Ilion
BOOK I

The Book of the Herald

Dawn in her journey eternal compelling the labour of mortals,
Dawn the beginner of things with the night for their rest or their ending,
Pallid and bright-lipped arrived from the mists and the chill of the Euxine.
Earth in the dawn-fire delivered from starry and shadowy vastness
Woke to the wonder of life and its passion and sorrow and beauty,
All on her bosom sustaining, the patient compassionate Mother.
Out of the formless vision of Night with its look on things hidden
Given to the gaze of the azure she lay in her garment of greenness,
Wearing light on her brow. In the dawn-ray lofty and voiceless
Ida climbed with her god-haunted peaks into diamond lustres,
Ida first of the hills with the ranges silent beyond her
Watching the dawn in their giant companies, as since the ages
First began they had watched her, upbearing Time on their summits.
Troas cold on her plain awaited the boon of the sunshine.
There, like a hope through an emerald dream sole-pacing for ever,
Stealing to wideness beyond, crept Simois lame in his currents,
Guiding his argent thread mid the green of the reeds and the grasses.
Headlong, impatient of Space and its boundaries, Time and its slowness,
Xanthus clamoured aloud as he ran to the far-surging waters,
Joining his call to the many-voiced roar of the mighty Aegean,
Answering Ocean’s limitless cry like a whelp to its parent.
Forests looked up through their rifts, the ravines grew aware of their
shadows.

Closer now gliding glimmered the golden feet of the goddess.
Over the hills and the headlands spreading her garment of splendour,
Fateful she came with her eyes impartial looking on all things,
Bringer to man of the day of his fortune and day of his downfall.
Full of her luminous errand, careless of eve and its weeping,
Fateful she paused unconcerned above Ilion’s mysteried greatness,
Domes like shimmering tongues of the crystal flames of the morning,
Opalesque rhythm-line of tower-tops, notes of the lyre of the sungod.
High over all that a nation had built and its love and its laughter,
Lighting the last time highway and homestead, market and temple,
Looking on men who must die and women destined to sorrow,
Looking on beauty fire must lay low and the sickle of slaughter,
Fateful she lifted the doom-scroll red with the script of the Immortals,
Deep in the invisible air that folds in the race and its morrows
Fixed it, and passed on smiling the smile of the griefless and deathless, —
Dealers of death though death they know not, who in the morning
Scatter the seed of the event for the reaping ready at nightfall.
Over the brooding of plains and the age-long trance of the summits
Out of the sun and its spaces she came, pausing tranquil and fatal,
And, at a distance followed by the golden herds of the sungod,
Carried the burden of Light and its riddle and danger to Hellas.

Even as fleets on a chariot divine through the gold streets of ether,
Swiftly when Life fleets, invisibly changing the arc of the soul-drift,
And, with the choice that has chanced or the fate man has called and now
suffers
Weighted, the moment travels driving the past towards the future,
Only its face and its feet are seen, not the burden it carries.
Weight of the event and its surface we bear, but the meaning is hidden.
Earth sees not; life’s clamour deafens the ear of the spirit:
Man knows not; least knows the messenger chosen for the summons.
Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart’s ignorant whisper,
Whistle of winds in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature.
Now too the messenger hastened driving the car of the errand:
Even while dawn was a gleam in the east, he had cried to his coursers.
Half yet awake in light’s turrets started the scouts of the morning
Hearing the jar of the wheels and the throbb of the hooves’ exultation,
Hooves of the horses of Greece as they galloped to Phrygian Troya.
Proudly they trampled through Xanthus thwarting the foam of his anger,
Whinnying high as in scorn crossed Simois’ tangled currents,
Xanthus’ reed-girdled twin, the gentle and sluggard river.
One and unarmed in the car was the driver; grey was he, shrunken,
Worn with his decades. To Pergama cinctured with strength Cyclopean
Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,
Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.
Ilion, couchant, saw him arrive from the sea and the darkness.
Heard mid the faint slow stirrings of life in the sleep of the city,
Rapid there neared a running of feet, and the cry of the summons
Beat round the doors that guarded the domes of the splendour of Priam.
“Wardens charged with the night, ye who stand in Laomedon’s gateway,  
Waken the Ilian kings. Talthybius, herald of Argos,  
Parleying stands at the portals of Troy in the grey of the dawning.”

High and insistent the call. In the dimness and hush of his chamber  
Charioted far in his dreams amid visions of glory and terror,  
Scenes of a vivider world, — though blurred and deformed in the brain-cells,  
Vague and inconsequent, there full of colour and beauty and greatness, —  
Suddenly drawn by the pull of the conscious thread of the earth-bond  
And of the needs of Time and the travail assigned in the transience  
Warned by his body, Deiphobus, reached in that splendid remoteness,  
Touched through the nerve-ways of life that branch to the brain of the dreamer,

Heard the terrestrial call and slumber startled receded  
Sliding like dew from the mane of a lion. Reluctant he travelled  
Back from the light of the fields beyond death, from the wonderful kingdoms  
Where he had wandered a soul among souls in the countries beyond us,  
Free from the toil and incertitude, free from the struggle and danger:  
Now, compelled, he returned from the respite given to the time-born,  
Called to the strife and the wounds of the earth and the burden of daylight.  
He from the carven couch upreared his giant stature.  
Haste-spurred he laved his eyes and regained earth’s memories, haste-spurred  
Donning apparel and armour strode through the town of his fathers,  
Watched by her gods on his way to his fate, towards Pergama’s portals.

Nine long years had passed and the tenth now was wearily ending,  
Years of the wrath of the gods, and the leaguer still threatened the ramparts  
Since through a tranquil morn the ships came past Tenedos sailing  
And the first Argive fell slain as he leaped on the Phrygian beaches;  
Still the assailants attacked, still fought back the stubborn defenders.  
When the reward is withheld and endlessly lengthens the labour,  
Weary of fruitless toil grows the transient heart of the mortal.  
Weary of battle the invaders warring heartless and homeless  
Prayed to the gods for release and return to the land of their fathers:  
Weary of battle the Phrygians beset in their beautiful city  
Prayed to the gods for an end of the danger and mortal encounter.  
Long had the high-beached ships forgotten their measureless ocean.  
Greece seemed old and strange to her children camped on the beaches,  
Old like a life long past one remembers hardly believing
But as a dream that has happened, but as the tale of another.
Time with his tardy touch and Nature changing our substance
Slowly had dimmed the faces loved and the scenes once cherished:
Yet was the dream still dear to them longing for wife and for children,
Longing for hearth and glebe in the far-off valleys of Hellas.
Always like waves that swallow the shingles, lapsing, returning,
Tide of the battle, race of the onset relentlessly thundered
Over the Phrygian corn-fields. Trojan wrestled with Argive,
Caria, Lycia, Thrace and the war-lord mighty Achaia
Joined in the clasp of the fight. Death, panic and wounds and disaster,
Glory of conquest and glory of fall, and the empty hearth-side,
Weeping and fortitude, terror and hope and the pang of remembrance,
Anguish of hearts, the lives of the warriors, the strength of the nations
Thrown were like weights into Destiny's scales, but the balance wavered
Pressed by invisible hands. For not only the mortal fighters,
Heroes half divine whose names are like stars in remoteness,
Triumphed and failed and were winds or were weeds on the dance of the
surges,

But from the peaks of Olympus and shimmering summits of Ida
Gleaming and clanging the gods of the antique ages descended.
Hidden from human knowledge the brilliant shapes of Immortals
Mingled unseen in the mellay, or sometimes, marvellous, maskless,
Forms of undying beauty and power that made tremble the heart-strings
Parting their deathless secrecy crossed through the borders of vision,
Plain as of old to the demigods out of their glory emerging,
Heard by mortal ears and seen by the eyeballs that perish.
Mighty they came from their spaces of freedom and sorrowless splendour.
Sea-vast, trailing the azure hem of his clamorous waters,
Blue-lidded, maned with the Night, Poseidon smote for the future,
Earth-shaker who with his trident releases the coils of the Dragon,
Freeing the forces unborn that are locked in the caverns of Nature.
Calm and unmoved, upholding the Word that is Fate and the order
Fixed in the sight of a Will foreknowing and silent and changeless,
Hera sent by Zeus and Athene lifting his aegis
Guarded the hidden decree. But for Ilion, loud as the surges,
Ares impetuous called to the fire in men's hearts, and his passion
Woke in the shadowy depths the forms of the Titan and demon;
Dumb and coerced by the grip of the gods in the abyss of the being,  
Formidable, veiled they sit in the grey subconscious darkness  
Watching the sleep of the snake-haired Erinnys. Miracled, haloed,  
Seer and magician and prophet who beholds what the thought cannot  
witness,  
Lifting the godhead within us to more than a human endeavour,  
Slayer and saviour, thinker and mystic, leaped from his sun-peaks  
Guarding in Ilion the wall of his mysteries Delphic Apollo.  
Heaven’s strengths divided swayed in the whirl of the Earth-force.  
All that is born and destroyed is reborn in the sweep of the ages;  
Life like a decimal ever recurring repeats the old figure;  
Goal seems there none for the ball that is chased throughout Time by the  
Fate-teams;  
Evil once ended renews and no issue comes out of living:  
Only an Eye unseen can distinguish the thread of its workings.  
Such seemed the rule of the pastime of Fate on the plains of the Troad;  
All went backwards and forwards tossed in the swing of the death-game.  
Vain was the toil of the heroes, the blood of the mighty was squandered,  
Spray as of surf on the cliffs when it moans unappeased, unrequited  
Age after fruitless age. Day hunted the steps of the nightfall;  
Joy succeeded to grief; defeat only greaterened the vanquished,  
Victory offered an empty delight without guerdon or profit.  
End there was none of the effort and end there was none of the failure.  
Triumph and agony changing hands in a desperate measure  
Faced and turned as a man and a maiden trampling the grasses  
Face and turn and they laugh in their joy of the dance and each other.  
These were gods and they trampled lives. But though Time is immortal,  
Mortal his works are and ways and the anguish ends like the rapture.  
Artists of Nature content with their work in the plan of the transience,  
Beautiful, deathless, august, the Olympians turned from the carnage,  
Leaving the battle already decided, leaving the heroes  
Slain in their minds, Troy burned, Greece left to her glory and downfall.  
Into their heavens they rose up mighty like eagles ascending  
Fanning the world with their wings. As the great to their luminous mansions  
Turn from the cry and the strife, forgetting the wounded and fallen,  
Calm they repose from their toil and incline to the joy of the banquet,  
Watching the feet of the wine-bearers rosily placed on the marble,
Filling their hearts with ease, so they to their sorrowless ether
Passed from the wounded earth and its air that is ploughed with men's
anguish;
Calm they reposed and their hearts inclined to the joy and the silence.
Lifted was the burden laid on our wills by their starry presence:
Man was restored to his smallness, the world to its inconscient labour.
Life felt a respite from height, the winds breathed freer delivered;
Light was released from their blaze and the earth was released from their
greatness.

