

## BOOK XXII.

### ARGUMENT.

#### THE DEATH OF HECTOR.

The Trojans being safe within the walls, Hector only stays to oppose Achilles. Priam is struck at his approach, and tries to persuade his son to re-enter the town. Hecuba joins her entreaties, but in vain. Hector consults within himself what measures to take; but at the advance of Achilles, his resolution fails him, and he flies. Achilles pursues him thrice round the walls of Troy. The gods debate concerning the fate of Hector; at length Minerva descends to the aid of Achilles. She deludes Hector in the shape of Deiphobus; he stands the combat, and is slain. Achilles drags the dead body at his chariot in the sight of Priam and Hecuba. Their lamentations, tears, and despair. Their cries reach the ears of Andromache, who, ignorant of this, was retired into the inner part of the palace: she mounts up to the walls, and beholds her dead husband. She swoons at the spectacle. Her excess of grief and lamentation.

The thirtieth day still continues. The scene lies under the walls, and on the battlements of Troy.

Thus to their bulwarks, smit with panic fear,

The herded Ilians rush like driven deer:

There safe they wipe the briny drops away,  
And drown in bowls the labours of the day.  
Close to the walls, advancing o'er the fields  
Beneath one roof of well-compacted shields,  
March, bending on, the Greeks' embodied powers,  
Far stretching in the shade of Trojan towers.  
Great Hector singly stay'd: chain'd down by fate  
There fix'd he stood before the Scaean gate;  
Still his bold arms determined to employ,  
The guardian still of long-defended Troy.

Apollo now to tired Achilles turns:

(The power confess'd in all his glory burns:)

"And what (he cries) has Peleus' son in view,

With mortal speed a godhead to pursue?

For not to thee to know the gods is given,

Unskill'd to trace the latent marks of heaven.

What boots thee now, that Troy forsook the plain?

Vain thy past labour, and thy present vain:

Safe in their walls are now her troops bestow'd,

While here thy frantic rage attacks a god."

The chief incensed--"Too partial god of day!

To check my conquests in the middle way:

How few in Ilion else had refuge found!

What gasping numbers now had bit the ground!

Thou robb'st me of a glory justly mine,  
Powerful of godhead, and of fraud divine:  
Mean fame, alas! for one of heavenly strain,  
To cheat a mortal who repines in vain."

Then to the city, terrible and strong,  
With high and haughty steps he tower'd along,  
So the proud courser, victor of the prize,  
To the near goal with double ardour flies.  
Him, as he blazing shot across the field,  
The careful eyes of Priam first beheld.  
Not half so dreadful rises to the sight,(274)  
Through the thick gloom of some tempestuous night,  
Orion's dog (the year when autumn weighs),  
And o'er the feebler stars exerts his rays;  
Terrific glory! for his burning breath  
Taints the red air with fevers, plagues, and death.  
So flamed his fiery mail. Then wept the sage:  
He strikes his reverend head, now white with age;  
He lifts his wither'd arms; obtests the skies;  
He calls his much-loved son with feeble cries:  
The son, resolved Achilles' force to dare,  
Full at the Scaean gates expects the war;  
While the sad father on the rampart stands,  
And thus adjures him with extended hands:

"Ah stay not, stay not! guardless and alone;  
Hector! my loved, my dearest, bravest son!  
Methinks already I behold thee slain,  
And stretch'd beneath that fury of the plain.  
Implacable Achilles! might'st thou be  
To all the gods no dearer than to me!  
Thee, vultures wild should scatter round the shore.  
And bloody dogs grow fiercer from thy gore.  
How many valiant sons I late enjoy'd,  
Valiant in vain! by thy cursed arm destroy'd:  
Or, worse than slaughtered, sold in distant isles  
To shameful bondage, and unworthy toils.  
Two, while I speak, my eyes in vain explore,  
Two from one mother sprung, my Polydore,  
And loved Lycaon; now perhaps no more!  
Oh! if in yonder hostile camp they live,  
What heaps of gold, what treasures would I give!  
(Their grandsire's wealth, by right of birth their own,  
Consign'd his daughter with Lelegia's throne:)  
But if (which Heaven forbid) already lost,  
All pale they wander on the Stygian coast;  
What sorrows then must their sad mother know,  
What anguish I? unutterable woe!  
Yet less that anguish, less to her, to me,  
Less to all Troy, if not deprived of thee.  
Yet shun Achilles! enter yet the wall;

