

BOOK XVII.

ARGUMENT.

THE SEVENTH BATTLE, FOR THE BODY OF PATROCLUS.--THE ACTS OF MENELAUS.

Menelaus, upon the death of Patroclus, defends his body from the enemy: Euphorbus, who attempts it, is slain. Hector advancing, Menelaus retires; but soon returns with Ajax, and drives him off. This, Glaucus objects to Hector as a flight, who thereupon puts on the armour he had won from Patroclus, and renews the battle. The Greeks give way, till Ajax rallies them: Aeneas sustains the Trojans. Aeneas and Hector Attempt the chariot of Achilles, which is borne off by Automedon. The horses of Achilles deplore the loss of Patroclus: Jupiter covers his body with a thick darkness: the noble prayer of Ajax on that occasion. Menelaus sends Antilochus to Achilles, with the news of Patroclus' death: then returns to the fight, where, though attacked with the utmost fury, he and Meriones, assisted by the Ajaces, bear off the body to the ships.

The time is the evening of the eight-and-twentieth day. The scene lies in the fields before Troy.

On the cold earth divine Patroclus spread,  
Lies pierced with wounds among the vulgar dead.

Great Menelaus, touch'd with generous woe,  
Springs to the front, and guards him from the foe.  
Thus round her new-fallen young the heifer moves,  
Fruit of her throes, and first-born of her loves;  
And anxious (helpless as he lies, and bare)  
Turns, and re-turns her, with a mother's care,  
Opposed to each that near the carcass came,  
His broad shield glimmers, and his lances flame.

The son of Panthus, skill'd the dart to send,  
Eyes the dead hero, and insults the friend.  
"This hand, Atrides, laid Patroclus low;  
Warrior! desist, nor tempt an equal blow:  
To me the spoils my prowess won, resign:  
Depart with life, and leave the glory mine"

The Trojan thus: the Spartan monarch burn'd  
With generous anguish, and in scorn return'd:  
"Laugh'st thou not, Jove! from thy superior throne,  
When mortals boast of prowess not their own?  
Not thus the lion glories in his might,  
Nor panther braves his spotted foe in fight,  
Nor thus the boar (those terrors of the plain;)   
Man only vaunts his force, and vaunts in vain.  
But far the vainest of the boastful kind,  
These sons of Panthus vent their haughty mind.

Yet 'twas but late, beneath my conquering steel  
This boaster's brother, Hyperenor, fell;  
Against our arm which rashly he defied,  
Vain was his vigour, and as vain his pride.  
These eyes beheld him on the dust expire,  
No more to cheer his spouse, or glad his sire.  
Presumptuous youth! like his shall be thy doom,  
Go, wait thy brother to the Stygian gloom;  
Or, while thou may'st, avoid the threaten'd fate;  
Fools stay to feel it, and are wise too late."

Unmoved, Euphorbus thus: "That action known,  
Come, for my brother's blood repay thy own.  
His weeping father claims thy destined head,  
And spouse, a widow in her bridal bed.  
On these thy conquer'd spoils I shall bestow,  
To soothe a consort's and a parent's woe.  
No longer then defer the glorious strife,  
Let heaven decide our fortune, fame, and life."

Swift as the word the missile lance he flings;  
The well-aim'd weapon on the buckler rings,  
But blunted by the brass, innoxious falls.  
On Jove the father great Atrides calls,  
Nor flies the javelin from his arm in vain,  
It pierced his throat, and bent him to the plain;

Wide through the neck appears the grisly wound,  
Prone sinks the warrior, and his arms resound.  
The shining circlets of his golden hair,  
Which even the Graces might be proud to wear,  
Instarr'd with gems and gold, bestrow the shore,  
With dust dishonour'd, and deform'd with gore.

As the young olive, in some sylvan scene,  
Crown'd by fresh fountains with eternal green,  
Lifts the gay head, in snowy flowerets fair,  
And plays and dances to the gentle air;  
When lo! a whirlwind from high heaven invades  
The tender plant, and withers all its shades;  
It lies uprooted from its genial bed,  
A lovely ruin now defaced and dead:  
Thus young, thus beautiful, Euphorbus lay,  
While the fierce Spartan tore his arms away.  
Proud of his deed, and glorious in the prize,  
Affrighted Troy the towering victor flies:  
Flies, as before some mountain lion's ire  
The village curs and trembling swains retire,  
When o'er the slaughter'd bull they hear him roar,  
And see his jaws distil with smoking gore:  
All pale with fear, at distance scatter'd round,  
They shout incessant, and the vales resound.

Meanwhile Apollo view'd with envious eyes,  
And urged great Hector to dispute the prize;  
(In Mentès' shape, beneath whose martial care  
The rough Ciconians learn'd the trade of war;)(247)  
"Forbear (he cried) with fruitless speed to chase  
Achilles' coursers, of ethereal race;  
They stoop not, these, to mortal man's command,  
Or stoop to none but great Achilles' hand.  
Too long amused with a pursuit so vain,  
Turn, and behold the brave Euphorbus slain;  
By Sparta slain! for ever now suppress'd  
The fire which burn'd in that undaunted breast!"

