fix'd its date; the day I wish'd appears:
How Hector to my ships his battle bears,
The flames my eyes, the shouts invade my ears.
Go then, Patroclus! court fair honour's charms
In Troy's famed fields, and in Achilles' arms:
Lead forth my martial Myrmidons to fight,
Go save the fleets, and conquer in my right.
See the thin relics of their baffled band
At the last edge of yon deserted land!
Behold all Ilion on their ships descends;
How the cloud blackens, how the storm impends!
It was not thus, when, at my sight amazed,
Troy saw and trembled, as this helmet blazed:
Had not the injurious king our friendship lost,
Yon ample trench had buried half her host.
No camps, no bulwarks now the Trojans fear,
Those are not dreadful, no Achilles there;
No longer flames the lance of Tydeus' son;
No more your general calls his heroes on:
Hector, alone, I hear; his dreadful breath

Commands your slaughter, or proclaims your death.
Yet now, Patroclus, issue to the plain:
Now save the ships, the rising fires restrain,
And give the Greeks to visit Greece again.
But heed my words, and mark a friend's command,
Who trusts his fame and honours in thy hand,
And from thy deeds expects the Achaian host
Shall render back the beauteous maid he lost:
Rage uncontroll'd through all the hostile crew,
But touch not Hector, Hector is my due.
Though Jove in thunder should command the war,
Be just, consult my glory, and forbear.
The fleet once saved, desist from further chase,
Nor lead to Ilion's walls the Grecian race;
Some adverse god thy rashness may destroy;
Some god, like Phoebus, ever kind to Troy.
Let Greece, redeem'd from this destructive strait,
Do her own work; and leave the rest to fate.
O! would to all the immortal powers above,
Apollo, Pallas, and almighty Jove!
That not one Trojan might be left alive,
And not a Greek of all the race survive:
Might only we the vast destruction shun,
And only we destroy the accursed town!"
Such conference held the chiefs; while on the strand
Great Jove with conquest crown'd the Trojan band.

Ajax no more the sounding storm sustain'd,
So thick the darts an iron tempest rain'd:
On his tired arm the weighty buckler hung;
His hollow helm with falling javelins rung;
His breath, in quick short pantings, comes and goes;
And painful sweat from all his members flows.
Spent and o'erpower'd, he barely breathes at most;
Yet scarce an army stirs him from his post;
Dangers on dangers all around him glow,
And toil to toil, and woe succeeds to woe.

Say, Muses, throned above the starry frame,
How first the navy blazed with Trojan flame?

Stern Hector waved his sword, and standing near,
Where furious Ajax plied his ashen spear,
Full on the lance a stroke so justly sped,
That the broad falchion lopp'd its brazen head;
His pointless spear the warrior shakes in vain;
The brazen head falls sounding on the plain.
Great Ajax saw, and own'd the hand divine;
Confessing Jove, and trembling at the sign,
Warn'd he retreats. Then swift from all sides pour
The hissing brands; thick streams the fiery shower;
O'er the high stern the curling volumes rise,
And sheets of rolling smoke involve the skies.

Divine Achilles view'd the rising flames,
And smote his thigh, and thus aloud exclaims:
"Arm, arm, Patroclus! Lo, the blaze aspires!
The glowing ocean reddens with the fires.
Arm, ere our vessels catch the spreading flame;
Arm, ere the Grecians be no more a name;
I haste to bring the troops."--The hero said;
The friend with ardour and with joy obey'd.

He cased his limbs in brass; and first around
His manly legs, with silver buckles bound
The clasping greaves; then to his breast applies
The flaming cuirass of a thousand dyes;
Emblazed with studs of gold his falchion shone
In the rich belt, as in a starry zone:
Achilles' shield his ample shoulders spread,
Achilles' helmet nodded o'er his head:
Adorn'd in all his terrible array,
He flash'd around intolerable day.
Alone untouch'd, Pelides' javelin stands,
Not to be poised but by Pelides' hands:
From Pelion's shady brow the plant entire
Old Chiron rent, and shaped it for his sire;
Whose son's great arm alone the weapon wields,
The death of heroes, and the dread of fields.

The brave Automedon (an honour'd name,
The second to his lord in love and fame,
In peace his friend, and partner of the war)
The winged coursers harness'd to the car;
Xanthus and Balius, of immortal breed,
Sprung from the wind, and like the wind in speed.
Whom the wing'd harpy, swift Podarge, bore,
By Zephyr pregnant on the breezy shore:
Swift Pedasus was added to their side,
(Once great Aetion's, now Achilles' pride)
Who, like in strength, in swiftness, and in grace,
A mortal courser match'd the immortal race.

Achilles speeds from tent to tent, and warms
His hardy Myrmidons to blood and arms.
All breathing death, around the chief they stand,
A grim, terrific, formidable band:
Grim as voracious wolves, that seek the springs(244)
When scalding thirst their burning bowels wrings;
When some tall stag, fresh-slaughtered in the wood,
Has drench'd their wide insatiate throats with blood,
To the black fount they rush, a hideous throng,
With paunch distended, and with lolling tongue,
Fire fills their eye, their black jaws belch the gore,
And gorged with slaughter still they thirst for more.

Like furious, rush'd the Myrmidonian crew,
Such their dread strength, and such their deathful view.