And spare thyself, thy father, spare us all!  
Save thy dear life; or, if a soul so brave  
Neglect that thought, thy dearer glory save.  
Pity, while yet I live, these silver hairs;  
While yet thy father feels the woes he bears,  
Yet cursed with sense! a wretch, whom in his rage  
(All trembling on the verge of helpless age)  
Great Jove has placed, sad spectacle of pain!  
The bitter dregs of fortune's cup to drain:  
To fill with scenes of death his closing eyes,  
And number all his days by miseries!  
My heroes slain, my bridal bed o'erturn'd,  
My daughters ravish'd, and my city burn'd,  
My bleeding infants dash'd against the floor;  
These I have yet to see, perhaps yet more!  
Perhaps even I, reserved by angry fate,  
The last sad relic of my ruin'd state,  
(Dire pomp of sovereign wretchedness!) must fall,  
And stain the pavement of my regal hall;  
Where famish'd dogs, late guardians of my door,  
Shall lick their mangled master's spatter'd gore.  
Yet for my sons I thank ye, gods! 'tis well;  
Well have they perish'd, for in fight they fell.  
Who dies in youth and vigour, dies the best,  
Struck through with wounds, all honest on the breast.  
But when the fates, in fulness of their rage,

Spurn the hoar head of unresisting age,  
In dust the reverend lineaments deform,  
And pour to dogs the life-blood scarcely warm:  
This, this is misery! the last, the worse,  
That man can feel! man, fated to be cursed!"

He said, and acting what no words could say,  
Rent from his head the silver locks away.  
With him the mournful mother bears a part;  
Yet all her sorrows turn not Hector's heart.  
The zone unbraced, her bosom she display'd;  
And thus, fast-falling the salt tears, she said:

"Have mercy on me, O my son! revere  
The words of age; attend a parent's prayer!  
If ever thee in these fond arms I press'd,  
Or still'd thy infant clamours at this breast;  
Ah do not thus our helpless years forego,  
But, by our walls secured, repel the foe.  
Against his rage if singly thou proceed,  
Should'st thou, (but Heaven avert it!) should'st thou bleed,  
Nor must thy corse lie honour'd on the bier,  
Nor spouse, nor mother, grace thee with a tear!  
Far from our pious rites those dear remains  
Must feast the vultures on the naked plains."

So they, while down their cheeks the torrents roll;  
But fix'd remains the purpose of his soul;  
Resolved he stands, and with a fiery glance  
Expects the hero's terrible advance.  
So, roll'd up in his den, the swelling snake  
Beholds the traveller approach the brake;  
When fed with noxious herbs his turgid veins  
Have gather'd half the poisons of the plains;  
He burns, he stiffens with collected ire,  
And his red eyeballs glare with living fire.  
Beneath a turret, on his shield reclined,  
He stood, and question'd thus his mighty mind:(275)

"Where lies my way? to enter in the wall?  
Honour and shame the ungenerous thought recall:  
Shall proud Polydamas before the gate  
Proclaim, his counsels are obey'd too late,  
Which timely follow'd but the former night,  
What numbers had been saved by Hector's flight?  
That wise advice rejected with disdain,  
I feel my folly in my people slain.  
Methinks my suffering country's voice I hear,  
But most her worthless sons insult my ear,  
On my rash courage charge the chance of war,  
And blame those virtues which they cannot share.  
No--if I e'er return, return I must