But their immortal content from the struggle titanic departed.
Vacant the noise of the battle roared like the sea on the shingles;
Wearily hunted the spears their quarry; strength was disheartened;
Silence increased with the march of the months on the tents of the leaguer.
But not alone on the Achaians the steps of the moments fell heavy;
Slowly the shadow deepened on Ilion mighty and scornful:
Dragging her days went by; in the rear of the hearts of her people
Something that knew what they dared not know and the mind would not
utter,
Something that smote at her soul of defiance and beauty and laughter,
Darkened the hours. For Doom in her sombre and giant uprising
Neared, assailing the skies: the sense of her lived in all pastimes;
Time was pursued by unease and a terror woke in the midnight:
Even the ramparts felt her, stones that the gods had erected.
Now no longer she dallied and played, but bounded and hastened,
Seeing before her the end and, imagining massacre calmly,
Laughed and admired the flames and rejoiced in the cry of the captives.
Under her, dead to the watching immortals, Deiphobus hastened
Clanging in arms through the streets of the beautiful insolent city,
Brilliant, a gleaming husk but empty and left by the daemon.
Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces,
Seen in its form by men, but itself goes phantom-like fleeting
Void and null and dark through the uncaring infinite vastness,
So now he seemed to the sight that sees all things from the Real.
Timeless its vision of Time creates the hour by things coming.
Borne on a force from the past and no more by a power for the future
Mighty and bright was his body, but shadowy the shape of his spirit
Only an eidolon seemed of the being that had lived in him, fleeting
Vague like a phantom seen by the dim Acherontian waters.

But to the guardian towers that watched over Pergama’s gateway
Out of the waking city Deiphobus swiftly arriving
Called, and swinging back the huge gates slowly, reluctant,
Flung Troy wide to the entering Argive. Ilion’s portals
Parted admitting her destiny, then with a sullen and iron
Cry they closed. Mute, staring, grey like a wolf descended
Old Talthybius, propping his steps on the staff of his errand;
Feeble his body, but fierce still his glance with the fire within him;
Speechless and brooding he gazed on the hated and coveted city.
Suddenly, seeking heaven with her buildings hewn as for Titans,
Marvellous, rhythmic, a child of the gods with marble for raiment,
Smiting the vision with harmony, splendid and mighty and golden,
Ilion stood up around him entrenched in her giant defences.
Strength was uplifted on strength and grandeur supported by grandeur;
Beauty lay in her lap. Remote, hieratic and changeless,
Filled with her deeds and her dreams her gods looked out on the Argive,
Helpless and dumb with his hate as he gazed on her, they too like mortals
Knowing their centuries past, not knowing the morrow before them.
Dire were his eyes upon Troya the beautiful, his face like a doom-mask:
All Greece gazed in them, hated, admired, grew afraid, grew relentless.
But to the Greek Deiphobus cried and he turned from his passion
Fixing his ominous eyes with the god in them straight on the Trojan:
“Messenger, voice of Achaia, wherefore confronting the daybreak
Comest thou driving thy car from the sleep of the tents that besiege us?
Fateful, I deem, was the thought that, conceived in the silence of midnight,
Raised up thy aged limbs from the couch of their rest in the stillness,—
Thoughts of a mortal but forged by the Will that uses our members
And of its promptings our speech and our acts are the tools and the image.
Oft from the veil and the shadow they leap out like stars in their brightness,
Lights that we think our own, yet they are but tokens and counters,
Signs of the Forces that flow through us serving a Power that is secret.
What in the dawning bringst thou to Troya the mighty and dateless
Now in the ending of Time when the gods are weary of struggle?
Sends Agamemnon challenge or courtesy, Greek, to the Trojans?”
High like the northwind answered the voice of the doom from Achaia:
“Trojan Deiphobus, daybreak, silence of night and the evening
Sink and arise and even the strong sun rests from his splendour.
Not for the servant is rest nor Time is his, only his death-pyre.
I have not come from the monarch of men or the armoured assembly
Held on the wind-swept marge of the thunder and laughter of ocean.
One in his singleness greater than kings and multitudes sends me.
I am a voice out of Phthia, I am the will of the Hellene.
Peace in my right I bring to you, death in my left hand. Trojan,
Proudly receive them, honour the gifts of the mighty Achilles.
Death accept, if Ate deceives you and Doom is your lover,
Peace if your fate can turn and the god in you chooses to hearken.
Full is my heart and my lips are impatient of speech undelivered.
It was not made for the streets or the market, nor to be uttered
Meanly to common ears, but where counsel and majesty harbour
Far from the crowd in the halls of the great and to wisdom and foresight
Secrecy whispers, there I will speak among Ilion’s princes.”
“Envoy,” answered the Laomedontian, “voice of Achilles,
Vain is the offer of peace that sets out with a threat for its prelude.
Yet will we hear thee. Arise who are fleetest of foot in the gateway,—
Thou, Thrasymachus, haste. Let the domes of the mansion of Ilus
Wake to the bruit of the Hellene challenge. Summon Aeneas.”
Even as the word sank back into stillness, doffing his mantle
Started to run at the bidding a swift-footed youth of the Trojans
First in the race and the battle, Thrasymachus son of Aretes.
He in the dawn disappeared into swiftness. Deiphobus slowly,
Measuring Fate with his thoughts in the troubled vasts of his spirit,
Back through the stir of the city returned to the house of his fathers,
Taming his mighty stride to the pace infirm of the Argive.

But with the god in his feet Thrasymachus rapidly running
Came to the halls in the youth of the wonderful city by Ilus
Built for the joy of the eye; for he rested from war and, triumphant,
Reigned adored by the prostrate nations. Now when all ended,
Last of its mortal possessors to walk in its flowering gardens,
Great Anchises lay in that luminous house of the ancients
Soothing his restful age, the far-warring victor Anchises,
High Bucoleon’s son and the father of Rome by a goddess;
Lonely and vagrant once in his boyhood divine upon Ida
White Aphrodite ensnared him and she loosed her ambrosial girdle
Seeking a mortal’s love. On the threshold Thrasymachus halted
Looking for servant or guard, but felt only a loneliness of slumber
Drawing the soul’s sight within away from its life and things human;
Soundless, unheeding, the vacant corridors fled into darkness.

He to the shades of the house and the dreams of the echoing rafters
Trusted his high-voiced call, and from chambers still dim in their twilight
Strong Aeneas armoured and mantled, leonine striding,
Came, Anchises’ son; for the dawn had not found him reposing,
But in the night he had left his couch and the clasp of Creusa,
Rising from sleep at the call of his spirit that turned to the waters
Prompted by Fate and his mother who guided him, white Aphrodite.

Still with the impulse of speed Thrasymachus greeted Aeneas:
“Hero Aeneas, swift be thy stride to the Ilian hill-top.
Dardanid, haste! for the gods are at work; they have risen with the morning,
Each from his starry couch, and they labour. Doom, we can see it,
Glows on their anvils of destiny, clang we can hear of their hammers.
Something they forge there sitting unknown in the silence eternal,
Whether of evil or good it is they who shall choose who are masters
Calm, unopposed; they are gods and they work out their iron caprices.
Troy is their stage and Argos their background; we are their puppets.
Always our voices are prompted to speech for an end that we know not,
Always we think that we drive, but are driven. Action and impulse,
Yearning and thought are their engines, our will is their shadow and helper.
Now too, deeming he comes with a purpose framed by a mortal,
Shaft of their will they have shot from the bow of the Grecian leaguer,
Lashing themselves at his steeds, Talthybius sent by Achilles.”

“Busy the gods are always, Thrasymachus son of Aretes,
Weaving Fate on their looms, and yesterday, now and tomorrow
Are but the stands they have made with Space and Time for their timber,
Frame but the dance of their shuttle. What eye unamazed by their workings
Ever can pierce where they dwell and uncover their far-stretching purpose?
Silent they toil, they are hid in the clouds, they are wrapped with the
midnight.

Yet to Apollo I pray, the Archer friendly to mortals,
Yet to the rider on Fate I abase myself, wielder of thunder,
Evil and doom to avert from my fatherland. All night Morpheus,
He who with shadowy hands heaps error and truth upon mortals,
Stood at my pillow with images. Dreaming I erred like a phantom
Helpless in Ilion's streets with the fire and the foeman around me.
Red was the smoke as it mounted triumphant the house-top of Priam,
Clang of the arms of the Greeks was in Troya, and thwarting the clangour
Voices were crying and calling me over the violent Ocean
Borne by the winds of the West from a land where Hesperus harbours.”
Brooding they ceased, for their thoughts grew heavy upon them and
voiceless.