High in the midst the great Achilles stands,
Directs their order, and the war commands.
He, loved of Jove, had launch'd for Ilion's shores
Full fifty vessels, mann'd with fifty oars:
Five chosen leaders the fierce bands obey,
Himself supreme in valour, as in sway.

First march'd Menestheus, of celestial birth,
Derived from thee, whose waters wash the earth,
Divine Sperchius! Jove-descended flood!
A mortal mother mixing with a god.
Such was Menestheus, but miscall'd by fame
The son of Borus, that espoused the dame.

Eudorus next; whom Polymele the gay,
Famed in the graceful dance, produced to-day.
Her, sly Cellenius loved: on her would gaze,
As with swift step she form'd the running maze:
To her high chamber from Diana's quire,
The god pursued her, urged, and crown'd his fire.
The son confess'd his father's heavenly race,
And heir'd his mother's swiftness in the chase.
Strong Echeclus, bless'd in all those charms

That pleased a god, succeeded to her arms;
Not conscious of those loves, long hid from fame,
With gifts of price he sought and won the dame;
Her secret offspring to her sire she bare;
Her sire caress'd him with a parent's care.

Pisander follow'd; matchless in his art
To wing the spear, or aim the distant dart;
No hand so sure of all the Emathian line,
Or if a surer, great Patroclus! thine.

The fourth by Phoenix' grave command was graced,
Laerces' valiant offspring led the last.

Soon as Achilles with superior care
Had call'd the chiefs, and order'd all the war,
This stern remembrance to his troops he gave:
"Ye far-famed Myrmidons, ye fierce and brave!
Think with what threats you dared the Trojan throng,
Think what reproach these ears endured so long;
'Stern son of Peleus, (thus ye used to say,
While restless, raging, in your ships you lay)
Oh nursed with gall, unknowing how to yield;
Whose rage defrauds us of so famed a field:
If that dire fury must for ever burn,
What make we here? Return, ye chiefs, return!"

Such were your words--Now, warriors! grieve no more,
Lo there the Trojans; bathe your swords in gore!
This day shall give you all your soul demands,
Glut all your hearts, and weary all your hands!"

Thus while he roused the fire in every breast,
Close and more close the listening cohorts press'd;
Ranks wedged in ranks; of arms a steely ring
Still grows, and spreads, and thickens round the king.
As when a circling wall the builder forms,
Of strength defensive against wind and storms,
Compacted stones the thickening work compose,
And round him wide the rising structure grows:
So helm to helm, and crest to crest they throng,
Shield urged on shield, and man drove man along;
Thick, undistinguish'd plumes, together join'd,
Float in one sea, and wave before the wind.

Far o'er the rest in glittering pomp appear,
There bold Automedon, Patroclus here;
Brothers in arms, with equal fury fired;
Two friends, two bodies with one soul inspired.

But mindful of the gods, Achilles went
To the rich coffer in his shady tent;
There lay on heaps his various garments roll'd,

And costly furs, and carpets stiff with gold,
(The presents of the silver-footed dame)
From thence he took a bowl, of antique frame,
Which never man had stained with ruddy wine,
Nor raised in offerings to the power divine,
But Peleus' son; and Peleus' son to none
Had raised in offerings, but to Jove alone.
This tinged with sulphur, sacred first to flame,
He purged; and wash'd it in the running stream.
Then cleansed his hands; and fixing for a space
His eyes on heaven, his feet upon the place
Of sacrifice, the purple draught he pour'd
Forth in the midst; and thus the god implored:

"O thou supreme! high-throned all height above!
O great Pelasgic, Dodonaean Jove!
Who 'midst surrounding frosts, and vapours chill,
Presid'st on bleak Dodona's vocal hill:
(Whose groves the Selli, race austere! surround,
Their feet unwash'd, their slumbers on the ground;
Who hear, from rustling oaks, thy dark decrees;
And catch the fates, low-whispered in the breeze;)
Hear, as of old! Thou gav'st, at Thetis' prayer,
Glory to me, and to the Greeks despair.
Lo, to the dangers of the fighting field
The best, the dearest of my friends, I yield,

Though still determined, to my ships confined;
Patroclus gone, I stay but half behind.
Oh! be his guard thy providential care,
Confirm his heart, and string his arm to war:
Press'd by his single force let Hector see
His fame in arms not owing all to me.
But when the fleets are saved from foes and fire,
Let him with conquest and renown retire;
Preserve his arms, preserve his social train,
And safe return him to these eyes again!"

Great Jove consents to half the chief's request,
But heaven's eternal doom denies the rest;
To free the fleet was granted to his prayer;
His safe return, the winds dispersed in air.
Back to his tent the stern Achilles flies,
And waits the combat with impatient eyes.

Meanwhile the troops beneath Patroclus' care,
Invade the Trojans, and commence the war.
As wasps, provoked by children in their play,
Pour from their mansions by the broad highway,
In swarms the guiltless traveller engage,
Whet all their stings, and call forth all their rage:
All rise in arms, and, with a general cry,
Assert their waxen domes, and buzzing progeny.

Thus from the tents the fervent legion swarms,
So loud their clamours, and so keen their arms:
Their rising rage Patroclus' breath inspires,
Who thus inflames them with heroic fires:

"O warriors, partners of Achilles' praise!
Be mindful of your deeds in ancient days;
Your godlike master let your acts proclaim,
And add new glories to his mighty name.
Think your Achilles sees you fight: be brave,
And humble the proud monarch whom you save."