Glorious, my country's terror laid in dust:  
Or if I perish, let her see me fall  
In field at least, and fighting for her wall.  
And yet suppose these measures I forego,  
Approach unarm'd, and parley with the foe,  
The warrior-shield, the helm, and lance, lay down.  
And treat on terms of peace to save the town:  
The wife withheld, the treasure ill-detain'd  
(Cause of the war, and grievance of the land)  
With honourable justice to restore:  
And add half Ilion's yet remaining store,  
Which Troy shall, sworn, produce; that injured Greece  
May share our wealth, and leave our walls in peace.  
But why this thought? Unarm'd if I should go,  
What hope of mercy from this vengeful foe,  
But woman-like to fall, and fall without a blow?  
We greet not here, as man conversing man,  
Met at an oak, or journeying o'er a plain;  
No season now for calm familiar talk,  
Like youths and maidens in an evening walk:  
War is our business, but to whom is given  
To die, or triumph, that, determine Heaven!"

Thus pondering, like a god the Greek drew nigh;  
His dreadful plumage nodded from on high;  
The Pelian javelin, in his better hand,

Shot trembling rays that glitter'd o'er the land;  
And on his breast the beamy splendour shone,  
Like Jove's own lightning, or the rising sun.  
As Hector sees, unusual terrors rise,  
Struck by some god, he fears, recedes, and flies.  
He leaves the gates, he leaves the wall behind:  
Achilles follows like the winged wind.  
Thus at the panting dove a falcon flies  
(The swiftest racer of the liquid skies),  
Just when he holds, or thinks he holds his prey,  
Obliquely wheeling through the aerial way,  
With open beak and shrilling cries he springs,  
And aims his claws, and shoots upon his wings:  
No less fore-right the rapid chase they held,  
One urged by fury, one by fear impell'd:  
Now circling round the walls their course maintain,  
Where the high watch-tower overlooks the plain;  
Now where the fig-trees spread their umbrage broad,  
(A wider compass,) smoke along the road.  
Next by Scamander's double source they bound,  
Where two famed fountains burst the parted ground;  
This hot through scorching clefts is seen to rise,  
With exhalations steaming to the skies;  
That the green banks in summer's heat o'erflows,  
Like crystal clear, and cold as winter snows:  
Each gushing fount a marble cistern fills,

Whose polish'd bed receives the falling rills;  
Where Trojan dames (ere yet alarm'd by Greece)  
Wash'd their fair garments in the days of peace.(276)  
By these they pass'd, one chasing, one in flight:  
(The mighty fled, pursued by stronger might:)  
Swift was the course; no vulgar prize they play,  
No vulgar victim must reward the day:  
(Such as in races crown the speedy strife:)  
The prize contended was great Hector's life.  
As when some hero's funerals are decreed  
In grateful honour of the mighty dead;  
Where high rewards the vigorous youth inflame  
(Some golden tripod, or some lovely dame)  
The panting coursers swiftly turn the goal,  
And with them turns the raised spectator's soul:  
Thus three times round the Trojan wall they fly.  
The gazing gods lean forward from the sky;  
To whom, while eager on the chase they look,  
The sire of mortals and immortals spoke:

"Unworthy sight! the man beloved of heaven,  
Behold, inglorious round yon city driven!  
My heart partakes the generous Hector's pain;  
Hector, whose zeal whole hecatombs has slain,  
Whose grateful fumes the gods received with joy,  
From Ida's summits, and the towers of Troy:

Now see him flying; to his fears resign'd,  
And fate, and fierce Achilles, close behind.  
Consult, ye powers! ('tis worthy your debate)  
Whether to snatch him from impending fate,  
Or let him bear, by stern Pelides slain,  
(Good as he is) the lot imposed on man."