Thus having spoke, Apollo wing'd his flight,  
And mix'd with mortals in the toils of fight:  
His words infix'd unutterable care  
Deep in great Hector's soul: through all the war  
He darts his anxious eye; and, instant, view'd  
The breathless hero in his blood imbued,  
(Forth welling from the wound, as prone he lay)  
And in the victor's hands the shining prey.  
Sheath'd in bright arms, through cleaving ranks he flies,  
And sends his voice in thunder to the skies:  
Fierce as a flood of flame by Vulcan sent,  
It flew, and fired the nations as it went.  
Atrides from the voice the storm divined,

And thus explored his own unconquer'd mind:

"Then shall I quit Patroclus on the plain,  
Slain in my cause, and for my honour slain!  
Desert the arms, the relics, of my friend?  
Or singly, Hector and his troops attend?  
Sure where such partial favour heaven bestow'd,  
To brave the hero were to brave the god:  
Forgive me, Greece, if once I quit the field;  
'Tis not to Hector, but to heaven I yield.  
Yet, nor the god, nor heaven, should give me fear,  
Did but the voice of Ajax reach my ear:  
Still would we turn, still battle on the plains,  
And give Achilles all that yet remains  
Of his and our Patroclus--" This, no more  
The time allow'd: Troy thicken'd on the shore.  
A sable scene! The terrors Hector led.  
Slow he recedes, and sighing quits the dead.

So from the fold the unwilling lion parts,  
Forced by loud clamours, and a storm of darts;  
He flies indeed, but threatens as he flies,  
With heart indignant and retorted eyes.  
Now enter'd in the Spartan ranks, he turn'd  
His manly breast, and with new fury burn'd;  
O'er all the black battalions sent his view,

And through the cloud the godlike Ajax knew;  
Where labouring on the left the warrior stood,  
All grim in arms, and cover'd o'er with blood;  
There breathing courage, where the god of day  
Had sunk each heart with terror and dismay.

To him the king: "Oh Ajax, oh my friend!  
Haste, and Patroclus' loved remains defend:  
The body to Achilles to restore  
Demands our care; alas, we can no more!  
For naked now, despoiled of arms, he lies;  
And Hector glories in the dazzling prize."  
He said, and touch'd his heart. The raging pair  
Pierced the thick battle, and provoke the war.  
Already had stern Hector seized his head,  
And doom'd to Trojan gods the unhappy dead;  
But soon as Ajax rear'd his tower-like shield,  
Sprung to his car, and measured back the field,  
His train to Troy the radiant armour bear,  
To stand a trophy of his fame in war.

Meanwhile great Ajax (his broad shield display'd)  
Guards the dead hero with the dreadful shade;  
And now before, and now behind he stood:  
Thus in the centre of some gloomy wood,  
With many a step, the lioness surrounds

Her tawny young, beset by men and hounds;  
Elate her heart, and rousing all her powers,  
Dark o'er the fiery balls each hanging eyebrow lours.  
Fast by his side the generous Spartan glows  
With great revenge, and feeds his inward woes.

But Glaucus, leader of the Lycian aids,  
On Hector frowning, thus his flight upbraids:

"Where now in Hector shall we Hector find?  
A manly form, without a manly mind.  
Is this, O chief! a hero's boasted fame?  
How vain, without the merit, is the name!  
Since battle is renounced, thy thoughts employ  
What other methods may preserve thy Troy:  
'Tis time to try if Ilion's state can stand  
By thee alone, nor ask a foreign hand:  
Mean, empty boast! but shall the Lycians stake  
Their lives for you? those Lycians you forsake?  
What from thy thankless arms can we expect?  
Thy friend Sarpedon proves thy base neglect;  
Say, shall our slaughter'd bodies guard your walls,  
While unreveng'd the great Sarpedon falls?  
Even where he died for Troy, you left him there,  
A feast for dogs, and all the fowls of air.  
On my command if any Lycian wait,



Hence let him march, and give up Troy to fate.  
Did such a spirit as the gods impart  
Impel one Trojan hand or Trojan heart,  
(Such as should burn in every soul that draws  
The sword for glory, and his country's cause)  
Even yet our mutual arms we might employ,  
And drag yon carcass to the walls of Troy.  
Oh! were Patroclus ours, we might obtain  
Sarpedon's arms and honour'd corse again!  
Greece with Achilles' friend should be repaid,  
And thus due honours purchased to his shade.  
But words are vain--Let Ajax once appear,  
And Hector trembles and recedes with fear;  
Thou dar'st not meet the terrors of his eye;  
And lo! already thou prepar'st to fly."