Then, in a farewell brief and unthought and unconscious of meaning,
Parting they turned to their tasks and their lives now close but soon severed:
Destined to perish even before his perishing nation,
Back to his watch at the gate sped Thrasy machus rapidly running;
Large of pace and swift, but with eyes absorbed and unseeing,
Driven like a car of the gods by the whip of his thoughts through the
highways,

Turned to his mighty future the hero born of a goddess.
One was he chosen to ascend into greatness through fall and disaster,
Loser of his world by the will of a heaven that seemed ruthless and adverse,
Founder of a newer and greater world by daring adventure.
Now, from the citadel's rise with the townships crowding below it
High towards a pondering of domes and the mystic Palladium climbing,
Fronted with the morning ray and joined by the winds of the ocean,
Fate-weighed up Troy's slope strode musing strong Aeneas.
Under him silent the slumbering roofs of the city of Ilus
Dreamed in the light of the dawn; above watched the citadel, sleepless
Lonely and strong like a goddess white-limbed and bright on a hill-top,
Looking far out at the sea and the foe and the prowling of danger.
Over the brow he mounted and saw the palace of Priam,
Home of the gods of the earth, Laomedon's marvellous vision
Held in the thought that accustomed his will to unearthly achievement
And in the blaze of his spirit compelling heaven with its greatness,
Dreamed by the harp of Apollo, a melody caught into marble.
Out of his mind it arose like an epic canto by canto;
Each of its halls was a strophe, its chambers lines of an epode,
Victor chant of Ilion's destiny. Absent he entered,
Voiceless with thought, the brilliant megaron crowded with paintings,
Paved with a splendour of marble, and saw Deiphobus seated,
Son of the ancient house by the opulent hearth of his fathers,
And at his side like a shadow the grey and ominous Argive.
Happy of light like a lustrous star when it welcomes the morning,
Brilliant, beautiful, glamoured with gold and a fillet of gem-fire,
Paris, plucked from the song and the lyre by the Grecian challenge,
Came with the joy in his face and his eyes that Fate could not alter.
Ever a child of the dawn at play near a turn of the sun-roads,
Facing destiny’s look with the careless laugh of a comrade,
He with his vision of delight and beauty brightening the earth-field
Passed through its peril and grief on his way to the ambiguous Shadow.
Last from her chamber of sleep where she lay in the Ilian mansion
Far in the heart of the house with the deep-bosomed daughters of Priam,
Noble and tall and erect in a nimbus of youth and of glory,
Claiming the world and life as a fief of her strength and her courage,
Dawned through a doorway that opened to distant murmurs and laughter,
Capturing the eye like a smile or a sunbeam, Penthesilea.
    She from the threshold cried to the herald, crossing the marble,
Regal and fleet, with her voice that was mighty and dire in its sweetness.
    “What with such speed has impelled from the wind-haunted beaches of
    Troas,
Herald, thy car though the sun yet hesitates under the mountains?
Comest thou humbler to Troy, Talthybius, now than thou camest
Once when the streams of my East sang low to my ear, not this Ocean
Loud, and I roamed in my mountains uncalled by the voice of Apollo?
Bringest thou dulcet-eyed peace or, sweeter to Penthesilea,
Challenge of war when the spears fall thick on the shields of the fighters,
Lightly the wheels leap onward chanting the anthem of Ares,
Death is at work in his fields and the heart is enamoured of danger?
What says Odysseus, the baffled Ithacan? what Agamemnon?
Are they then weary of war who were rapid and bold and triumphant,
Now that their gods are reluctant, now victory darts not from heaven
Down from the clouds above Ida directing the luminous legions
Armed by Fate, now Pallas forgets, now Poseidon slumbers?
Bronze were their throats to the battle like bugles blaring in chorus;
Mercy they knew not, but shouted and ravened and ran to the slaughter
Eager as hounds when they chase, till a woman met them and stayed them,
Loud my war-shout rang by Scamander. Herald of Argos,
What say the vaunters of Greece to the virgin Penthesilea?"

High was the Argive's answer confronting the mighty in Troya.
"Princes of Pergama, whelps of the lion who roar for the mellay,
Suffer my speech! It shall ring like a spear on the hearts of the mighty.
Blame not the herald; his voice is an impulse, an echo, a channel
Now for the timbrels of peace and now for the drums of the battle.
And I have come from no cautious strength, from no half-hearted speaker,
But from the Phthian. All know him! Proud is his soul as his fortunes,
Swift as his sword and his spear are the speech and the wrath from his bosom.
I am his envoy, herald am I of the conquering Argives.
Has not one heard in the night when the breezes whisper and shudder,
Dire, the voice of a lion unsatisfied, gnawed by his hunger,
Seeking his prey from the gods? For he prowls through the glens of the

mountains,

Errs a dangerous gleam in the woodlands, fatal and silent.
So for a while he endures, for a while he seeks and he suffers
Patient yet in his terrible grace as assured of his banquet;
But he has lacked too long and he lifts his head and to heaven
Roars in his wonder, incensed, impatiently. Startled the valleys
Shrink from the dreadful alarum, the cattle gallop to shelter.
Arming the herdsmen cry to each other for comfort and courage."

So Talthybius spoke, as a harper voicing his prelude
Touches his strings to a varied music, seeks for a concord;
Long his strain he prepares. But one broke in on the speaker,—
Sweet was his voice like a harp's though heard in the front of the onset,—
One of the sons of Fate by the people loved whom he ruined,
Leader in counsel and battle, the Priamid, he in his beauty
Carelessly walking who scattered the seeds of Titanic disaster.
"Surely thou dreamest at night and awaking thy dreams have not left thee!
Hast thou not woven thy words to intimidate children in Argos
Sitting alarmed in the shadows who listen pale to their nurses?
Greek, thou art standing in Ilion now and thou facest her princes.
Use not thy words but thy king's. If friendship their honey-breathed burden,
Friendship we clasp from Achilles, but challenge outpace with our challenge
Meeting the foe ere he moves in his will to the clash of encounter.
Such is the way of the Trojans since Phryx by the Hellespont halting
Seated Troy on her hill with the Ocean for comrade and sister."
Shaking in wrath his filleted head Talthybius answered:

“Princes, ye speak their words who drive you! Thus said Achilles:
Rise, Talthybius, meet in her spaces the car of the morning;
Challenge her coursers divine as they bound through the plains of the Troad.
Hasten, let not the day wear gold ere thou stand in her ramparts.
Herald charged with my will to a haughty and obstinate nation,
Speak in the palace of Priam the word of the Phthian Achilles.
Freely and not as his vassal who leads, Agamemnon, the Argive,
But as a ruler in Hellas I send thee, king of my nations.
Long I have walked apart from the mellay of gods in the Troad,
Long has my listless spear leaned back on the peace of my tent-side,
Deaf to the talk of the trumpets, the whine of the chariots speeding;
Sole with my heart I have lived, unheeding the Hellene murmur,
Chid when it roared for the hunt the lion pack of the war-god,
Day after day I walked at dawn and in blush of the sunset,
Far by the call of the seas and alone with the gods and my dreaming,
Leaned to the unsatisfied chant of my heart and the rhythms of ocean,
Sung to by hopes that were sweet-lipped and vain. For Polyxena’s brothers
Still are the brood of the Titan Laomedon slain in his greatness,
Engines of God unable to bear all the might that they harbour.
Awe they have chid from their hearts, nor our common humanity binds them,
Stay have they none in the gods who approve, giving calmness to mortals:
But like the Titans of old they have hugged to them grandeur and ruin.
Seek then the race self-doomed, the leaders blinded by heaven—
Not in the agora swept by the winds of debate and the shoutings
Lion-voiced, huge of the people! In Troya’s high-crested mansion
Speak out my word to the hero Deiphobus, head of the mellay,
Paris the racer of doom and the stubborn strength of Aeneas.
Herald of Greece, when thy feet shall be pressed on the gold and the marble,
Rise in the Ilian megaron, curb not the cry of the challenge.
Thus shalt thou say to them striking the ground with the staff of defiance,
Fronting the tempests of war, the insensate, the gamblers with downfall.
“Princes of Troy, I have sat in your halls, I have slept in your chambers;
Not in the battle alone as a warrior glad of his foemen,
Glad of the strength that mates with his own, in peace we encountered.
Marvelling I sat in the halls of my enemies, close to the bosoms
Scarred by the dints of my sword and the eyes I had seen through the battle,
Ate rejoicing the food of the East at the tables of Priam
Served by the delicatest hands in the world, by Hecuba’s daughter,
Or with our souls reconciled in some careless and rapturous midnight
Drank of the sweetness of Phrygian wine, admiring your bodies
Shaped by the gods indeed, and my spirit revolted from hatred,—
Softening it yearned in its strings to the beauty and joy of its foemen,
Yearned from the death that o’ertakes and the flame that cries and desires
Even at the end to save and even on the verge to deliver
Troy and her wonderful works and her sons and her deep-bosomed daughters.