Joyful they heard, and kindling as he spoke,
Flew to the fleet, involved in fire and smoke.
From shore to shore the doubling shouts resound,
The hollow ships return a deeper sound.
The war stood still, and all around them gazed,
When great Achilles' shining armour blazed:
Troy saw, and thought the dread Achilles nigh,
At once they see, they tremble, and they fly.

Then first thy spear, divine Patroclus! flew,
Where the war raged, and where the tumult grew.
Close to the stern of that famed ship which bore
Unbless'd Protesilaus to Ilion's shore,
The great Paeonian, bold Pyrechmes stood;

(Who led his bands from Axius' winding flood;)
His shoulder-blade receives the fatal wound;
The groaning warrior pants upon the ground.
His troops, that see their country's glory slain,
Fly diverse, scatter'd o'er the distant plain.
Patroclus' arm forbids the spreading fires,
And from the half-burn'd ship proud Troy retires;
Clear'd from the smoke the joyful navy lies;
In heaps on heaps the foe tumultuous flies;
Triumphant Greece her rescued decks ascends,
And loud acclaim the starry region rends.
So when thick clouds enwrap the mountain's head,
O'er heaven's expanse like one black ceiling spread;
Sudden the Thunderer, with a flashing ray,
Bursts through the darkness, and lets down the day:
The hills shine out, the rocks in prospect rise,
And streams, and vales, and forests, strike the eyes;
The smiling scene wide opens to the sight,
And all the unmeasured ether flames with light.

But Troy repulsed, and scatter'd o'er the plains,
Forced from the navy, yet the fight maintains.
Now every Greek some hostile hero slew,
But still the foremost, bold Patroclus flew:
As Areilycus had turn'd him round,
Sharp in his thigh he felt the piercing wound;

The brazen-pointed spear, with vigour thrown,
The thigh transfix'd, and broke the brittle bone:
Headlong he fell. Next, Thoas was thy chance;
Thy breast, unarm'd, received the Spartan lance.
Phylides' dart (as Amphidus drew nigh)
His blow prevented, and transpierced his thigh,
Tore all the brawn, and rent the nerves away;
In darkness, and in death, the warrior lay.

In equal arms two sons of Nestor stand,
And two bold brothers of the Lycian band:
By great Antilochus, Atymnius dies,
Pierced in the flank, lamented youth! he lies,
Kind Maris, bleeding in his brother's wound,
Defends the breathless carcass on the ground;
Furious he flies, his murderer to engage:
But godlike Thrasimed prevents his rage,
Between his arm and shoulder aims a blow;
His arm falls spouting on the dust below:
He sinks, with endless darkness cover'd o'er:
And vents his soul, effused with gushing gore.

Slain by two brothers, thus two brothers bleed,
Sarpedon's friends, Amisodarus' seed;
Amisodarus, who, by Furies led,
The bane of men, abhorr'd Chimaera bred;

Skill'd in the dart in vain, his sons expire,
And pay the forfeit of their guilty sire.

Stopp'd in the tumult Cleobulus lies,
Beneath Oileus' arm, a living prize;
A living prize not long the Trojan stood;
The thirsty falchion drank his reeking blood:
Plunged in his throat the smoking weapon lies;
Black death, and fate unpitying, seal his eyes.

Amid the ranks, with mutual thirst of fame,
Lycon the brave, and fierce Peneleus came;
In vain their javelins at each other flew,
Now, met in arms, their eager swords they drew.
On the plumed crest of his Boeotian foe
The daring Lycon aim'd a noble blow;
The sword broke short; but his, Peneleus sped
Full on the juncture of the neck and head:
The head, divided by a stroke so just,
Hung by the skin; the body sunk to dust.

O'ertaken Neamas by Merion bleeds,
Pierced through the shoulder as he mounts his steeds;
Back from the car he tumbles to the ground:
His swimming eyes eternal shades surround.

Next Erymas was doom'd his fate to feel,
His open'd mouth received the Cretan steel:
Beneath the brain the point a passage tore,
Crash'd the thin bones, and drown'd the teeth in gore:
His mouth, his eyes, his nostrils, pour a flood;
He sobs his soul out in the gush of blood.

As when the flocks neglected by the swain,
Or kids, or lambs, lie scatter'd o'er the plain,
A troop of wolves the unguarded charge survey,
And rend the trembling, unresisting prey:
Thus on the foe the Greeks impetuous came;
Troy fled, unmindful of her former fame.

But still at Hector godlike Ajax aim'd,
Still, pointed at his breast, his javelin flamed.
The Trojan chief, experienced in the field,
O'er his broad shoulders spread the massy shield,
Observed the storm of darts the Grecians pour,
And on his buckler caught the ringing shower:
He sees for Greece the scale of conquest rise,
Yet stops, and turns, and saves his loved allies.