The Trojan chief with fix'd resentment eyed  
The Lycian leader, and sedate replied:

"Say, is it just, my friend, that Hector's ear  
From such a warrior such a speech should hear?  
I deem'd thee once the wisest of thy kind,  
But ill this insult suits a prudent mind.  
I shun great Ajax? I desert my train?  
'Tis mine to prove the rash assertion vain;  
I joy to mingle where the battle bleeds,

And hear the thunder of the sounding steeds.  
But Jove's high will is ever uncontroll'd,  
The strong he withers, and confounds the bold;  
Now crowns with fame the mighty man, and now  
Strikes the fresh garland from the victor's brow!  
Come, through yon squadrons let us hew the way,  
And thou be witness, if I fear to-day;  
If yet a Greek the sight of Hector dread,  
Or yet their hero dare defend the dead."

Then turning to the martial hosts, he cries:  
"Ye Trojans, Dardans, Lycians, and allies!  
Be men, my friends, in action as in name,  
And yet be mindful of your ancient fame.  
Hector in proud Achilles' arms shall shine,  
Torn from his friend, by right of conquest mine."

He strode along the field, as thus he said:  
(The sable plumage nodded o'er his head:)  
Swift through the spacious plain he sent a look;  
One instant saw, one instant overtook  
The distant band, that on the sandy shore  
The radiant spoils to sacred Ilion bore.  
There his own mail unbraced the field bestrow'd;  
His train to Troy convey'd the massy load.  
Now blazing in the immortal arms he stands;

The work and present of celestial hands;  
By aged Peleus to Achilles given,  
As first to Peleus by the court of heaven:  
His father's arms not long Achilles wears,  
Forbid by fate to reach his father's years.

Him, proud in triumph, glittering from afar,  
The god whose thunder rends the troubled air  
Beheld with pity; as apart he sat,  
And, conscious, look'd through all the scene of fate.  
He shook the sacred honours of his head;  
Olympus trembled, and the godhead said;  
"Ah, wretched man! unmindful of thy end!  
A moment's glory; and what fates attend!  
In heavenly panoply divinely bright  
Thou stand'st, and armies tremble at thy sight,  
As at Achilles' self! beneath thy dart  
Lies slain the great Achilles' dearer part.  
Thou from the mighty dead those arms hast torn,  
Which once the greatest of mankind had worn.  
Yet live! I give thee one illustrious day,  
A blaze of glory ere thou fad'st away.  
For ah! no more Andromache shall come  
With joyful tears to welcome Hector home;  
No more officious, with endearing charms,  
From thy tired limbs unbrace Pelides' arms!"

Then with his sable brow he gave the nod  
That seals his word; the sanction of the god.  
The stubborn arms (by Jove's command disposed)  
Conform'd spontaneous, and around him closed:  
Fill'd with the god, enlarged his members grew,  
Through all his veins a sudden vigour flew,  
The blood in brisker tides began to roll,  
And Mars himself came rushing on his soul.  
Exhorting loud through all the field he strode,  
And look'd, and moved, Achilles, or a god.  
Now Mesthles, Glaucus, Medon, he inspires,  
Now Phorcys, Chromius, and Hippothous fires;  
The great Thersilochus like fury found,  
Asteropaeus kindled at the sound,  
And Ennomus, in augury renown'd.

"Hear, all ye hosts, and hear, unnumber'd bands  
Of neighbouring nations, or of distant lands!  
'Twas not for state we summon'd you so far,  
To boast our numbers, and the pomp of war:  
Ye came to fight; a valiant foe to chase,  
To save our present, and our future race.  
For this, our wealth, our products, you enjoy,  
And glean the relics of exhausted Troy.  
Now then, to conquer or to die prepare;

To die or conquer are the terms of war.  
Whatever hand shall win Patroclus slain,  
Whoe'er shall drag him to the Trojan train,  
With Hector's self shall equal honours claim;  
With Hector part the spoil, and share the fame."

Fired by his words, the troops dismiss their fears,  
They join, they thicken, they protend their spears;  
Full on the Greeks they drive in firm array,  
And each from Ajax hopes the glorious prey:  
Vain hope! what numbers shall the field o'erspread,  
What victims perish round the mighty dead!

Great Ajax mark'd the growing storm from far,  
And thus bespoke his brother of the war:  
"Our fatal day, alas! is come, my friend;  
And all our wars and glories at an end!  
'Tis not this corse alone we guard in vain,  
Condemn'd to vultures on the Trojan plain;  
We too must yield: the same sad fate must fall  
On thee, on me, perhaps, my friend, on all.  
See what a tempest direful Hector spreads,  
And lo! it bursts, it thunders on our heads!  
Call on our Greeks, if any hear the call,  
The bravest Greeks: this hour demands them all."

The warrior raised his voice, and wide around  
The field re-echoed the distressful sound.  
"O chiefs! O princes, to whose hand is given  
The rule of men; whose glory is from heaven!  
Whom with due honours both Atrides grace:  
Ye guides and guardians of our Argive race!  
All, whom this well-known voice shall reach from far,  
All, whom I see not through this cloud of war;  
Come all! let generous rage your arms employ,  
And save Patroclus from the dogs of Troy."