Warned by the gods who reveal to the heart what the mind cannot hearken
Deaf with its thoughts, I offered you friendship, I offered you bridal,
Hellas for comrade, Achilles for brother, the world for enjoyment
Won by my spear. And one heard my call and one turned to my seeking.
Why is it then that the war-cry sinks not to rest by the Xanthus?
We are not voices from Argolis, Lacedaemonian tricksters,
Splendid and subtle and false; we are speakers of truth, we are Hellenes,
Men of the northland faithful in friendship and noble in anger;
Strong like our fathers of old. But you answered my truth with evasion
Hoping to seize what I will not yield and you flattered your people.
Long have I waited for wisdom to dawn on your violent natures.
Lonely I paced o’er the sands by the thousand-throated waters
Praying to Pallas the wise that the doom might turn from your mansions,
Buildings delightful, gracious as rhythms, lyrics in marble,
Works of the transient gods, and I yearned for the end of the war-din
Hoping that Death might relent to the beautiful sons of the Trojans.
Far from the cry of the spears, from the speed and the laughter of axles,
Heavy upon me like iron the intolerable yoke of inaction
Weighed like a load on a runner. The war-cry rose by Scamander;
Xanthus was crossed on a bridge of the fallen, not by Achilles.
Often I stretched out my hand to the spear, for the Trojan beaches
Rang with the voice of Deiphobus shouting and slaying the Argives;
Often my heart like an anxious mother for Greece and her children
Leaped, for the air was full of the leonine roar of Aeneas.
Always the evening fell or the gods protected the Argives.
Then by the moat of the ships, on the hither plain of the Xanthus
New was the voice that climbed through the din and sailed on the breezes,
High, insistent, clear, and it shouted an unknown war-cry
Threatening doom to the peoples. A woman had come in to aid you,
Regal and insolent, fair as the morning and fell as the northwind,
Freed from the distaff who grasps at the sword and she spurns at subjection
Breaking the rule of the gods. She is turbulent, swift in the battle.
Clanging her voice of the swan as a summons to death and disaster,
Fleet-footed, happy and pitiless, laughing she runs to the slaughter;
Strong with the gait that allures she leaps from her car to the slaying,
Dabbles in blood smooth hands like lilies. Europe astonished
Reels from her shock to the Ocean. She is the panic and mellay,
War is her paean, the chariots thunder of Penthesilea.
Doom was her coming, it seems, to the men of the West and their legions;
Ajax sleeps for ever, Meriones lies on the beaches.
One by one they are falling before you, the great in Achaia.
Ever the wounded are borne like the stream of the ants when they forage
Past my ships, and they hush their moans as they near and in silence
Gaze at the legions inactive accusing the fame of Achilles.
Still have I borne with you, waited a little, looked for a summons,
Longing for bridal torches, not flame on the Ilian housetops,
Blood in the chambers of sweetness, the golden amorous city
Swallowed by doom. Not broken I turned from the wrestle Titanic,
Hopeless, weary of toil in the ebb of my glorious spirit,
But from my stress of compassion for doom of the kindred nations,
But for her sake whom my soul desires, for the daughter of Priam.
And for Polyxena’s sake I will speak to you yet as your lover
Once ere the Fury, abrupt from Erebus, deaf to your crying,
Mad with the joy of the massacre, seizes on wealth and on women
Calling to Fire as it strides and Ilion sinks into ashes.
Yield; for your doom is impatient. No longer your helpers hasten,
Legions swift to your call; the yoke of your pride and your splendour
Lies not now on the nations of earth as when Fortune desired you,
Strength was your slave and Troya the lioness hungrily roaring
Threatened the western world from her ramparts built by Apollo.
Gladly released from the thraldom they hated, the insolent shackles
Curbing their manhood the peoples arise and they pray for your ruin;
Piled are their altars with gifts; their blessings help the Achaians.
Memnon came, but he sleeps, and the faces swart of his nation
Darken no more like a cloud over thunder and surge of the onset.
Wearily Lycia fights; far fled are the Carian levies.
Thrace retreats to her plains preferring the whistle of stormwinds
Or on the banks of the Strymon to wheel in her Orphean measure,
Not in the revel of swords and fronting the spears of the Hellenes.
Princes of Pergama, open your gates to our Peace who would enter,
Life in her gracious clasp and forgetfulness, grave of earth’s passions,
Healer of wounds and the past. In a comity equal, Hellenic,
Asia join with Greece, one world from the frozen rivers
Trod by the hooves of the Scythian to farthest undulant Ganges.
Tyndarid Helen resign, the desirable cause of your danger,
Back to Greece that is empty long of her smile and her movements.
Broader with riches her coming, pomp of her slaves and the wagons
Endlessly groaning with gold that arrive with the ransom of nations.
So shall the Fury be pacified, she who exultant from Sparta
Breathed in the sails of the Trojan ravisher helping his oarsmen.
So shall the gods be appeased and the thoughts of their wrath shall be
cancelled,

Justice contented trace back her steps and for brands of the burning
Torches delightful shall break into Troy with the swords of the bridal.
I like a bridegroom will seize on your city and clasp and defend her
Safe from the envy of Argos, from Lacedaemonian hatred,
Safe from the hunger of Crete and the Locrian’s violent rapine.
But if you turn from my voice and you hearken only to Ares
Crying for battle within you deluded by Hera and Pallas,
Swiftly the fierce death’s surges shall close over Troy and her ramparts
Built by the gods shall be stubble and earth to the tread of the Hellene.
For to my tents I return not, I swear it by Zeus and Apollo,
Master of Truth who sits within Delphi fathomless brooding
Sole in the caverns of Nature and hearkens her underground murmur,
Giving my oath to his keeping mute and stern who forgets not,
Not from the panting of Ares’ toil to repose, from the wrestle
Locked of hope and death in the ruthless clasp of the mellay
Leaving again the Trojan ramparts unmounted, leaving
Greece unavenged, the Aegean a lake and Europe a province.
Choosing from Hellas exile, from Peleus and Deidamia,
Choosing the field for my chamber of sleep and the battle for hearthside
I shall go warring on till Asia enslaved to my footsteps
Feels the tread of the God in my sandal pressed on her bosom.
Rest shall I then when the borders of Greece are fringed with the Ganges;
Thus shall the past pay its Titan ransom and, Fate her balance
Changing, a continent ravished suffer the fortune of Helen.
This I have sworn allying my will to Zeus and Ananke.””

So was it spoken, the Phthian challenge. Silent the heroes
Looked back amazed on their past and into the night of their future.
Silent their hearts felt a grasp from gods and had hints of the heavens.
Hush was awhile in the room, as if Fate were trying her balance
Poised on the thoughts of her mortals. At length with a musical laughter
Sweet as the jangling of bells upon anklets leaping in measure
Answered aloud to the gods the virgin Penthesilea.
“Long I had heard in my distant realms of the fame of Achilles,
Ignorant still while I played with the ball and ran in the dances
Thinking not ever to war; but I dreamed of the shock of the hero.
So might a poet inland who imagines the rumour of Ocean,
Yearn with his lust for the giant upheaval, the dance as of hill-tops,
Toss of the yellow mane and the tawny march and the voices
Lionlike claiming earth as a prey for the clamorous waters.
So have I longed as I came for the cry and the speed of Achilles.
But he has lurked in his ships, he has sulked like a boy that is angry.
Glad am I now of his soul that arises hungry for battle,
Glad, whether victor I live or defeated travel the shadows.
Once shall my spear have rung on the shield of the Phthian Achilles.
Peace I desire not. I came to a haughty and resolute nation,
Honour and fame they cherish, not life by the gift of a foeman.
Sons of the ancient house on whom Ilion looks as on Titans,
Chiefs whom the world admires, do you fear then the shock of the Phthian?
Gods, it is said, have decided your doom. Are you less in your greatness?
Are you not gods to reverse their decrees or unshaken to suffer?
Memnon is dead and the Carians leave you? Lycia lingers?
But from the streams of my East I have come to you, Penthesilea.”

“Virgin of Asia,” answered Talthybius, “doom of a nation
Brought thee to Troy and her haters Olympian shielded thy coming,
Vainly who feedest men’s hearts with a hope that the gods have rejected.
Doom in thy sweet voice utters her counsels robed like a woman.”
Answered the virgin disdainfully, wroth at the words of the Argive:
“Hast thou not ended the errand they gave thee, envoy of Hellas?
Not, do I think, as our counsellor cam’st thou elected from Argos,
Nor as a lover to Troy hast thou hastened with amorous footing
Hurting thy heart with her frowardness. Hatred and rapine sent thee,
Greed of the Ilian gold and lust of the Phrygian women,
Voice of Achaian aggression! Doom am I truly; let Gnossus
Witness it, Salamis speak of my fatal arrival and Argos
Silent remember her wounds.” But the Argive answered the virgin:
“Hearken then to the words of the Hellene, Penthesilea.
‘Virgin to whom earth’s strongest are corn in the sweep of thy sickle,
Lioness vain of thy bruit who besiegest the paths of the battle!
Art thou not satiate yet? hast thou drunk then so little of slaughter?
Death has ascended thy car; he has chosen thy hand for his harvest.
But I have heard of thy pride and disdain, how thou scornest the Argives
And of thy fate thou complainest that ever averse to thy wishes
Cloisters the Phthian and matches with weaklings Penthesilea.
“Not of the Ithacan boar nor the wild-cat littered in Locris
Nor of the sleek-coat Argive wild-bulls sates me the hunting;”
So hast thou said, “I would bury my spear in the lion of Hellas.”
Blind and infatuate, art thou not beautiful, bright as the lightning?
Were not thy limbs made cunningly linking sweetness to sweetness?
Is not thy laughter an arrow surprising hearts imprudent?
Charm is the seal of the gods upon woman. Distaff and girdle,
Work of the jar at the well and the hush of our innermost chambers,
These were appointed thee, but thou hast scorned them, O Titaness, grasping
Rather the shield and the spear. Thou, obeying thy turbulent nature,
Tramplest o’er laws that are old to the pleasure thy heart has demanded.
Rather bow to the ancient Gods who are seated and constant.
But for thyself thou passest and what hast thou gained for the aeons
Mingled with men in their works and depriving the age of thy beauty?
Fair art thou, woman, but fair with a bitter and opposite sweetness
Clanging in war when thou matchest thy voice with the shout of assemblies.
Not to this end was thy sweetness made and the joy of thy members,
Not to this rhythm Heaven tuned its pipe in thy throat of enchantment,
Armoured like men to go warring forth and with hardness and fierceness
Mix in the strife and the hate while the varied meaning of Nature
Perishes hurt in its heart and life is emptied of music.
Long have I marked in your world a madness. Monarchs descending
Court the imperious mob of their slaves and their suppliant gesture
Shameless and venal offends the majestic tradition of ages:
Princes plead in the agora; spurred by the tongue of a coward,
Heroes march to an impious war at a priestly bidding.
Gold is sought by the great with the chaffering heart of the trader.
Asia fails and the Gods are abandoning Ida for Hellas.
Why must thou come here to perish, O noble and exquisite virgin,
Here in a cause not thine, in a quarrel remote from thy beauty,
Leaving a land that is lovely and far to be slain among strangers?
Girl, to thy rivers go back and thy hills where the grapes are aspirant.
Trust not a fate that indulges; for all things, Penthesilea,
Break with excess and he is the wisest who walks by a measure.
Yet, if thou wilt, thou shalt meet me today in the shock of the battle:
There will I give thee the fame thou desirdest; captive in Hellas,
Men shall point to thee always, smiling and whispering, saying,
“This is the woman who fought with the Greeks, overthrowing their heroes;
This is the slayer of Ajax, this is the slave of Achilles.”