Then Pallas thus: "Shall he whose vengeance forms  
The forky bolt, and blackens heaven with storms,  
Shall he prolong one Trojan's forfeit breath?  
A man, a mortal, pre-ordain'd to death!  
And will no murmurs fill the courts above?  
No gods indignant blame their partial Jove?"

"Go then (return'd the sire) without delay,  
Exert thy will: I give the Fates their way.  
Swift at the mandate pleased Tritonia flies,  
And stoops impetuous from the cleaving skies.

As through the forest, o'er the vale and lawn,  
The well-breath'd beagle drives the flying fawn,  
In vain he tries the covert of the brakes,  
Or deep beneath the trembling thicket shakes;  
Sure of the vapour in the tainted dews,  
The certain hound his various maze pursues.  
Thus step by step, where'er the Trojan wheel'd,

There swift Achilles compass'd round the field.  
Oft as to reach the Dardan gates he bends,  
And hopes the assistance of his pitying friends,  
(Whose showering arrows, as he coursed below,  
From the high turrets might oppress the foe,)  
So oft Achilles turns him to the plain:  
He eyes the city, but he eyes in vain.  
As men in slumbers seem with speedy pace,  
One to pursue, and one to lead the chase,  
Their sinking limbs the fancied course forsake,  
Nor this can fly, nor that can overtake:  
No less the labouring heroes pant and strain:  
While that but flies, and this pursues in vain.

What god, O muse, assisted Hector's force  
With fate itself so long to hold the course?  
Phoebus it was; who, in his latest hour,  
Endued his knees with strength, his nerves with power:  
And great Achilles, lest some Greek's advance  
Should snatch the glory from his lifted lance,  
Sign'd to the troops to yield his foe the way,  
And leave untouch'd the honours of the day.

Jove lifts the golden balances, that show  
The fates of mortal men, and things below:  
Here each contending hero's lot he tries,

And weighs, with equal hand, their destinies.  
Low sinks the scale surcharged with Hector's fate;  
Heavy with death it sinks, and hell receives the weight.

Then Phoebus left him. Fierce Minerva flies  
To stern Pelides, and triumphing, cries:  
"O loved of Jove! this day our labours cease,  
And conquest blazes with full beams on Greece.  
Great Hector falls; that Hector famed so far,  
Drunk with renown, insatiable of war,  
Falls by thy hand, and mine! nor force, nor flight,  
Shall more avail him, nor his god of light.  
See, where in vain he supplicates above,  
Roll'd at the feet of unrelenting Jove;  
Rest here: myself will lead the Trojan on,  
And urge to meet the fate he cannot shun."

Her voice divine the chief with joyful mind  
Obey'd; and rested, on his lance reclined  
While like Deiphobus the martial dame  
(Her face, her gesture, and her arms the same),  
In show an aid, by hapless Hector's side  
Approach'd, and greets him thus with voice belied:

"Too long, O Hector! have I borne the sight  
Of this distress, and sorrow'd in thy flight:

It fits us now a noble stand to make,  
And here, as brothers, equal fates partake."

Then he: "O prince! allied in blood and fame,  
Dearer than all that own a brother's name;  
Of all that Hecuba to Priam bore,  
Long tried, long loved: much loved, but honoured more!  
Since you, of all our numerous race alone  
Defend my life, regardless of your own."

Again the goddess: "Much my father's prayer,  
And much my mother's, press'd me to forbear:  
My friends embraced my knees, adjured my stay,  
But stronger love impell'd, and I obey.  
Come then, the glorious conflict let us try,  
Let the steel sparkle, and the javelin fly;  
Or let us stretch Achilles on the field,  
Or to his arm our bloody trophies yield."

Fraudful she said; then swiftly march'd before:  
The Dardan hero shuns his foe no more.  
Sternly they met. The silence Hector broke:  
His dreadful plumage nodded as he spoke:

"Enough, O son of Peleus! Troy has view'd  
Her walls thrice circled, and her chief pursued.