As when the hand of Jove a tempest forms,
And rolls the cloud to blacken heaven with storms,
Dark o'er the fields the ascending vapour flies,

And shades the sun, and blots the golden skies:
So from the ships, along the dusky plain,
Dire Flight and Terror drove the Trojan train.
Even Hector fled; through heads of disarray
The fiery coursers forced their lord away:
While far behind his Trojans fall confused;
Wedged in the trench, in one vast carnage bruised:
Chariots on chariots roll: the clashing spokes
Shock; while the madding steeds break short their yokes.
In vain they labour up the steepy mound;
Their charioteers lie foaming on the ground.
Fierce on the rear, with shouts Patroclus flies;
Tumultuous clamour fills the fields and skies;
Thick drifts of dust involve their rapid flight;
Clouds rise on clouds, and heaven is snatch'd from sight.
The affrighted steeds their dying lords cast down,
Scour o'er the fields, and stretch to reach the town.
Loud o'er the rout was heard the victor's cry,
Where the war bleeds, and where the thickest die,
Where horse and arms, and chariots he o'erthrown,
And bleeding heroes under axles groan.
No stop, no check, the steeds of Peleus knew:
From bank to bank the immortal coursers flew.
High-bounding o'er the fosse, the whirling car
Smokes through the ranks, o'ertakes the flying war,
And thunders after Hector; Hector flies,

Patroclus shakes his lance; but fate denies.
Not with less noise, with less impetuous force,
The tide of Trojans urge their desperate course,
Than when in autumn Jove his fury pours,
And earth is loaden with incessant showers;
(When guilty mortals break the eternal laws,
Or judges, bribed, betray the righteous cause;)
From their deep beds he bids the rivers rise,
And opens all the flood-gates of the skies:
The impetuous torrents from their hills obey,
Whole fields are drown'd, and mountains swept away;
Loud roars the deluge till it meets the main;
And trembling man sees all his labours vain!

And now the chief (the foremost troops repell'd)
Back to the ships his destined progress held,
Bore down half Troy in his resistless way,
And forced the routed ranks to stand the day.
Between the space where silver Simois flows,
Where lay the fleets, and where the rampires rose,
All grim in dust and blood Patroclus stands,
And turns the slaughter on the conquering bands.
First Pronous died beneath his fiery dart,
Which pierced below the shield his valiant heart.
Thestor was next, who saw the chief appear,
And fell the victim of his coward fear;

Shrunk up he sat, with wild and haggard eye,
Nor stood to combat, nor had force to fly;
Patroclus mark'd him as he shunn'd the war,
And with unmanly tremblings shook the car,
And dropp'd the flowing reins. Him 'twixt the jaws,
The javelin sticks, and from the chariot draws.
As on a rock that overhangs the main,
An angler, studious of the line and cane,
Some mighty fish draws panting to the shore:
Not with less ease the barbed javelin bore
The gaping dastard; as the spear was shook,
He fell, and life his heartless breast forsook.

Next on Eryalus he flies; a stone,
Large as a rock, was by his fury thrown:
Full on his crown the ponderous fragment flew,
And burst the helm, and cleft the head in two:
Prone to the ground the breathless warrior fell,
And death involved him with the shades of hell.
Then low in dust Epaltes, Echius, lie;
Ipheas, Evippus, Polymelus, die;
Amphoterus and Erymas succeed;
And last Tlepolemus and Pyres bleed.
Where'er he moves, the growing slaughters spread
In heaps on heaps a monument of dead.

When now Sarpedon his brave friends beheld
Groveling in dust, and gasping on the field,
With this reproach his flying host he warms:
"Oh stain to honour! oh disgrace to arms!
Forsake, inglorious, the contended plain;
This hand unaided shall the war sustain:
The task be mine this hero's strength to try,
Who mows whole troops, and makes an army fly."

He spake: and, speaking, leaps from off the car:
Patroclus lights, and sternly waits the war.
As when two vultures on the mountain's height
Stoop with resounding pinions to the fight;
They cuff, they tear, they raise a screaming cry;
The desert echoes, and the rocks reply:
The warriors thus opposed in arms, engage
With equal clamours, and with equal rage.

Jove view'd the combat: whose event foreseen,
He thus bespoke his sister and his queen:
"The hour draws on; the destinies ordain,(245)
My godlike son shall press the Phrygian plain:
Already on the verge of death he stands,
His life is owed to fierce Patroclus' hands,
What passions in a parent's breast debate!
Say, shall I snatch him from impending fate,

And send him safe to Lycia, distant far
From all the dangers and the toils of war;
Or to his doom my bravest offspring yield,
And fatten, with celestial blood, the field?"

Then thus the goddess with the radiant eyes:
"What words are these, O sovereign of the skies!
Short is the date prescribed to mortal man;
Shall Jove for one extend the narrow span,
Whose bounds were fix'd before his race began?
How many sons of gods, foredoom'd to death,
Before proud Ilion must resign their breath!
Were thine exempt, debate would rise above,
And murmuring powers condemn their partial Jove.
Give the bold chief a glorious fate in fight;
And when the ascending soul has wing'd her flight,
Let Sleep and Death convey, by thy command,
The breathless body to his native land.
His friends and people, to his future praise,
A marble tomb and pyramid shall raise,
And lasting honours to his ashes give;
His fame ('tis all the dead can have) shall live."