Oilean Ajax first the voice obey'd,  
Swift was his pace, and ready was his aid:  
Next him Idomeneus, more slow with age,  
And Merion, burning with a hero's rage.  
The long-succeeding numbers who can name?  
But all were Greeks, and eager all for fame.  
Fierce to the charge great Hector led the throng;  
Whole Troy embodied rush'd with shouts along.  
Thus, when a mountain billow foams and raves,  
Where some swoln river disembogues his waves,  
Full in the mouth is stopp'd the rushing tide,  
The boiling ocean works from side to side,  
The river trembles to his utmost shore,  
And distant rocks re-bellow to the roar.

Nor less resolved, the firm Achaian band  
With brazen shields in horrid circle stand.  
Jove, pouring darkness o'er the mingled fight,  
Conceals the warriors' shining helms in night:  
To him, the chief for whom the hosts contend  
Had lived not hateful, for he lived a friend:  
Dead he protects him with superior care.  
Nor dooms his carcase to the birds of air.

The first attack the Grecians scarce sustain,  
Repulsed, they yield; the Trojans seize the slain.  
Then fierce they rally, to revenge led on  
By the swift rage of Ajax Telamon.  
(Ajax to Peleus' son the second name,  
In graceful stature next, and next in fame)  
With headlong force the foremost ranks he tore;  
So through the thicket bursts the mountain boar,  
And rudely scatters, for a distance round,  
The frightened hunter and the baying hound.  
The son of Lethus, brave Pelasgus' heir,  
Hippothous, dragg'd the carcase through the war;  
The sinewy ankles bored, the feet he bound  
With thongs inserted through the double wound:  
Inevitable fate o'ertakes the deed;  
Doom'd by great Ajax' vengeful lance to bleed:  
It cleft the helmet's brazen cheeks in twain;

The shatter'd crest and horse-hair strow the plain:  
With nerves relax'd he tumbles to the ground:  
The brain comes gushing through the ghastly wound:  
He drops Patroclus' foot, and o'er him spread,  
Now lies a sad companion of the dead:  
Far from Larissa lies, his native air,  
And ill requites his parents' tender care.  
Lamented youth! in life's first bloom he fell,  
Sent by great Ajax to the shades of hell.

Once more at Ajax Hector's javelin flies;  
The Grecian marking, as it cut the skies,  
Shunn'd the descending death; which hissing on,  
Stretch'd in the dust the great Iphytus' son,  
Schedius the brave, of all the Phocian kind  
The boldest warrior and the noblest mind:  
In little Panope, for strength renown'd,  
He held his seat, and ruled the realms around.  
Plunged in his throat, the weapon drank his blood,  
And deep transpiercing through the shoulder stood;  
In clanging arms the hero fell and all  
The fields resounded with his weighty fall.

Phorcys, as slain Hippothous he defends,  
The Telamonian lance his belly rends;  
The hollow armour burst before the stroke,



And through the wound the rushing entrails broke:  
In strong convulsions panting on the sands  
He lies, and grasps the dust with dying hands.

Struck at the sight, recede the Trojan train:  
The shouting Argives strip the heroes slain.  
And now had Troy, by Greece compell'd to yield,  
Fled to her ramparts, and resign'd the field;  
Greece, in her native fortitude elate,  
With Jove averse, had turn'd the scale of fate:  
But Phoebus urged Æneas to the fight;  
He seem'd like aged Periphas to sight:  
(A herald in Anchises' love grown old,  
Revered for prudence, and with prudence bold.)

Thus he--"What methods yet, O chief! remain,  
To save your Troy, though heaven its fall ordain?  
There have been heroes, who, by virtuous care,  
By valour, numbers, and by arts of war,  
Have forced the powers to spare a sinking state,  
And gain'd at length the glorious odds of fate:  
But you, when fortune smiles, when Jove declares  
His partial favour, and assists your wars,  
Your shameful efforts 'gainst yourselves employ,  
And force the unwilling god to ruin Troy."

Æneas through the form assumed describes  
The power conceal'd, and thus to Hector cries:  
"Oh lasting shame! to our own fears a prey,  
We seek our ramparts, and desert the day.  
A god, nor is he less, my bosom warms,  
And tells me, Jove asserts the Trojan arms."

He spoke, and foremost to the combat flew:  
The bold example all his hosts pursue.  
Then, first, Leocritus beneath him bled,  
In vain beloved by valiant Lycomedes;  
Who view'd his fall, and, grieving at the chance,  
Swift to revenge it sent his angry lance;  
The whirling lance, with vigorous force address'd,  
Descends, and pants in Apisaon's breast;  
From rich Paeonia's vales the warrior came,  
Next thee, Asteropeus! in place and fame.  
Asteropeus with grief beheld the slain,  
And rush'd to combat, but he rush'd in vain:  
Indissolubly firm, around the dead,  
Rank within rank, on buckler buckler spread,  
And hemm'd with bristled spears, the Grecians stood,  
A brazen bulwark, and an iron wood.  
Great Ajax eyes them with incessant care,  
And in an orb contracts the crowded war,  
Close in their ranks commands to fight or fall,

And stands the centre and the soul of all:  
Fix'd on the spot they war, and wounded, wound  
A sanguine torrent steeps the reeking ground:  
On heaps the Greeks, on heaps the Trojans bled,  
And, thickening round them, rise the hills of dead.