Then with her musical laughter the fearless Penthesilea:
“Well do I hope that Achilles enslaved shall taste of that glory
Or on the Phrygian fields lie slain by the spear of a woman.”
But to the herald Achaian the Priamid, leader of Troya:
“Rest in the halls of thy foes and ease thy fatigue and thy winters.
Herald, abide till the people have heard and reply to Achilles.
Not as the kings of the West are Ilion’s princes and archons,
Monarchs of men who drive their nations dumb to the battle.
Not in the palace of Priam and not in the halls of the mighty
Whispered councils prevail and the few dispose of the millions;
But with their nation consulting, feeling the hearts of the commons
Ilion’s princes march to the war or give peace to their foemen.
Lightning departs from her kings and the thunder returns from her people
Met in the ancient assembly where Ilus founded his columns
And since her famous centuries, names that the ages remember
Leading her, Troya proclaims her decrees to obedient nations.”

Ceasing he cried to the thralls of his house and they tended the Argive.
Brought to a chamber of rest in the luminous peace of the mansion,
Grey he sat and endured the food and the wine of his foemen,
Chiding his spirit that murmured within him and gazed undelighted,
Vexed with the endless pomps of Laomedon. Far from those glories
Memory winged it back to a sward half-forgotten, a village
Nestling in leaves and low hills watching it crowned with the sunset.
So for his hour he abode in earth's palace of lordliest beauty,
But in its caverns his heart was weary and, hurt by the splendours,
Longed for Greece and the smoke-darkened roof of a cottage in Argos,
Eyes of a woman faded and children crowding the hearthside.
Joyless he rose and eastward expected the sunrise on Ida.
BOOK II

The Book of the Statesman

Now from his cycle sleepless and vast round the dance of the earth-globe
Gold Hyperion rose in the wake of the dawn like the eyeball
Flaming of God revealed by his uplifted luminous eyelid.
Troy he beheld and he viewed the transient labour of mortals.
All her marble beauty and pomp were laid bare to the heavens.
Sunlight streamed into Ilion waking the voice of her gardens,
Amorous seized on her ways, lived glad in her plains and her pastures,
Kissed her leaves into brightness of green. As a lover the last time
Yearns to the beauty desired that again shall not wake to his kisses,
So over Ilion doomed leaned the yearning immense of the sunrise.
She like a wordless marble memory dreaming for ever
Lifted the gaze of her perishable immortality sunwards.
All her human past aspired in the clearness eternal,
Temples of Phryx and Dardanus touched with the gold of the morning,
Columns triumphant of Ilus, domes of their greatness enamoured,
Stones that intended to live; and her citadel climbed up to heaven
White like the soul of the Titan Laomedon claiming his kingdoms,
Watched with alarm by the gods as he came. Her bosom maternal
Thrilled to the steps of her sons and a murmur began in her high-roads.
Life renewed its ways which death and sleep cannot alter;
Life that pursuing her boundless march to a goal which we know not,
Ever her own law obeys, not our hopes, who are slaves of her heart-beats.
Then as now men walked in the round which the gods have decreed them
Eagerly turning their eyes to the lure and the tool and the labour.
Chained is their gaze to the span in front, to the gulfs they are blinded
Meant for their steps. The seller opened his shop and the craftsman
Bent o’er his instruments handling the work he never would finish,
Busy as if their lives were for ever, today in its evening
Sure of tomorrow. The hammers clanged and the voice of the markets
Waking desired its daily rumour. Nor only the craftsman,
Only the hopes of the earth, but the hearts of her votaries kneeling
Came to her marble shrines and upraised to our helpers eternal
Missioned the prayer and the hymn or silent, subtly adoring
Ventured upwards in incense. Loud too the clash of the cymbals
Filled all the temples of Troy with the cry of our souls to the azure.
Prayers breathed in vain and a cry that fell back with Fate for its answer!
Children laughed in her doorways; joyous they played, by their mothers
Smiled on still, but their tender bodies unknowing awaited
Grecian spearpoints sharpened by Fate for their unripe bosoms,
Tasks of the slave in Greece. Like bees round their honey-filled dwellings
Murmuring swarmed to the well-heads the large-eyed daughters of Troya,
Deep-bosomed, limbed like the gods, — glad faces of old that were sentient
Rapturous flowers of the soul, bright bodies that lived under darkness
Nobly massed of their locks like day under night made resplendent,
Daughters divine of the earth in the ages when heaven was our father.
They round Troy’s well-heads flowerlike satisfied morn with their beauty
Or in the river baring their knees to the embrace of the coolness
Dipped their white feet in the clutch of his streams, in the haste of Scamander,
Lingered this last time with laughter and talk of the day and the morrow
Leaned to the hurrying flood. All his swiftnesses raced down to meet them,
Crowding his channel with dancing billows and turbulent murmurs.
Xanthus prämaeval met these waves of our life in its passing
Even as of old he had played with Troy’s ancient fair generations
Mingling his deathless voice with the laughter and joy of their ages,
Laughter of dawns that are dead and a joy that the earth has rejected.
Still his whispering trees remembered their bygone voices.
Hast thou forgotten, O river of Troy? Still, still we can hear them
Now, if we listen long in our souls, the bygone voices.
Earth in her fibres remembers, the breezes are stored with our echoes.
Over the stone-hewn steps for their limpid orient waters
Joyous they leaned and they knew not yet of the wells of Mycenae,
Drew not yet from Eurotas the jar for an alien master,
Mixed not Peneus yet with their tears. From the clasp of the current
Now in their groups they arose and dispersed through the streets and the
byways,

Turned from the freedom of earth to the works and the joy of the hearthside,
Lightly they rose and returned through the lanes of the wind-haunted city
Swaying with rhythmical steps while the anklets jangled and murmured.
Silent temples saw them passing; you too, O houses
Built with such hopes by mortal man for his transient lodging;
Fragrant the gardens strewed on dark tresses their white-smiling jasmines
Dropped like a silent boon of purity soft from the branches:
Flowers by the wayside were budding, cries flew winged round the
   tree-tops.

Bright was the glory of life in Ilion city of Priam.
   Thrice to the city the doom-blast published its solemn alarum;
   Blast of the trumpets that call to assembly clamoured through Troya
   Thrice and were still. From garden and highway, from palace and temple
   Turned like a steed to the trumpet, rejoicing in war and ambition,
   Gathered alert to the call the democracy hated of heaven.
First in their ranks upbearing their age as Atlas his heavens,
   Eagle-crested, with hoary hair like the snow upon Ida,
   Ilion’s senators paced, Antenor and wide-browed Anchises,
   Athamas famous for ships and the war of the waters, Tryas
   Still whose name was remembered by Oxus the orient river,
   Astyoches and Ucalegon, dateless Pallachus, Aetor,
   Aspetus who of the secrets divine knew all and was silent,
   Ascanus, Iliones, Alcesiphron, Orus, Aretes.
Next from the citadel came with the voice of the heralds before him
   Priam and Priam’s sons, Aeneas leonine striding,
   Followed by the heart of a nation adoring her Penthesilea.
All that was noble in Troy attended the regal procession
   Marching in front and behind and the tramp of their feet was a rhythm
   Tuned to the arrogant fortunes of Ilion ruled by incarnate
   Demigods, Ilus and Phryx and Dardanus, Tros of the conquests,
   Tros and far-ruling Laomedon who to his soul’s strong labour
   Drew down the sons of the skies and was served by the ageless immortals.
   Into the agora vast and aspirant besieged by its columns
   Bathed and anointed they came like gods in their beauty and grandeur.
   Last like the roar of the winds came trampling the surge of the people.
   Clamorous led by a force obscure to its ultimate fatal
   Session of wrath the violent mighty democracy hastened;
   Thousands of ardent lives with the heart yet unslain in their bosoms
   Lifted to heaven the voice of man and his far-spreading rumour.
Singing the young men with banners marched in their joyous processions,
   Trod in martial measure or dancing with lyrical paces
   Chanted the glory of Troy and the wonderful deeds of their fathers.
   Into the columned assembly where Ilus had gathered his people,
Thousands on thousands the tramp and the murmur poured; in their
armoured
Glittering tribes they were ranked, an untameable high-hearted nation
Waiting the voice of its chiefs. Some gazed on the greatness of Priam
Ancient, remote from their days, the last of the gods who were passing,
Left like a soul uncompanioned in worlds where his strength shall not
conquer:

Sole like a column gigantic alone on a desolate hill-side
Older than mortals he seemed and mightier. Many in anger
Aimed their hostile looks where calm though by heaven abandoned,
Left to his soul and his lucid mind and its thoughts unavailing,
Leading the age-chilled few whom the might of their hearts had not blinded,
Famous Antenor was seated, the fallen unpopular statesman,
Wisest of speakers in Troy but rejected, stoned and dishonoured.
Silent, aloof from the people he sat, a heart full of ruins.
Low was the rumour that swelled like the hum of the bees in a meadow
When with the thirst of the honey they swarm on the thyme and the linden,
Hundreds humming and flitting till all that place is a murmur.
Then from his seat like a tower arising Priam the monarch
Slowly erect in his vast tranquillity silenced the people:
Lonely, august he stood like one whom death has forgotten,
Reared like a column of might and of silence over the assembly.
So Olympus rises alone with his snows into heaven.
Crowned were his heights by the locks that swept like the mass of the
snow-swathe

Clothing his giant shoulders; his eyes of deep meditation,
Eyes that beheld now the end and accepted it like the beginning
Gazed on the throng of the people as on a pomp that is painted:
Slowly he spoke like one who is far from the scenes where he sojourns.
“Leader of Ilion, hero Deiphobus, thou who hast summoned
Troy in her people, arise; say wherefore thou callest us. Evil
Speak thou or good, thou canst speak that only: Necessity fashions
All that the unseen eye has beheld. Speak then to the Trojans;
Say on this dawn of her making what issue of death or of triumph
Fate in her suddenness puts to the unseeing, what summons to perish
Send to this nation men who revolt and gods who are hostile.”

Rising Deiphobus spoke, in stature less than his father,
Less in his build, yet the mightiest man and tallest whom coursers
Bore or his feet to the fight since Ajax fell by the Xanthus.
“People of Ilion, long have you fought with the gods and the Argives
Slaying and slain, but the years persist and the struggle is endless.
Fainting your helpers cease from the battle, the nations forsake you.
Asia weary of strenuous greatness, ease-enamoured
Suffers the foot of the Greek to tread on the beaches of Troas.
Yet have we striven for Troy and for Asia, men who desert us.
Not for ourselves alone have we fought, for our life of a moment!
Once if the Greeks were triumphant, once if their nations were marshalled
Under some far-seeing chief, Odysseus, Peleus, Achilles,
Not on the banks of Scamander and skirts of the azure Aegean
Fainting would cease the audacious emprise, the Titanic endeavour;
Tigris would flee from their tread and Indus be drunk by their coursers.
Now in these days when each sun goes marvelling down that Troy stands yet
Suffering, smiting, alive, though doomed to all eyes that behold her,
Flinging back Death from her walls and bronze to the shock and the clamour,
Driven by a thought that has risen in the dawn from the tents on the beaches
Grey Talthybius’ chariot waits in the Ilian portals,
Voice of the Hellene demigod challenges timeless Troya.
Thus has he said to us: ‘Know you not Doom when she walks in your
heavens?’

Feelst thou not then thy set, O sun who illuminedst Nature?
Stripped of helpers you stand alone against Doom and Achilles,
Left by the earth that served you, by heaven that helped you rejected;
Death insists at your gates and the flame and the sword are impatient.
None can escape the wheel of the gods and its vast revolutions!
Fate demands the joy and pride of the earth for the Argive,
Asia’s wealth for the lust of the young barbarian nations.
City divine, whose fame overroofed like heaven the nations,
Sink eclipsed in the circle vast of my radiance; Troya,
Joined to my northern realms deliver the East to the Hellene;
Ilion, to Hellas be yoked; wide Asia, fringe thou Peneus.
Lay down golden Helen, a sacrifice lovely and priceless
Cast by your weakness and fall on immense Necessity’s altar;
Yield to my longing Polyxena, Hecuba’s deep-bosomed daughter,
Her whom my heart desires. She shall leave with you peace and her healing
Joy of mornings secure and death repulsed from your hearthides.
Yield these and live, else I leap on you, Fate in front, Hades behind me.
Bound to the gods by an oath I return not again from the battle
Till from high Ida my shadow extends to the Mede and Euphrates.
Let not your victories deceive you, steps that defeat has imagined;
Hear not the voice of your heroes; their fame is a trumpet in Hades:
Only they conquer while yet my horses champ free in their stables.
Earth cannot long resist the man whom Heaven has chosen;
Gods with him walk; his chariot is led; his arm is assisted.’
High rings the Hellene challenge, earth waits for the Ilian answer.
Always man’s Fate hangs poised on the flitting breath of a moment;
Called by some word, by some gesture it leaps, then ‘tis graven, ‘tis granite.
Speak! by what gesture high shall the stern gods recognise Troya?
Sons of the ancients, race of the gods, inviolate city,
Firmer my spear shall I grasp or cast from my hand and for ever?
Search in your hearts if your fathers still dwell in them, children of Teucer.”
So Deiphobus spoke and the nation heard him in silence,
Awed by the shadow vast of doom, indignant with Fortune.

Calm from his seat Antenor arose as a wrestler arises,
Tamer of beasts in the cage of the lions, eyeing the monsters
Brilliant, tawny of mane, and he knows if his courage waver,
Falter his eye or his nerve be surprised by the gods that are hostile,
Death will leap on him there in the crowded helpless arena.
Fearless Antenor arose, and a murmur swelled in the meeting
Cruel and threatening, hoarse like the voice of the sea upon boulders;
Hisses thrilled through the roar and one man cried to another,
“Lo he will speak of peace who has swallowed the gold of Achaia!
Surely the people of Troy are eunuchs who suffer Antenor
Rising unharmed in the agora. Are there not stones in the city?
Surely the steel grows dear in the land when a traitor can flourish.”
Calm like a god or a summit Antenor stood in the uproar.
But as he gazed on his soul came memory dimming the vision;
For he beheld his past and the agora crowded and cheering,
Passionate, full of delight while Antenor spoke to the people,
Troy that he loved and his fatherland proud of her eloquent statesman.
Tears to his eyes came thick and he gripped at the staff he was holding.
Mounting his eyes met fully the tumult, mournful and thrilling,
Conquering men’s hearts with a note of doom in its sorrowful sweetness.

“People of Ilion, blood of my blood, O race of Antenor,
Once will I speak though you slay me; for who would shrink from

destruction

Knowing that soon of his city and nation, his house and his dear ones
All that remains will be a couch of trampled ashes? Athene,
Slain today may I join the victorious souls of our fathers,
Not for the anguish be kept and the irremediable weeping.
Loud will I speak the word that the gods have breathed in my spirit,
Strive this last time to save the death-destined. Who are these clamour

‘Hear him not, gold of the Greeks bought his words and his throat is

accursèd’?

Troy whom my counsels made great, hast thou heard this roar of their frenzy
Tearing thy ancient bosom? Is it thy voice, heaven-abandoned, my mother?
O my country, O my creatress, earth of my longings!
Earth where our fathers lie in their sacred ashes undying,
Memoried temples shelter the shrines of our gods and the altars
Pure where we worshipped, the beautiful children smile on us passing,
Women divine and the men of our nation! O land where our childhood
Played at a mother’s feet mid the trees and the hills of our country,
Hoping our manhood toiled and our youth had its seekings for godhead, —
Thou for our age keepst repose mid the love and the honour of kinsmen,
Silent our relics shall lie with the city guarding our ashes!
Earth who hast fostered our parents, earth who hast given us our offspring,
Soil that created our race where fed from the bosom of Nature
Happy our children shall dwell in the storied homes of their fathers,
Souls that our souls have stamped, sweet forms of ourselves when we perish!
Once even then have they seen thee in their hearts, or dreamed of thee ever
Who from thy spirit revolt and only thy name make an idol
Hating thy faithful sons and the cult of thy ancient ideal!
Wake, O my mother divine, remember thy gods and thy wisdom,
Silence the tongues that degrade thee, prophets profane of thy godhead.
Madmen, to think that a man who has offered his life for his country,
Served her with words and deeds and adored with victories and triumphs
Ever could think of enslaving her breast to the heel of a foeman!
Surely Antenor’s halls are empty, he begs from the stranger
Leading his sons and his children’s sons by the hand in the market
Showing his rags since his need is so bitter of gold from the Argives!
You who demand a reply when Laocoon lessens Antenor,
Hush then your feeble roar and your ear to the past and the distance
Turn. You fields that are famous for ever, reply for me calling,
Fields of the mighty mown by my sword’s edge, Chersonese conquered,
Thrace and her snows where we fought on the frozen streams and were victors
Then when they were unborn who are now your delight and your leaders.
Answer return, you columns of Ilus, here where my counsels
Made Troy mightier guiding her safe through the shocks of her foemen.
Gold! I have heaped it up high, I am rich with the spoils of your haters.
It was your fathers dead who gave me that wealth as my guerdon,
Now my reproach, your fathers who saw not the Greeks round their ramparts:
They were not coopèd by an upstart race in the walls of Apollo,
Saw not Hector slain and Troilus dragged by his coursers.
Far over wrathful Jaxartes they rode; the shaken Achaian
Prostrate adored your strength who now shouts at your portals and conquers
Then when Antenor guided Troy, this old man, this traitor,
Not Laocoon, nay, not even Paris nor Hector.
But I have changed, I have grown a niggard of blood and of treasure,
Selfish, chilled as old men seem to the young and the headstrong,
Counselling safety and ease, not the ardour of noble decisions.
Come to my house and behold, my house that was filled once with voices.
Sons whom the high gods envied me crowded the halls that are silent.
Where are they now? They are dead, their voices are silent in Hades,
Fallen slaying the foe in a war between sin and the Furies.
Silent they went to the battle to die unmourned for their country,
Died as they knew in vain. Do I keep now the last ones remaining,
Sparing their blood that my house may endure? Is there any in Troya
Speeds to the front of the mellay outstripping the sons of Antenor?
Let him arise and speak and proclaim it and bid me be silent.
Heavy is this war that you love on my heart and I hold you as madmen
Doomed by the gods, abandoned by Pallas, by Hera afflicted.
Who would not hate to behold his work undone by the foolish?
Who would not weep if he saw Laocoon ruining Troya,
Paris doomed in his beauty, Aeneas slain by his valour?
Still you need to be taught that the high gods see and remember,
Dream that they care not if justice be done on the earth or oppression!
Happy to live, aspire while you violate man and the immortals!
Vainly the sands of Time have been strewn with the ruins of empires,
Signs that the gods had left, but in vain. For they look for a nation,
One that can conquer itself having conquered the world, but they find none.
None has been able to hold all the gods in his bosom unstaggered,
All have grown drunken with force and have gone down to Hell and to Ate.
‘All have been thrust from their heights,’ say the fools; ‘we shall live and
for ever.