She said: the cloud-compeller, overcome,
Assents to fate, and ratifies the doom.
Then touch'd with grief, the weeping heavens distill'd

A shower of blood o'er all the fatal field:
The god, his eyes averting from the plain,
Laments his son, predestined to be slain,
Far from the Lycian shores, his happy native reign.
Now met in arms, the combatants appear;
Each heaved the shield, and poised the lifted spear;
From strong Patroclus' hand the javelin fled,
And pass'd the groin of valiant Thrasymed;
The nerves unbraced no more his bulk sustain,
He falls, and falling bites the bloody plain.
Two sounding darts the Lycian leader threw:
The first aloof with erring fury flew,
The next transpierced Achilles' mortal steed,
The generous Pegasus of Theban breed:
Fix'd in the shoulder's joint, he reel'd around,
Roll'd in the bloody dust, and paw'd the slippery ground.
His sudden fall the entangled harness broke;
Each axle crackled, and the chariot shook:
When bold Automedon, to disengage
The starting coursers, and restrain their rage,
Divides the traces with his sword, and freed
The encumbered chariot from the dying steed:
The rest move on, obedient to the rein:
The car rolls slowly o'er the dusty plain.

The towering chiefs to fiercer fight advance:

And first Sarpedon whirl'd his weighty lance,
Which o'er the warrior's shoulder took its course,
And spent in empty air its dying force.
Not so Patroclus' never-erring dart;
Aim'd at his breast it pierced a mortal part,
Where the strong fibres bind the solid heart.
Then as the mountain oak, or poplar tall,
Or pine (fit mast for some great admiral)
Nods to the axe, till with a groaning sound
It sinks, and spreads its honours on the ground,
Thus fell the king; and laid on earth supine,
Before his chariot stretch'd his form divine:
He grasp'd the dust distain'd with streaming gore,
And, pale in death, lay groaning on the shore.
So lies a bull beneath the lion's paws,
While the grim savage grinds with foamy jaws
The trembling limbs, and sucks the smoking blood;
Deep groans, and hollow roars, rebellow through the wood.

Then to the leader of the Lycian band
The dying chief address'd his last command;
"Glaucus, be bold; thy task be first to dare
The glorious dangers of destructive war,
To lead my troops, to combat at their head,
Incite the living, and supply the dead.
Tell them, I charged them with my latest breath

Not unrevenged to bear Sarpedon's death.
What grief, what shame, must Glaucus undergo,
If these spoil'd arms adorn a Grecian foe!
Then as a friend, and as a warrior fight;
Defend my body, conquer in my right:
That, taught by great examples, all may try
Like thee to vanquish, or like me to die."
He ceased; the Fates suppress'd his labouring breath,
And his eyes darken'd with the shades of death.
The insulting victor with disdain bestrode
The prostrate prince, and on his bosom trod;
Then drew the weapon from his panting heart,
The reeking fibres clinging to the dart;
From the wide wound gush'd out a stream of blood,
And the soul issued in the purple flood.
His flying steeds the Myrmidons detain,
Unguided now, their mighty master slain.
All-impotent of aid, transfix'd with grief,
Unhappy Glaucus heard the dying chief:
His painful arm, yet useless with the smart
Inflicted late by Teucer's deadly dart,
Supported on his better hand he stay'd:
To Phoebus then ('twas all he could) he pray'd:

"All-seeing monarch! whether Lycia's coast,
Or sacred Ilion, thy bright presence boast,

Powerful alike to ease the wretch's smart;
O hear me! god of every healing art!
Lo! stiff with clotted blood, and pierced with pain,
That thrills my arm, and shoots through every vein,
I stand unable to sustain the spear,
And sigh, at distance from the glorious war.
Low in the dust is great Sarpedon laid,
Nor Jove vouchsafed his hapless offspring aid;
But thou, O god of health! thy succour lend,
To guard the relics of my slaughter'd friend:
For thou, though distant, canst restore my might,
To head my Lycians, and support the fight."

Apollo heard; and, suppliant as he stood,
His heavenly hand restrain'd the flux of blood;
He drew the dolours from the wounded part,
And breathed a spirit in his rising heart.
Renew'd by art divine, the hero stands,
And owns the assistance of immortal hands.
First to the fight his native troops he warms,
Then loudly calls on Troy's vindictive arms;
With ample strides he stalks from place to place;
Now fires Agenor, now Polydamas:
Æneas next, and Hector he accosts;
Inflaming thus the rage of all their hosts.

"What thoughts, regardless chief! thy breast employ?
Oh too forgetful of the friends of Troy!
Those generous friends, who, from their country far,
Breathe their brave souls out in another's war.
See! where in dust the great Sarpedon lies,
In action valiant, and in council wise,
Who guarded right, and kept his people free;
To all his Lycians lost, and lost to thee!
Stretch'd by Patroclus' arm on yonder plains,
O save from hostile rage his loved remains!
Ah let not Greece his conquer'd trophies boast,
Nor on his corse revenge her heroes lost!"

He spoke: each leader in his grief partook:
Troy, at the loss, through all her legions shook.
Transfix'd with deep regret, they view o'erthrown
At once his country's pillar, and their own;
A chief, who led to Troy's beleaguer'd wall
A host of heroes, and outshined them all.
Fired, they rush on; first Hector seeks the foes,
And with superior vengeance greatly glows.

But o'er the dead the fierce Patroclus stands,
And rousing Ajax, roused the listening bands:

"Heroes, be men; be what you were before;

Or weigh the great occasion, and be more.
The chief who taught our lofty walls to yield,
Lies pale in death, extended on the field.
To guard his body Troy in numbers flies;
Tis half the glory to maintain our prize.
Haste, strip his arms, the slaughter round him spread,
And send the living Lycians to the dead."