But now some god within me bids me try  
Thine, or my fate: I kill thee, or I die.  
Yet on the verge of battle let us stay,  
And for a moment's space suspend the day;  
Let Heaven's high powers be call'd to arbitrate  
The just conditions of this stern debate,  
(Eternal witnesses of all below,  
And faithful guardians of the treasured vow!)  
To them I swear; if, victor in the strife,  
Jove by these hands shall shed thy noble life,  
No vile dishonour shall thy corse pursue;  
Stripp'd of its arms alone (the conqueror's due)  
The rest to Greece uninjured I'll restore:  
Now plight thy mutual oath, I ask no more."

"Talk not of oaths (the dreadful chief replies,  
While anger flash'd from his disdainful eyes),  
Detested as thou art, and ought to be,  
Nor oath nor pact Achilles plights with thee:  
Such pacts as lambs and rabid wolves combine,  
Such leagues as men and furious lions join,  
To such I call the gods! one constant state  
Of lasting rancour and eternal hate:  
No thought but rage, and never-ceasing strife,  
Till death extinguish rage, and thought, and life.  
Rouse then thy forces this important hour,

Collect thy soul, and call forth all thy power.  
No further subterfuge, no further chance;  
'Tis Pallas, Pallas gives thee to my lance.  
Each Grecian ghost, by thee deprived of breath,  
Now hovers round, and calls thee to thy death."

He spoke, and launch'd his javelin at the foe;  
But Hector shunn'd the meditated blow:  
He stoop'd, while o'er his head the flying spear  
Sang innocent, and spent its force in air.  
Minerva watch'd it falling on the land,  
Then drew, and gave to great Achilles' hand,  
Unseen of Hector, who, elate with joy,  
Now shakes his lance, and braves the dread of Troy.

"The life you boasted to that javelin given,  
Prince! you have miss'd. My fate depends on Heaven,  
To thee, presumptuous as thou art, unknown,  
Or what must prove my fortune, or thy own.  
Boasting is but an art, our fears to blind,  
And with false terrors sink another's mind.  
But know, whatever fate I am to try,  
By no dishonest wound shall Hector die.  
I shall not fall a fugitive at least,  
My soul shall bravely issue from my breast.  
But first, try thou my arm; and may this dart

End all my country's woes, deep buried in thy heart."

The weapon flew, its course unerring held,  
Unerring, but the heavenly shield repell'd  
The mortal dart; resulting with a bound  
From off the ringing orb, it struck the ground.  
Hector beheld his javelin fall in vain,  
Nor other lance, nor other hope remain;  
He calls Deiphobus, demands a spear--  
In vain, for no Deiphobus was there.  
All comfortless he stands: then, with a sigh;  
"'Tis so--Heaven wills it, and my hour is nigh!  
I deem'd Deiphobus had heard my call,  
But he secure lies guarded in the wall.  
A god deceived me; Pallas, 'twas thy deed,  
Death and black fate approach! 'tis I must bleed.  
No refuge now, no succour from above,  
Great Jove deserts me, and the son of Jove,  
Propitious once, and kind! Then welcome fate!  
'Tis true I perish, yet I perish great:  
Yet in a mighty deed I shall expire,  
Let future ages hear it, and admire!"

Fierce, at the word, his weighty sword he drew,  
And, all collected, on Achilles flew.

So Jove's bold bird, high balanced in the air,

Stoops from the clouds to truss the quivering hare.  
Nor less Achilles his fierce soul prepares:  
Before his breast the flaming shield he bears,  
Refulgent orb! above his fourfold cone  
The gilded horse-hair sparkled in the sun.  
Nodding at every step: (Vulcanian frame!)  
And as he moved, his figure seem'd on flame.  
As radiant Hesper shines with keener light,(277)  
Far-beaming o'er the silver host of night,  
When all the starry train emblaze the sphere:  
So shone the point of great Achilles' spear.  
In his right hand he waves the weapon round,  
Eyes the whole man, and meditates the wound;  
But the rich mail Patroclus lately wore  
Securely cased the warrior's body o'er.  
One space at length he spies, to let in fate,  
Where 'twixt the neck and throat the jointed plate  
Gave entrance: through that penetrable part  
Furious he drove the well-directed dart:  
Nor pierced the windpipe yet, nor took the power  
Of speech, unhappy! from thy dying hour.  
Prone on the field the bleeding warrior lies,  
While, thus triumphing, stern Achilles cries:  
  