Greece, in close order, and collected might,  
Yet suffers least, and sways the wavering fight;  
Fierce as conflicting fires the combat burns,  
And now it rises, now it sinks by turns.  
In one thick darkness all the fight was lost;  
The sun, the moon, and all the ethereal host  
Seem'd as extinct: day ravish'd from their eyes,  
And all heaven's splendours blotted from the skies.  
Such o'er Patroclus' body hung the night,  
The rest in sunshine fought, and open light;  
Unclouded there, the aerial azure spread,  
No vapour rested on the mountain's head,  
The golden sun pour'd forth a stronger ray,  
And all the broad expansion flamed with day.  
Dispersed around the plain, by fits they fight,  
And here and there their scatter'd arrows light:  
But death and darkness o'er the carcass spread,  
There burn'd the war, and there the mighty bled.

Meanwhile the sons of Nestor, in the rear,

(Their fellows routed,) toss the distant spear,  
And skirmish wide: so Nestor gave command,  
When from the ships he sent the Pylian band.  
The youthful brothers thus for fame contend,  
Nor knew the fortune of Achilles' friend;  
In thought they view'd him still, with martial joy,  
Glorious in arms, and dealing death to Troy.

But round the corse the heroes pant for breath,  
And thick and heavy grows the work of death:  
O'erlabour'd now, with dust, and sweat, and gore,  
Their knees, their legs, their feet, are covered o'er;  
Drops follow drops, the clouds on clouds arise,  
And carnage clogs their hands, and darkness fills their eyes.  
As when a slaughter'd bull's yet reeking hide,  
Strain'd with full force, and tugg'd from side to side,  
The brawny carriers stretch; and labour o'er  
The extended surface, drunk with fat and gore:  
So tugging round the corse both armies stood;  
The mangled body bathed in sweat and blood;  
While Greeks and Ilians equal strength employ,  
Now to the ships to force it, now to Troy.  
Not Pallas' self, her breast when fury warms,  
Nor he whose anger sets the world in arms,  
Could blame this scene; such rage, such horror reign'd;  
Such, Jove to honour the great dead ordain'd.

Achilles in his ships at distance lay,  
Nor knew the fatal fortune of the day;  
He, yet unconscious of Patroclus' fall,  
In dust extended under Ilion's wall,  
Expects him glorious from the conquered plain,  
And for his wish'd return prepares in vain;  
Though well he knew, to make proud Ilion bend  
Was more than heaven had destined to his friend.  
Perhaps to him: this Thetis had reveal'd;  
The rest, in pity to her son, conceal'd.

Still raged the conflict round the hero dead,  
And heaps on heaps by mutual wounds they bled.  
"Cursed be the man (even private Greeks would say)  
Who dares desert this well-disputed day!  
First may the cleaving earth before our eyes  
Gape wide, and drink our blood for sacrifice;  
First perish all, ere haughty Troy shall boast  
We lost Patroclus, and our glory lost!"

Thus they: while with one voice the Trojans said,  
"Grant this day, Jove! or heap us on the dead!"

Then clash their sounding arms; the clangours rise,  
And shake the brazen concave of the skies.

Meantime, at distance from the scene of blood,  
The pensive steeds of great Achilles stood:  
Their godlike master slain before their eyes,  
They wept, and shared in human miseries.(248)  
In vain Automedon now shakes the rein,  
Now plies the lash, and soothes and threats in vain;  
Nor to the fight nor Hellespont they go,  
Restive they stood, and obstinate in woe:  
Still as a tombstone, never to be moved,  
On some good man or woman unreproved  
Lays its eternal weight; or fix'd, as stands  
A marble courser by the sculptor's hands,  
Placed on the hero's grave. Along their face  
The big round drops coursed down with silent pace,  
Conglobing on the dust. Their manes, that late  
Circled their arched necks, and waved in state,  
Trail'd on the dust beneath the yoke were spread,  
And prone to earth was hung their languid head:  
Nor Jove disdain'd to cast a pitying look,  
While thus relenting to the steeds he spoke:

"Unhappy coursers of immortal strain,  
Exempt from age, and deathless, now in vain;  
Did we your race on mortal man bestow,  
Only, alas! to share in mortal woe?"

For ah! what is there of inferior birth,  
That breathes or creeps upon the dust of earth;  
What wretched creature of what wretched kind,  
Than man more weak, calamitous, and blind?  
A miserable race! but cease to mourn:  
For not by you shall Priam's son be borne  
High on the splendid car: one glorious prize  
He rashly boasts: the rest our will denies.  
Ourself will swiftness to your nerves impart,  
Ourself with rising spirits swell your heart.  
Automedon your rapid flight shall bear  
Safe to the navy through the storm of war.  
For yet 'tis given to Troy to ravage o'er  
The field, and spread her slaughters to the shore;  
The sun shall see her conquer, till his fall  
With sacred darkness shades the face of all."