We are the people at last, the children, the favourites; all things
Only to us are permitted.’ They too descend to the silence,
Death receives their hopes and the void their stirrings of action.

‘Eviler fate there is none than life too long among mortals.
I have conversed with the great who have gone, I have fought in their
war-cars;

Tros I have seen, Laomedon’s hand has dwelt on my temples.
Now I behold Laocoon, now our greatest is Paris.
First when Phryx by the Hellespont reared to the cry of the ocean
Hewing her stones as vast as his thoughts his high-seated fortress,
Planned he a lair for a beast of prey, for a pantheress dire-souled
Crouched in the hills for her bound or self-gathered against the avenger?
Dardanus shepherded Asia’s coasts and her sapphire-girt islands.
Mild was his rule like the blessing of rain upon fields in the summer.
Gladly the harried coasts reposed confessing the Phrygian,
Caria, Lycia’s kings and the Paphlagon, strength of the Mysian;
Minos’ Crete recovered the sceptre of old Rhadamanthus.
Ilus and Tros had strength in the fight like a far-striding Titan’s:
Troy triumphant following the urge of their souls to the vastness,
Helmeted, crowned like a queen of the gods with the fates for her coursers
Rode through the driving sleet of the spears to Indus and Oxus.
Then twice over she conquered the vanquished, with peace as in battle;
There where discord had clashed, sweet Peace sat girded with plenty,
There where tyranny counted her blows, came the hands of a father.
Neither had Teucer a soul like your chiefs’ who refounded this nation.
Such was the antique and noble tradition of Troy in her founders,
Builders of power that endured; but it perishes lost to their offspring,
Trampled, scorned by an arrogant age, by a violent nation.
Strong Anchises trod it down trampling victorious onwards
Stern as his sword and hard as the silent bronze of his armour.
More than another I praise the man who is mighty and steadfast,
Even as Ida the mountain I praise, a refuge for lions;
But in the council I laud him not, he who a god for his kindred,
Lives for the rest without bowels of pity or fellowship, lone-souled,
Scorning the world that he rules, who untamed by the weight of an empire
Holds allies as subjects, subjects as slaves and drives to the battle
Careless more of their wills than the courser’s yoked to his war-car.
Therefore they fought while they feared, but gladly abandon us falling.
Yet had they gathered to Teucer in the evil days of our nation.
Where are they now? Do they gather then to the dreaded Anchises?
Or has Aeneas helped with his counsels hateful to wisdom?
Hateful is this, abhorred of the gods, imagined by Ate
When against subjects murmuring discord and faction appointed
Scatter unblest gold, the heart of a people is poisoned,
Virtue pursued and baseness triumphs tongued like a harlot,
Brother against brother arrayed that the rule may endure of a stranger.
Yes, but it lasts! For its hour. The high gods watch in their silence,
Mute they endure for a while that the doom may be swifter and greater.
Hast thou then lasted, O Troy? Lo, the Greeks at thy gates and Achilles.
Dream, when Virtue departs, that Wisdom will linger, her sister!
Wisdom has turned from your hearts; shall Fortune dwell with the foolish?
Fatal oracles came to you great-tongued, vaunting of empires
Stretched from the risen sun to his rest in the occident waters,
Dreams of a city throned on the hills with her foot on the nations.
Meanwhile the sword was prepared for our breasts and the flame for our
housetops.

Wake, awake, O my people! the fire-brand mounts up your doorsteps;
Gods who deceived to slay, press swords on your children’s bosoms.
See, O ye blind, ere death in pale countries open your eyelids!
Hear, O ye deaf, the sounds in your ears and the voices of evening!
Young men who vaunt in your strength! when the voice of this aged Antenor
Governed your fathers’ youth, all the Orient was joined to our banners.
Macedon leaned to the East and her princes yearned to the victor,
Scythians worshipped in Ilion’s shrines, the Phoenician trader
Bartered her tokens, Babylon's wise men paused at our thresholds;
Fair-haired sons of the snows came rapt towards golden Troya
Drawn by the song and the glory. Strymon sang hymns unto Ida,
Hoarse Chalcidice, dim Chersonesus married their waters
Under the o'erarching yoke of Troy twixt the term-posts of Ocean.
Meanwhile far through the world your fortunes led by my counsels
Followed their lure like women snared by a magical tempter:
High was their chant as they paced and it came from continents distant.
Turn now and hear! what voice approaches? what glitter of armies?
Loud upon Trojan beaches the tread and the murmur of Hellas!
Hark! 'tis the Achaian's paean rings o'er the Pergaman waters!
So wake the dreams of Aeneas; reaped is Laocoon's harvest.
Artisans new of your destiny fashioned this far-spreading downfall,
Counsellors blind who scattered your strength to the hooves of the Scythian,
Barren victories, trophies of skin-clad Illyrian pastors.
Who but the fool and improvident, who but the dreamer and madman
Leaves for the far and ungrasped earth's close and provident labour?
Children of earth, our mother gives tokens, she lays down her signposts,
Step by step to advance on her bosom, to grow by her seasons,
Order our works by her patience and limit our thought by her spaces.
But you had chiefs who were demigods, souls of an earth-scoring stature,
Minds that saw vaster than life and strengths that God's hour could not limit!
These men seized upon Troy as the tool of their giant visions,
Dreaming of Africa's suns and bright Hesperian orchards,
Carthage our mart and our feet on the sunset hills of the Latins.
Ilion's hinds in the dream ploughed Libya, sowed Italy's cornfields,
Troy stretched to Gades; even the gods and the Fates had grown Trojan.
So are the natures of men uplifted by Heaven in its satire.
Scorning the bit of the gods, despisers of justice and measure,
Zeus is denied and adored some shadow huge of their natures
Losing the shape of man in a dream that is splendid and monstrous.
Titans, vaunting they stride and the world resounds with their footsteps;
Titans, clanging they fall and the world is full of their ruin.
Children, you dreamed with them, heard the roar of the Atlantic breakers
Welcome your keels and the Isles of the Blest grew your wonderful gardens.
Lulled in the dream, you saw not the black-drifting march of the storm-rack,
Heard not the galloping wolves of the doom and the howl of their hunger.
Greece in her peril united her jarring clans; you suffered
Patient, preparing the north, the wisdom and silence of Peleus,
Atreus’ craft and the Argives gathered to King Agamemnon.
But there were prophecies, Pythian oracles, mutterings from Delphi.
How shall they prosper who haste after auguries, oracles, whispers,
Dreams that walk in the night and voices obscure of the silence?
Touches are these from the gods that bewilder the brain to its ruin.
One sole oracle helps, still armoured in courage and prudence
Patient and heedful to toil at the work that is near in the daylight.
Leave to the night its phantoms, leave to the future its curtain!
Only today Heaven gave to mortal man for his labour.
If thou hadst bowed not thy mane, O Troy, to the child and the dreamer,
Hadst thou been faithful to Wisdom the counsellor seated and ancient,
Then would the hour not have dawned when Paris lingered in Sparta
Led by the goddess fatal and beautiful, white Aphrodite.
Man, shun the impulses dire that spring armed from thy nature’s abysms!
Dread the dusk rose of the gods, flee the honey that tempts from its petals!
Therefore the black deed was done and the hearth that welcomed was sullied.
Sin-called the Fury uplifted her tresses of gloom o’er the nations
Maddening the earth with the scream of her blood-thirst, bowlessless,
  stone-eyed,
Claiming her victims from God and bestriding the hate and the clamour.
Yet midst the stroke and the wail when men’s eyes were blind with the
  blood-mist,
Still had the high gods mercy recalling Teucer and Ilus.
Just was the heart of their anger. Discord flaming from Ida,
Hundred-voiced glared from the ships through the camp of the victor
  Achaians,—

Love to that discord added her flowerlike lips of Briseis;
Faltering lids of Polyxena conquered the strength of Pelides.
Vainly the gods who pity open the gates of salvation!
Vainly the winds of their mercy breathe on our fevered existence!
Man his passions prefers to the voice that guides from the heavens.
These too were here whom Hera had chosen to ruin this nation:
Charioteers cracking the whips of their speed on the paths of destruction,
Demigods they! they have come down from Heaven glad to that labour,
Deaf is the world with the fame of their wheels as they race down to Hades.
O that alone they could reach it! O that pity could soften
Harsh Necessity's dealings, sparing our innocent children,
Saving the Trojan women and aged from bonds and the sword-edge!
These had not sinned whom you slay in your madness! Ruthless, O mortals,
Must you be then to yourselves when the gods even faltering with pity
Turn from the grief that must come and the agony vast and the weeping?
Say not the road of escape sinks too low for your arrogant treading.
Pride is not for our clay; the earth, not heaven was our mother
And we are even as the ant in our toil and the beast in our dying;
Only who cling to the hands of the gods can rise up from the earth-mire.
Children, lie prone to their scourge, that your hearts may revive in their sunshine.