"At last is Hector stretch'd upon the plain,  
Who fear'd no vengeance for Patroclus slain:

Then, prince! you should have fear'd, what now you feel;  
Achilles absent was Achilles still:  
Yet a short space the great avenger stayed,  
Then low in dust thy strength and glory laid.  
Peaceful he sleeps, with all our rites adorn'd,  
For ever honour'd, and for ever mourn'd:  
While cast to all the rage of hostile power,  
Thee birds shall mangle, and the gods devour."

Then Hector, fainting at the approach of death:  
"By thy own soul! by those who gave thee breath!  
By all the sacred prevalence of prayer;  
Ah, leave me not for Grecian dogs to tear!  
The common rites of sepulture bestow,  
To soothe a father's and a mother's woe:  
Let their large gifts procure an urn at least,  
And Hector's ashes in his country rest."

"No, wretch accursed! relentless he replies;  
(Flames, as he spoke, shot flashing from his eyes;)  
Not those who gave me breath should bid me spare,  
Nor all the sacred prevalence of prayer.  
Could I myself the bloody banquet join!  
No--to the dogs that carcase I resign.  
Should Troy, to bribe me, bring forth all her store,  
And giving thousands, offer thousands more;

Should Dardan Priam, and his weeping dame,  
Drain their whole realm to buy one funeral flame:  
Their Hector on the pile they should not see,  
Nor rob the vultures of one limb of thee."

Then thus the chief his dying accents drew:  
"Thy rage, implacable! too well I knew:  
The Furies that relentless breast have steel'd,  
And cursed thee with a heart that cannot yield.  
Yet think, a day will come, when fate's decree  
And angry gods shall wreak this wrong on thee;  
Phoebus and Paris shall avenge my fate,  
And stretch thee here before the Scaean gate."(278)

He ceased. The Fates suppress'd his labouring breath,  
And his eyes stiffen'd at the hand of death;  
To the dark realm the spirit wings its way,  
(The manly body left a load of clay,  
And plaintive glides along the dreary coast,  
A naked, wandering, melancholy ghost!

Achilles, musing as he roll'd his eyes  
O'er the dead hero, thus unheard, replies:  
"Die thou the first! When Jove and heaven ordain,  
I follow thee"--He said, and stripp'd the slain.  
Then forcing backward from the gaping wound

The reeking javelin, cast it on the ground.  
The thronging Greeks behold with wondering eyes  
His manly beauty and superior size;  
While some, ignobler, the great dead deface  
With wounds ungenerous, or with taunts disgrace:

"How changed that Hector, who like Jove of late  
Sent lightning on our fleets, and scatter'd fate!"

High o'er the slain the great Achilles stands,  
Begirt with heroes and surrounding bands;  
And thus aloud, while all the host attends:  
"Princes and leaders! countrymen and friends!  
Since now at length the powerful will of heaven  
The dire destroyer to our arm has given,  
Is not Troy fallen already? Haste, ye powers!  
See, if already their deserted towers  
Are left unmann'd; or if they yet retain  
The souls of heroes, their great Hector slain.  
But what is Troy, or glory what to me?  
Or why reflects my mind on aught but thee,  
Divine Patroclus! Death hath seal'd his eyes;  
Unwept, unhonour'd, uninterr'd he lies!  
Can his dear image from my soul depart,  
Long as the vital spirit moves my heart?  
If in the melancholy shades below,

The flames of friends and lovers cease to glow,  
Yet mine shall sacred last; mine, undecay'd,  
Burn on through death, and animate my shade.  
Meanwhile, ye sons of Greece, in triumph bring  
The corpse of Hector, and your paeans sing.  
Be this the song, slow-moving toward the shore,  
"Hector is dead, and Ilion is no more."