He said; and breathing in the immortal horse  
Excessive spirit, urged them to the course;  
From their high manes they shake the dust, and bear  
The kindling chariot through the parted war:  
So flies a vulture through the clamorous train  
Of geese, that scream, and scatter round the plain.  
From danger now with swiftest speed they flew,  
And now to conquest with like speed pursue;  
Sole in the seat the charioteer remains,

Now plies the javelin, now directs the reins:  
Him brave Alcimedon beheld distress'd,  
Approach'd the chariot, and the chief address'd:

"What god provokes thee rashly thus to dare,  
Alone, unaided, in the thickest war?  
Alas! thy friend is slain, and Hector wields  
Achilles' arms triumphant in the fields."

"In happy time (the charioteer replies)  
The bold Alcimedon now greets my eyes;  
No Greek like him the heavenly steeds restrains,  
Or holds their fury in suspended reins:  
Patroclus, while he lived, their rage could tame,  
But now Patroclus is an empty name!  
To thee I yield the seat, to thee resign  
The ruling charge: the task of fight be mine."

He said. Alcimedon, with active heat,  
Snatches the reins, and vaults into the seat.  
His friend descends. The chief of Troy descried,  
And call'd Æneas fighting near his side.

"Lo, to my sight, beyond our hope restored,  
Achilles' car, deserted of its lord!  
The glorious steeds our ready arms invite,



Scarce their weak drivers guide them through the fight.

Can such opponents stand when we assail?

Unite thy force, my friend, and we prevail."

The son of Venus to the counsel yields;

Then o'er their backs they spread their solid shields:

With brass refulgent the broad surface shined,

And thick bull-hides the spacious concave lined.

Them Chromius follows, Aretus succeeds;

Each hopes the conquest of the lofty steeds:

In vain, brave youths, with glorious hopes ye burn,

In vain advance! not fated to return.

Unmov'd, Automedon attends the fight,

Implores the Eternal, and collects his might.

Then turning to his friend, with dauntless mind:

"Oh keep the foaming coursers close behind!

Full on my shoulders let their nostrils blow,

For hard the fight, determined is the foe;

'Tis Hector comes: and when he seeks the prize,

War knows no mean; he wins it or he dies."

Then through the field he sends his voice aloud,

And calls the Ajaces from the warring crowd,

With great Atrides. "Hither turn, (he said,)

Turn where distress demands immediate aid;

The dead, encircled by his friends, forego,  
And save the living from a fiercer foe.  
Unhelp'd we stand, unequal to engage  
The force of Hector, and Æneas' rage:  
Yet mighty as they are, my force to prove  
Is only mine: the event belongs to Jove."

He spoke, and high the sounding javelin flung,  
Which pass'd the shield of Aretus the young:  
It pierced his belt, emboss'd with curious art,  
Then in the lower belly struck the dart.  
As when a ponderous axe, descending full,  
Cleaves the broad forehead of some brawny bull:(249)  
Struck 'twixt the horns, he springs with many a bound,  
Then tumbling rolls enormous on the ground:  
Thus fell the youth; the air his soul received,  
And the spear trembled as his entrails heaved.

Now at Automedon the Trojan foe  
Discharged his lance; the meditated blow,  
Stooping, he shunn'd; the javelin idly fled,  
And hiss'd innoxious o'er the hero's head;  
Deep rooted in the ground, the forceful spear  
In long vibrations spent its fury there.  
With clashing falchions now the chiefs had closed,  
But each brave Ajax heard, and interposed;

Nor longer Hector with his Trojans stood,  
But left their slain companion in his blood:  
His arms Automedon divests, and cries,  
"Accept, Patroclus, this mean sacrifice:  
Thus have I soothed my griefs, and thus have paid,  
Poor as it is, some offering to thy shade."

So looks the lion o'er a mangled boar,  
All grim with rage, and horrible with gore;  
High on the chariot at one bound he sprung,  
And o'er his seat the bloody trophies hung.

And now Minerva from the realms of air  
Descends impetuous, and renews the war;  
For, pleased at length the Grecian arms to aid,  
The lord of thunders sent the blue-eyed maid.  
As when high Jove denouncing future woe,  
O'er the dark clouds extends his purple bow,  
(In sign of tempests from the troubled air,  
Or from the rage of man, destructive war,)  
The drooping cattle dread the impending skies,  
And from his half-till'd field the labourer flies:  
In such a form the goddess round her drew  
A livid cloud, and to the battle flew.  
Assuming Phoenix' shape on earth she falls,  
And in his well-known voice to Sparta calls:

"And lies Achilles' friend, beloved by all,  
A prey to dogs beneath the Trojan wall?  
What shame 'o Greece for future times to tell,  
To thee the greatest in whose cause he fell!"  
"O chief, O father! (Atreus' son replies)  
O full of days! by long experience wise!  
What more desires my soul, than here unmoved  
To guard the body of the man I loved?  
Ah, would Minerva send me strength to rear  
This wearied arm, and ward the storm of war!  
But Hector, like the rage of fire, we dread,  
And Jove's own glories blaze around his head!"