The heroes kindle at his fierce command;
The martial squadrons close on either hand:
Here Troy and Lycia charge with loud alarms,
Thessalia there, and Greece, oppose their arms.
With horrid shouts they circle round the slain;
The clash of armour rings o'er all the plain.
Great Jove, to swell the horrors of the fight,
O'er the fierce armies pours pernicious night,
And round his son confounds the warring hosts,
His fate ennobling with a crowd of ghosts.

Now Greece gives way, and great Epigeus falls;
Agacleus' son, from Budium's lofty walls;
Who chased for murder thence a suppliant came
To Peleus, and the silver-footed dame;
Now sent to Troy, Achilles' arms to aid,
He pays due vengeance to his kinsman's shade.
Soon as his luckless hand had touch'd the dead,

A rock's large fragment thunder'd on his head;
Hurl'd by Hectorean force it cleft in twain
His shatter'd helm, and stretch'd him o'er the slain.

Fierce to the van of fight Patroclus came,
And, like an eagle darting at his game,
Sprung on the Trojan and the Lycian band.
What grief thy heart, what fury urged thy hand,
O generous Greek! when with full vigour thrown,
At Sthenelaus flew the weighty stone,
Which sunk him to the dead: when Troy, too near
That arm, drew back; and Hector learn'd to fear.
Far as an able hand a lance can throw,
Or at the lists, or at the fighting foe;
So far the Trojans from their lines retired;
Till Glaucus, turning, all the rest inspired.
Then Bathyclaeus fell beneath his rage,
The only hope of Chalcon's trembling age;
Wide o'er the land was stretch'd his large domain,
With stately seats, and riches blest in vain:
Him, bold with youth, and eager to pursue
The flying Lycians, Glaucus met and slew;
Pierced through the bosom with a sudden wound,
He fell, and falling made the fields resound.
The Achaians sorrow for their heroes slain;
With conquering shouts the Trojans shake the plain,

And crowd to spoil the dead: the Greeks oppose;
An iron circle round the carcase grows.

Then brave Laogonus resign'd his breath,
Despatch'd by Merion to the shades of death:
On Ida's holy hill he made abode,
The priest of Jove, and honour'd like his god.
Between the jaw and ear the javelin went;
The soul, exhaling, issued at the vent.
His spear Aeneas at the victor threw,
Who stooping forward from the death withdrew;
The lance hiss'd harmless o'er his covering shield,
And trembling struck, and rooted in the field;
There yet scarce spent, it quivers on the plain,
Sent by the great Aeneas' arm in vain.
"Swift as thou art (the raging hero cries)
And skill'd in dancing to dispute the prize,
My spear, the destined passage had it found,
Had fix'd thy active vigour to the ground."

"O valiant leader of the Dardan host!
(Insulted Merion thus retorts the boast)
Strong as you are, 'tis mortal force you trust,
An arm as strong may stretch thee in the dust.
And if to this my lance thy fate be given,
Vain are thy vaunts; success is still from heaven:

This, instant, sends thee down to Pluto's coast;
Mine is the glory, his thy parting ghost."

"O friend (Menoetius' son this answer gave)
With words to combat, ill befits the brave;
Not empty boasts the sons of Troy repel,
Your swords must plunge them to the shades of hell.
To speak, beseems the council; but to dare
In glorious action, is the task of war."

This said, Patroclus to the battle flies;
Great Merion follows, and new shouts arise:
Shields, helmets rattle, as the warriors close;
And thick and heavy sounds the storm of blows.
As through the shrilling vale, or mountain ground,
The labours of the woodman's axe resound;
Blows following blows are heard re-echoing wide,
While crackling forests fall on every side:
Thus echoed all the fields with loud alarms,
So fell the warriors, and so rung their arms.

Now great Sarpedon on the sandy shore,
His heavenly form defaced with dust and gore,
And stuck with darts by warring heroes shed,
Lies undistinguish'd from the vulgar dead.
His long-disputed corse the chiefs enclose,

On every side the busy combat grows;
Thick as beneath some shepherd's thatch'd abode
(The pails high foaming with a milky flood)
The buzzing flies, a persevering train,
Incessant swarm, and chased return again.

Jove view'd the combat with a stern survey,
And eyes that flash'd intolerable day.
Fix'd on the field his sight, his breast debates
The vengeance due, and meditates the fates:
Whether to urge their prompt effect, and call
The force of Hector to Patroclus' fall,
This instant see his short-lived trophies won,
And stretch him breathless on his slaughter'd son;
Or yet, with many a soul's untimely flight,
Augment the fame and horror of the fight.
To crown Achilles' valiant friend with praise
At length he dooms; and, that his last of days
Shall set in glory, bids him drive the foe;
Nor unattended see the shades below.
Then Hector's mind he fills with dire dismay;
He mounts his car, and calls his hosts away;
Sunk with Troy's heavy fates, he sees decline
The scales of Jove, and pants with awe divine.

Then, nor before, the hardy Lycians fled,

And left their monarch with the common dead:
Around, in heaps on heaps, a dreadful wall
Of carnage rises, as the heroes fall.
(So Jove decreed!) At length the Greeks obtain
The prize contested, and despoil the slain.
The radiant arms are by Patroclus borne;
Patroclus' ships the glorious spoils adorn.