Then his fell soul a thought of vengeance bred;  
(Unworthy of himself, and of the dead;)  
The nervous ancles bored, his feet he bound  
With thongs inserted through the double wound;  
These fix'd up high behind the rolling wain,  
His graceful head was trail'd along the plain.  
Proud on his car the insulting victor stood,  
And bore aloft his arms, distilling blood.  
He smites the steeds; the rapid chariot flies;  
The sudden clouds of circling dust arise.  
Now lost is all that formidable air;  
The face divine, and long-descending hair,  
Purple the ground, and streak the sable sand;  
Deform'd, dishonour'd, in his native land,  
Given to the rage of an insulting throng,  
And, in his parents' sight, now dragg'd along!

The mother first beheld with sad survey;

She rent her tresses, venerable grey,  
And cast, far off, the regal veils away.  
With piercing shrieks his bitter fate she moans,  
While the sad father answers groans with groans  
Tears after tears his mournful cheeks o'erflow,  
And the whole city wears one face of woe:  
No less than if the rage of hostile fires.  
From her foundations curling to her spires,  
O'er the proud citadel at length should rise,  
And the last blaze send Ilion to the skies.  
The wretched monarch of the falling state,  
Distracted, presses to the Dardan gate.  
Scarce the whole people stop his desperate course,  
While strong affliction gives the feeble force:  
Grief tears his heart, and drives him to and fro,  
In all the raging impotence of woe.  
At length he roll'd in dust, and thus begun,  
Imploring all, and naming one by one:  
"Ah! let me, let me go where sorrow calls;  
I, only I, will issue from your walls  
(Guide or companion, friends! I ask ye none),  
And bow before the murderer of my son.  
My grief perhaps his pity may engage;  
Perhaps at least he may respect my age.  
He has a father too; a man like me;  
One, not exempt from age and misery

(Vigorous no more, as when his young embrace  
Begot this pest of me, and all my race).  
How many valiant sons, in early bloom,  
Has that cursed hand send headlong to the tomb!  
Thee, Hector! last: thy loss (divinely brave)  
Sinks my sad soul with sorrow to the grave.  
O had thy gentle spirit pass'd in peace,  
The son expiring in the sire's embrace,  
While both thy parents wept the fatal hour,  
And, bending o'er thee, mix'd the tender shower!  
Some comfort that had been, some sad relief,  
To melt in full satiety of grief!"

Thus wail'd the father, grovelling on the ground,  
And all the eyes of Ilion stream'd around.

Amidst her matrons Hecuba appears:  
(A mourning princess, and a train in tears;)  
"Ah why has Heaven prolong'd this hated breath,  
Patient of horrors, to behold thy death?  
O Hector! late thy parents' pride and joy,  
The boast of nations! the defence of Troy!  
To whom her safety and her fame she owed;  
Her chief, her hero, and almost her god!  
O fatal change! become in one sad day  
A senseless corse! inanimated clay!"

But not as yet the fatal news had spread  
To fair Andromache, of Hector dead;  
As yet no messenger had told his fate,  
Not e'en his stay without the Scaean gate.  
Far in the close recesses of the dome,  
Pensive she plied the melancholy loom;  
A growing work employ'd her secret hours,  
Confusedly gay with intermingled flowers.  
Her fair-haired handmaids heat the brazen urn,  
The bath preparing for her lord's return  
In vain; alas! her lord returns no more;  
Unbathed he lies, and bleeds along the shore!  
Now from the walls the clamours reach her ear,  
And all her members shake with sudden fear:  
Forth from her ivory hand the shuttle falls,  
And thus, astonish'd, to her maids she calls:

"Ah follow me! (she cried) what plaintive noise  
Invades my ear? 'Tis sure my mother's voice.  
My faltering knees their trembling frame desert,  
A pulse unusual flutters at my heart;  
Some strange disaster, some reverse of fate  
(Ye gods avert it!) threatens the Trojan state.  
Far be the omen which my thoughts suggest!  
But much I fear my Hector's dauntless breast

Confronts Achilles; chased along the plain,  
Shut from our walls! I fear, I fear him slain!  
Safe in the crowd he ever scorn'd to wait,  
And sought for glory in the jaws of fate:  
Perhaps that noble heat has cost his breath,  
Now quench'd for ever in the arms of death."

She spoke: and furious, with distracted pace,  
Fears in her heart, and anguish in her face,  
Flies through the dome (the maids her steps pursue),  
And mounts the walls, and sends around her view.  
Too soon her eyes the killing object found,  
The godlike Hector dragg'd along the ground.  
A sudden darkness shades her swimming eyes:  
She faints, she falls; her breath, her colour flies.  
Her hair's fair ornaments, the braids that bound,  
The net that held them, and the wreath that crown'd,  
The veil and diadem flew far away  
(The gift of Venus on her bridal day).  
Around a train of weeping sisters stands,  
To raise her sinking with assistant hands.  
Scarce from the verge of death recall'd, again  
She faints, or but recovers to complain.

"O wretched husband of a wretched wife!  
Born with one fate, to one unhappy life!

For sure one star its baneful beam display'd  
On Priam's roof, and Hippoplacia's shade.  
From different parents, different climes we came.  
At different periods, yet our fate the same!  
Why was my birth to great Aetion owed,  
And why was all that tender care bestow'd?  
Would I had never been!--O thou, the ghost  
Of my dead husband! miserably lost!  
Thou to the dismal realms for ever gone!  
And I abandon'd, desolate, alone!  
An only child, once comfort of my pains,  
Sad product now of hapless love, remains!  
No more to smile upon his sire; no friend  
To help him now! no father to defend!  
For should he 'scape the sword, the common doom,  
What wrongs attend him, and what griefs to come!  
Even from his own paternal roof expell'd,  
Some stranger ploughs his patrimonial field.  
The day, that to the shades the father sends,  
Robs the sad orphan of his father's friends:  
He, wretched outcast of mankind! appears  
For ever sad, for ever bathed in tears;  
Amongst the happy, unregarded, he  
Hangs on the robe, or trembles at the knee,  
While those his father's former bounty fed  
Nor reach the goblet, nor divide the bread:

The kindest but his present wants allay,  
To leave him wretched the succeeding day.  
Frugal compassion! Heedless, they who boast  
Both parents still, nor feel what he has lost,  
Shall cry, 'Begone! thy father feasts not here:'  
The wretch obeys, retiring with a tear.  
Thus wretched, thus retiring all in tears,  
To my sad soul Astyanax appears!  
Forced by repeated insults to return,  
And to his widow'd mother vainly mourn:  
He, who, with tender delicacy bred,  
With princes sported, and on dainties fed,  
And when still evening gave him up to rest,  
Sunk soft in down upon the nurse's breast,  
Must--ah what must he not? Whom Ilion calls  
Astyanax, from her well-guarded walls,(279)  
Is now that name no more, unhappy boy!  
Since now no more thy father guards his Troy.  
But thou, my Hector, liest exposed in air,  
Far from thy parents' and thy consort's care;  
Whose hand in vain, directed by her love,  
The martial scarf and robe of triumph wove.  
Now to devouring flames be these a prey,  
Useless to thee, from this accursed day!  
Yet let the sacrifice at least be paid,  
An honour to the living, not the dead!"

So spake the mournful dame: her matrons hear,  
Sigh back her sighs, and answer tear with tear.