Pleased to be first of all the powers address'd,  
She breathes new vigour in her hero's breast,  
And fills with keen revenge, with fell despite,  
Desire of blood, and rage, and lust of fight.  
So burns the vengeful hornet (soul all o'er),  
Repulsed in vain, and thirsty still of gore;  
(Bold son of air and heat) on angry wings  
Untamed, untired, he turns, attacks, and stings.  
Fired with like ardour fierce Atrides flew,  
And sent his soul with every lance he threw.

There stood a Trojan, not unknown to fame,  
Action's son, and Podes was his name:

With riches honour'd, and with courage bless'd,  
By Hector loved, his comrade, and his guest;  
Through his broad belt the spear a passage found,  
And, ponderous as he falls, his arms resound.  
Sudden at Hector's side Apollo stood,  
Like Phaenops, Asius' son, appear'd the god;  
(Asius the great, who held his wealthy reign  
In fair Abydos, by the rolling main.)

"Oh prince! (he cried) Oh foremost once in fame!  
What Grecian now shall tremble at thy name?  
Dost thou at length to Menelaus yield,  
A chief once thought no terror of the field?  
Yet singly, now, the long-disputed prize  
He bears victorious, while our army flies:  
By the same arm illustrious Podes bled;  
The friend of Hector, unrevenged, is dead!"  
This heard, o'er Hector spreads a cloud of woe,  
Rage lifts his lance, and drives him on the foe.

But now the Eternal shook his sable shield,  
That shaded Ide and all the subject field  
Beneath its ample verge. A rolling cloud  
Involved the mount; the thunder roar'd aloud;  
The affrighted hills from their foundations nod,  
And blaze beneath the lightnings of the god:

At one regard of his all-seeing eye  
The vanquish'd triumph, and the victors fly.

Then trembled Greece: the flight Peneleus led;  
For as the brave Boeotian turn'd his head  
To face the foe, Polydamas drew near,  
And razed his shoulder with a shorten'd spear:  
By Hector wounded, Leitus quits the plain,  
Pierced through the wrist; and raging with the pain,  
Grasps his once formidable lance in vain.

As Hector follow'd, Idomen address'd  
The flaming javelin to his manly breast;  
The brittle point before his corslet yields;  
Exulting Troy with clamour fills the fields:  
High on his chariots the Cretan stood,  
The son of Priam whirl'd the massive wood.  
But erring from its aim, the impetuous spear  
Struck to the dust the squire and charioteer  
Of martial Merion: Coeranus his name,  
Who left fair Lyctus for the fields of fame.  
On foot bold Merion fought; and now laid low,  
Had graced the triumphs of his Trojan foe,  
But the brave squire the ready coursers brought,  
And with his life his master's safety bought.  
Between his cheek and ear the weapon went,

The teeth it shatter'd, and the tongue it rent.  
Prone from the seat he tumbles to the plain;  
His dying hand forgets the falling rein:  
This Merion reaches, bending from the car,  
And urges to desert the hopeless war:  
Idomeneus consents; the lash applies;  
And the swift chariot to the navy flies.

Not Ajax less the will of heaven descried,  
And conquest shifting to the Trojan side,  
Turn'd by the hand of Jove. Then thus begun,  
To Atreus's seed, the godlike Telamon:

"Alas! who sees not Jove's almighty hand  
Transfers the glory to the Trojan band?  
Whether the weak or strong discharge the dart,  
He guides each arrow to a Grecian heart:  
Not so our spears; incessant though they rain,  
He suffers every lance to fall in vain.  
Deserted of the god, yet let us try  
What human strength and prudence can supply;  
If yet this honour'd corse, in triumph borne,  
May glad the fleets that hope not our return,  
Who tremble yet, scarce rescued from their fates,  
And still hear Hector thundering at their gates.  
Some hero too must be despatch'd to bear

The mournful message to Pelides' ear;  
For sure he knows not, distant on the shore,  
His friend, his loved Patroclus, is no more.  
But such a chief I spy not through the host:  
The men, the steeds, the armies, all are lost  
In general darkness--Lord of earth and air!  
Oh king! Oh father! hear my humble prayer:  
Dispel this cloud, the light of heaven restore;  
Give me to see, and Ajax asks no more:  
If Greece must perish, we thy will obey,  
But let us perish in the face of day!"

With tears the hero spoke, and at his prayer  
The god relenting clear'd the clouded air;  
Forth burst the sun with all-enlightening ray;  
The blaze of armour flash'd against the day.  
"Now, now, Atrides! cast around thy sight;  
If yet Antilochus survives the fight,  
Let him to great Achilles' ear convey  
The fatal news"--Atrides hastes away.