Then thus to Phoebus, in the realms above,
Spoke from his throne the cloud-compelling Jove:
"Descend, my Phoebus! on the Phrygian plain,
And from the fight convey Sarpedon slain;
Then bathe his body in the crystal flood,
With dust dishonour'd, and deform'd with blood;
O'er all his limbs ambrosial odours shed,
And with celestial robes adorn the dead.
Those rites discharged, his sacred corse bequeath
To the soft arms of silent Sleep and Death.
They to his friends the immortal charge shall bear;
His friends a tomb and pyramid shall rear:
What honour mortals after death receive,
Those unavailing honours we may give!"

Apollo bows, and from mount Ida's height,
Swift to the field precipitates his flight;
Thence from the war the breathless hero bore,

Veil'd in a cloud, to silver Simois' shore;
There bathed his honourable wounds, and dress'd
His manly members in the immortal vest;
And with perfumes of sweet ambrosial dews
Restores his freshness, and his form renews.
Then Sleep and Death, two twins of winged race,
Of matchless swiftness, but of silent pace,
Received Sarpedon, at the god's command,
And in a moment reach'd the Lycian land;
The corse amidst his weeping friends they laid,
Where endless honours wait the sacred shade.

Meanwhile Patroclus pours along the plains,
With foaming coursers, and with loosen'd reins.
Fierce on the Trojan and the Lycian crew,
Ah blind to fate! thy headlong fury flew
Against what fate and powerful Jove ordain,
Vain was thy friend's command, thy courage vain.
For he, the god, whose counsels uncontroll'd
Dismay the mighty, and confound the bold;
The god who gives, resumes, and orders all,
He urged thee on, and urged thee on to fall.

Who first, brave hero! by that arm was slain,
Who last beneath thy vengeance press'd the plain;
When heaven itself thy fatal fury led,

And call'd to fill the number of the dead?
Adrestus first; Autonomous then succeeds;
Echeclus follows; next young Megas bleeds,
Epistor, Melanippus, bite the ground;
The slaughter, Elasmus and Mulus crown'd:
Then sunk Pylartes to eternal night;
The rest, dispersing, trust their fates to flight.

Now Troy had stoop'd beneath his matchless power,
But flaming Phoebus kept the sacred tower
Thrice at the battlements Patroclus strook;(246)
His blazing aegis thrice Apollo shook;
He tried the fourth; when, bursting from the cloud,
A more than mortal voice was heard aloud.

"Patroclus! cease; this heaven-defended wall
Defies thy lance; not fated yet to fall;
Thy friend, thy greater far, it shall withstand,
Troy shall not stoop even to Achilles' hand."

So spoke the god who darts celestial fires;
The Greek obeys him, and with awe retires.
While Hector, checking at the Scaean gates
His panting coursers, in his breast debates,
Or in the field his forces to employ,
Or draw the troops within the walls of Troy.

Thus while he thought, beside him Phoebus stood,
In Asius' shape, who reigned by Sangar's flood;
(Thy brother, Hecuba! from Dymas sprung,
A valiant warrior, haughty, bold, and young;)
Thus he accosts him. "What a shameful sight!
God! is it Hector that forbears the fight?
Were thine my vigour this successful spear
Should soon convince thee of so false a fear.
Turn thee, ah turn thee to the field of fame,
And in Patroclus' blood efface thy shame.
Perhaps Apollo shall thy arms succeed,
And heaven ordains him by thy lance to bleed."

So spoke the inspiring god; then took his flight,
And plunged amidst the tumult of the fight.
He bids Cebrion drive the rapid car;
The lash resounds, the coursers rush to war.
The god the Grecians' sinking souls depress'd,
And pour'd swift spirits through each Trojan breast.
Patroclus lights, impatient for the fight;
A spear his left, a stone employs his right:
With all his nerves he drives it at the foe.
Pointed above, and rough and gross below:
The falling ruin crush'd Cebrion's head,
The lawless offspring of king Priam's bed;
His front, brows, eyes, one undistinguish'd wound:

The bursting balls drop sightless to the ground.
The charioteer, while yet he held the rein,
Struck from the car, falls headlong on the plain.
To the dark shades the soul unwilling glides,
While the proud victor thus his fall derides.

"Good heaven! what active feats yon artist shows!
What skilful divers are our Phrygian foes!
Mark with what ease they sink into the sand!
Pity that all their practice is by land!"

Then rushing sudden on his prostrate prize,
To spoil the carcass fierce Patroclus flies:
Swift as a lion, terrible and bold,
That sweeps the field, depopulates the fold;
Pierced through the dauntless heart, then tumbles slain,
And from his fatal courage finds his bane.
At once bold Hector leaping from his car,
Defends the body, and provokes the war.
Thus for some slaughter'd hind, with equal rage,
Two lordly rulers of the wood engage;
Stung with fierce hunger, each the prey invades,
And echoing roars rebellow through the shades.
Stern Hector fastens on the warrior's head,
And by the foot Patroclus drags the dead:
While all around, confusion, rage, and fright,

Mix the contending hosts in mortal fight.
So pent by hills, the wild winds roar aloud
In the deep bosom of some gloomy wood;
Leaves, arms, and trees, aloft in air are blown,
The broad oaks crackle, and the Sylvans groan;
This way and that, the rattling thicket bends,
And the whole forest in one crash descends.
Not with less noise, with less tumultuous rage,
In dreadful shock the mingled hosts engage.
Darts shower'd on darts, now round the carcass ring;
Now flights of arrows bounding from the string:
Stones follow stones; some clatter on the fields,
Some hard, and heavy, shake the sounding shields.
But where the rising whirlwind clouds the plains,
Sunk in soft dust the mighty chief remains,
And, stretch'd in death, forgets the guiding reins!

Now flaming from the zenith, Sol had driven
His fervid orb through half the vault of heaven;
While on each host with equal tempests fell
The showering darts, and numbers sank to hell.
But when his evening wheels o'erhung the main,
Glad conquest rested on the Grecian train.
Then from amidst the tumult and alarms,
They draw the conquer'd corse and radiant arms.
Then rash Patroclus with new fury glows,

And breathing slaughter, pours amid the foes.
Thrice on the press like Mars himself he flew,
And thrice three heroes at each onset slew.
There ends thy glory! there the Fates untwine
The last, black remnant of so bright a line:
Apollo dreadful stops thy middle way;
Death calls, and heaven allows no longer day!

For lo! the god in dusky clouds enshrined,
Approaching dealt a staggering blow behind.
The weighty shock his neck and shoulders feel;
His eyes flash sparkles, his stunn'd senses reel
In giddy darkness; far to distance flung,
His bounding helmet on the champaign rung.
Achilles' plume is stain'd with dust and gore;
That plume which never stoop'd to earth before;
Long used, untouch'd, in fighting fields to shine,
And shade the temples of the mad divine.
Jove dooms it now on Hector's helm to nod;
Not long--for fate pursues him, and the god.

His spear in shivers falls; his ample shield
Drops from his arm: his baldric strows the field:
The corslet his astonish'd breast forsakes:
Loose is each joint; each nerve with horror shakes;
Stupid he stares, and all-assistless stands:

Such is the force of more than mortal hands!

A Dardan youth there was, well known to fame,
From Panthus sprung, Euphorbus was his name;
Famed for the manage of the foaming horse,
Skill'd in the dart, and matchless in the course:
Full twenty knights he tumbled from the car,
While yet he learn'd his rudiments of war.
His venturous spear first drew the hero's gore;
He struck, he wounded, but he durst no more.
Nor, though disarm'd, Patroclus' fury stood:
But swift withdrew the long-protended wood.
And turn'd him short, and herded in the crowd.
Thus, by an arm divine, and mortal spear,
Wounded, at once, Patroclus yields to fear,
Retires for succour to his social train,
And flies the fate, which heaven decreed, in vain.
Stern Hector, as the bleeding chief he views,
Breaks through the ranks, and his retreat pursues:
The lance arrests him with a mortal wound;
He falls, earth thunders, and his arms resound.
With him all Greece was sunk; that moment all
Her yet-surviving heroes seem'd to fall.
So, scorch'd with heat, along the desert score,
The roaming lion meets a bristly boar,
Fast by the spring; they both dispute the flood,

With flaming eyes, and jaws besmear'd with blood;
At length the sovereign savage wins the strife;
And the torn boar resigns his thirst and life.
Patroclus thus, so many chiefs o'erthrown,
So many lives effused, expires his own.
As dying now at Hector's feet he lies,
He sternly views him, and triumphant cries:

"Lie there, Patroclus! and with thee, the joy
Thy pride once promised, of subverting Troy;
The fancied scenes of Ilion wrapt in flames,
And thy soft pleasures served with captive dames.
Unthinking man! I fought those towers to free,
And guard that beauteous race from lords like thee:
But thou a prey to vultures shalt be made;
Thy own Achilles cannot lend thee aid;
Though much at parting that great chief might say,
And much enjoin thee, this important day.

'Return not, my brave friend (perhaps he said),
Without the bloody arms of Hector dead.'
He spoke, Patroclus march'd, and thus he sped."

Supine, and wildly gazing on the skies,
With faint, expiring breath, the chief replies:

"Vain boaster! cease, and know the powers divine!
Jove's and Apollo's is this deed, not thine;
To heaven is owed whate'er your own you call,
And heaven itself disarm'd me ere my fall.
Had twenty mortals, each thy match in might,
Opposed me fairly, they had sunk in fight:
By fate and Phoebus was I first o'erthrown,
Euphorbus next; the third mean part thy own.
But thou, imperious! hear my latest breath;
The gods inspire it, and it sounds thy death:
Insulting man, thou shalt be soon as I;
Black fate o'erhangs thee, and thy hour draws nigh;
Even now on life's last verge I see thee stand,
I see thee fall, and by Achilles' hand."

He faints: the soul unwilling wings her way,
(The beauteous body left a load of clay)
Flits to the lone, uncomfortable coast;
A naked, wandering, melancholy ghost!

Then Hector pausing, as his eyes he fed
On the pale carcase, thus address'd the dead:

"From whence this boding speech, the stern decree
Of death denounced, or why denounced to me?
Why not as well Achilles' fate be given

To Hector's lance? Who knows the will of heaven?"

Pensive he said; then pressing as he lay

His breathless bosom, tore the lance away;

And upwards cast the corse: the reeking spear

He shakes, and charges the bold charioteer.

But swift Automedon with loosen'd reins

Rapt in the chariot o'er the distant plains,

Far from his rage the immortal coursers drove;

The immortal coursers were the gift of Jove.