So turns the lion from the nightly fold,  
Though high in courage, and with hunger bold,  
Long gall'd by herdsmen, and long vex'd by hounds,  
Stiff with fatigue, and fretted sore with wounds;  
The darts fly round him from a hundred hands,



And the red terrors of the blazing brands:  
Till late, reluctant, at the dawn of day  
Sour he departs, and quits the untasted prey,  
So moved Atrides from his dangerous place  
With weary limbs, but with unwilling pace;  
The foe, he fear'd, might yet Patroclus gain,  
And much admonish'd, much adjured his train:

"O guard these relics to your charge consign'd,  
And bear the merits of the dead in mind;  
How skill'd he was in each obliging art;  
The mildest manners, and the gentlest heart:  
He was, alas! but fate decreed his end,  
In death a hero, as in life a friend!"

So parts the chief; from rank to rank he flew,  
And round on all sides sent his piercing view.  
As the bold bird, endued with sharpest eye  
Of all that wings the mid aerial sky,  
The sacred eagle, from his walks above  
Looks down, and sees the distant thicket move;  
Then stoops, and sousing on the quivering hare,  
Snatches his life amid the clouds of air.  
Not with less quickness, his exerted sight  
Pass'd this and that way, through the ranks of fight:  
Till on the left the chief he sought, he found,

Cheering his men, and spreading deaths around:

To him the king: "Beloved of Jove! draw near,  
For sadder tidings never touch'd thy ear;  
Thy eyes have witness'd what a fatal turn!  
How Ilium triumphs, and the Achaians mourn.  
This is not all: Patroclus, on the shore  
Now pale and dead, shall succour Greece no more.  
Fly to the fleet, this instant fly, and tell  
The sad Achilles, how his loved-one fell:  
He too may haste the naked corse to gain:  
The arms are Hector's, who despoil'd the slain."

The youthful warrior heard with silent woe,  
From his fair eyes the tears began to flow:  
Big with the mighty grief, he strove to say  
What sorrow dictates, but no word found way.  
To brave Laodocus his arms he flung,  
Who, near him wheeling, drove his steeds along;  
Then ran the mournful message to impart,  
With tearful eyes, and with dejected heart.

Swift fled the youth: nor Menelaus stands  
(Though sore distress'd) to aid the Pylian bands;  
But bids bold Thrasymede those troops sustain;  
Himself returns to his Patroclus slain.

"Gone is Antilochus (the hero said);  
But hope not, warriors, for Achilles' aid:  
Though fierce his rage, unbounded be his woe,  
Unarm'd, he fights not with the Trojan foe.  
'Tis in our hands alone our hopes remain,  
'Tis our own vigour must the dead regain,  
And save ourselves, while with impetuous hate  
Troy pours along, and this way rolls our fate."

"'Tis well (said Ajax), be it then thy care,  
With Merion's aid, the weighty corse to rear;  
Myself, and my bold brother will sustain  
The shock of Hector and his charging train:  
Nor fear we armies, fighting side by side;  
What Troy can dare, we have already tried,  
Have tried it, and have stood." The hero said.  
High from the ground the warriors heave the dead.  
A general clamour rises at the sight:  
Loud shout the Trojans, and renew the fight.  
Not fiercer rush along the gloomy wood,  
With rage insatiate, and with thirst of blood,  
Voracious hounds, that many a length before  
Their furious hunters, drive the wounded boar;  
But if the savage turns his glaring eye,  
They howl aloof, and round the forest fly.  
Thus on retreating Greece the Trojans pour,

Wave their thick falchions, and their javelins shower:  
But Ajax turning, to their fears they yield,  
All pale they tremble and forsake the field.

While thus aloft the hero's corse they bear,  
Behind them rages all the storm of war:  
Confusion, tumult, horror, o'er the throng  
Of men, steeds, chariots, urged the rout along:  
Less fierce the winds with rising flames conspire  
To whelm some city under waves of fire;  
Now sink in gloomy clouds the proud abodes,  
Now crack the blazing temples of the gods;  
The rumbling torrent through the ruin rolls,  
And sheets of smoke mount heavy to the poles.  
The heroes sweat beneath their honour'd load:  
As when two mules, along the rugged road,  
From the steep mountain with exerted strength  
Drag some vast beam, or mast's unwieldy length;  
Inly they groan, big drops of sweat distil,  
The enormous timber lumbering down the hill:  
So these--Behind, the bulk of Ajax stands,  
And breaks the torrent of the rushing bands.  
Thus when a river swell'd with sudden rains  
Spreads his broad waters o'er the level plains,  
Some interposing hill the stream divides.  
And breaks its force, and turns the winding tides.

Still close they follow, close the rear engage;  
Aeneas storms, and Hector foams with rage:  
While Greece a heavy, thick retreat maintains,  
Wedged in one body, like a flight of cranes,  
That shriek incessant, while the falcon, hung  
High on poised pinions, threatens their callow young.  
So from the Trojan chiefs the Grecians fly,  
Such the wild terror, and the mingled cry:  
Within, without the trench, and all the way,  
Strow'd in bright heaps, their arms and armour lay;  
Such horror Jove impress'd! yet still proceeds  
The work of death, and still the battle bleeds.