This is our lot! when the anger of heaven has passed then the mortal
Raises his head; soon he heals his heart and forgets he has suffered.
Yet if resurgence from weakness and shame were withheld from the creature,
Every fall without morrow, who then would counsel submission?
But since the height of mortal fortune ascending must stumble,
Fallen, again ascend, since death like birth is our portion,
Ripening, mowed, to be sown again like corn by the farmer,
Let us be patient still with the gods accepting their purpose.
Deem not defeat I welcome. Think not to Hellas submitting
Death of proud hope I would seal. Not this have I counselled, O nation,
But to be even as your high-crested forefathers, greatest of mortals.
Troya of old enringed by the hooves of Cimmerian armies
Flamed to the heavens from her plains and her smoke-blackened citadel sheltered
Mutely the joyless rest of her sons and the wreck of her greatness.
Courage and wisdom survived in that fall and a stern-eyed prudence
Helped her to live; disguised from her mightiness Troy crouched waiting.
Teucer descended whose genius worked at this kingdom and nation,
Patient, scrupulous, wise, like a craftsman carefully toiling
Over a helmet or over a breastplate, testing it always,
Toiled in the eye of the Masters of all and had heed of its labour.
So in the end they would not release him like souls that are common;
They out of Ida sent into Ilion Pallas Athene;
Secret she came and he went with her into the luminous silence.
Teucer's children after their sire completed his labour.
Now too, O people, front adversity self-gathered, silent.
Veil thyself, leonine mighty Ilion, hiding thy greatness!
Be as thy father Teucer; be as a cavern for lions;
Be as a Fate that crouches! Wordless and stern for your vengeance
Self-gathered work in the night and secrecy shrouding your bosoms.
Let not the dire heavens know of it; let not the foe seize a whisper!
Ripen the hour of your stroke, while your words drip sweeter than honey.
Sure am I, friends, you will turn from death at my voice, you will hear me!
Some day yet I shall gaze on the ruins of haughty Mycenae.
Is this not better than Ilion cast to the sword of her haters,
Is this not happier than Troya captured and wretchedly burning,
Time to await in his stride when the southern and northern Achaians
Gazing with dull distaste now over their severing isthmus
Hate-filled shall move to the shock by the spur of the gods in them driven,
Pelops march upon Attica, Thebes descend on the Spartan?
Then shall the hour now kept in heaven for us ripen to dawning,
Then shall Victory cry to our banners over the Ocean
Calling our sons with her voice immortal. Children of Ilus,
Then shall Troy rise in her strength and stride over Greece up to Gades.”

So Antenor spoke and the mind of the hostile assembly
Moved and swayed with his words like the waters ruled by Poseidon.
Even as the billows rebellious lashed by the whips of the tempest
Curvet and rear their crests like the hooded wrath of a serpent,
Green-eyed under their cowls sublime,—unwilling they journey,
Foam-bannered, hoarse-voiced, shepherded, forced by the wind to the margin
Meant for their rest and can turn not at all, though they rage, on their driver,—

Last with a sullen applause and consenting lapse into thunder,
Where they were led all the while they sink down huge and astonished,
So in their souls that withstood and obeyed and hated the yielding,
Lashed by his censure, indignant, the Trojans moved towards his purpose:
Sometimes a roar arose, then only, weakened, rarer,
Angry murmurs swelled between sullen stretches of silence;
Last, a reluctant applause broke dull from the throats of the commons.
Silent raged in their hearts Laocoon’s following daunted;
Troubled the faction of Paris turned to the face of their leader.
He as yet rose not; careless he sat in his beauty and smiling,
Gazing with brilliant eyes at the sculptured pillars of Ilus.
Doubtful, swayed by Antenor, waited in silence the nation.
BOOK III

The Book of the Assembly

But as the nation beset betwixt doom and a shameful surrender
Waited mute for a voice that could lead and a heart to encourage,
Up in the silence deep Laocoon rose up, far-heard,—
Heard by the gods in their calm and heard by men in their passion —
Cloud-haired, clad in mystic red, flamboyant, sombre,
Priam’s son Laocoon, fate-darkened seer of Apollo.
As when the soul of the Ocean arises rapt in the dawning
And mid the rocks and the foam uplifting the voice of its musings
Opens the chant of its turbulent harmonies, so rose the far-borne
Voice of Laocoon soaring mid columns of Ilion’s glories,
Claiming the earth and the heavens for the field of its confident rumour.
“Trojans, deny your hearts to the easeful flutings of Hades!
Live, O nation!” he thundered forth and Troy’s streets and her pillars
Sent back their fierce response. Restored to her leonine spirits
Ilium rose in her agora filling the heavens with shoutings,
Bearing a name to the throne of Zeus in her mortal defiance.
As when a sullen calm of the heavens discourages living,
Nature and man feel the pain of the lightnings repressed in their bosoms,
Dangerous and dull is the air, then suddenly strong from the anguish
Zeus of the thunders starts into glories releasing his storm-voice,
Earth exults in the kiss of the rain and the life-giving laughters,
So from the silence broke forth the thunder of Troya arising;
Fiercely she turned from prudence and wisdom and turned back to greatness
Casting her voice to the heavens from the depths of her fathomless spirit.
Raised by those clamours, triumphant once more on this scene of his

greatness,

Tool of the gods, but he deemed of his strength as a leader in Nature,
Took for his own a voice that was given and dreamed that he fashioned
Fate that fashions us all, Laocoon stood mid the shouting
Leaned on the calm of an ancient pillar. In eyes self-consuming
Kindled the flame of the prophet that blinds at once and illumines;
Quivering thought-besieged lips and shaken locks of the lion,
Lifted his gaze the storm-led enthusiast. Then as the shouting
Tired of itself at last disappeared in the bosom of silence,
A page of Illion
The Island. Then
I have sailed the golden ocean
And crossed the silver sea.
I have reached the inner sea of knowledge
The soft self’s midnight-star.

It’s fields of flaming oases,
Its mountains of the night,
Its parks of fancy-regexped
Its air of absolute light.

Its sea of self-obliteration,
Its island of Titan’s heart.
Because my soul’s dominion
Is island of the blank.

How with God I silently
Breathe, it lived in thought.
Life was the figure of music
Thought in words, and art, and rhyme.

The light was still around me
When I came back to earth
Bringing its immortal knowledge
Into mere case of birth.

October 3, 1929
Once more he started erect and his voice o’er the hearts of his hearers
Swept like Ocean’s impatient cry when it calls from its surges,
Ocean loud with a thought sublime in its measureless marching,
Each man felt his heart like foam in the rushing of waters.

“Ilion is vanquished then! she abases her grandiose spirit
Mortal found in the end to the gods and the Greeks and Antenor,
And when a barbarous chieftain’s menace and insolent mercy
Bring here their pride to insult the columned spirit of Ilus,
Trojans have sat and feared! For a man has arisen and spoken,
One whom the gods in their anger have hired. Since the Argive prevailed not,
Armed with his strength and his numbers, in Troya they sought for her slayer,
Gathered their wiles in a voice and they chose a man famous and honoured,
Summoned Ate to aid and corrupted the heart of Antenor.
Flute of the breath of the Hell-witch, always he scatters among you
Doubt, affliction and weakness chilling the hearts of the fighters,
Always his voice with its cadenced and subtle possession for evil
Breaks the constant will and maims the impulse heroic.
Therefore while yet her heroes fight and her arms are unconquered,
Troy in your hearts is defeated! The souls of your Fathers have heard you
Dallying, shamefast, with vileness, lured by the call of dishonour.
Such is the power Zeus gave to the winged words of a mortal!
Foiled in his will, disowned by the years that stride on for ever,
Yet in the frenzy cold of his greed and his fallen ambition
Doom from heaven he calls down on his countrymen, Trojan abuses
Troy, his country, extolling her enemies, blessing her slayers.
Such are the gods Antenor has made in his heart’s own image
That if one evil man have not way for his greed and his longing
Cities are doomed and kings must be slain and a nation must perish!
But from the mind of the free and the brave I will answer thy bodings,
Gold-hungry raven of Troy who croakst from thy nest at her princes.
Only one doom irreparable treads down the soul of a nation,
Only one downfall endures; ‘tis the ruin of greatness and virtue,
Mourning when Freedom departs from the life and the heart of a people,
Into her room comes creeping the mind of the slave and it poisons
Manhood and joy and the voice to lying is trained and subjection
Easy feels to the neck of man who is next to the godheads.
Not of the fire am I terrified, not of the sword and its slaying;
Vileness of men appals me, baseness I fear and its voices.
What can man suffer direr or worse than enslaved from a victor
Boons to accept, to take safety and ease from the foe and the stranger,
Fallen from the virtue stern that heaven permits to a mortal?
Death is not keener than this nor the slaughter of friends and our dear ones.
Out and alas! earth’s greatest are earth and they fail in the testing,
Conquered by sorrow and doubt, fate’s hammerers, fires of her furnace.
God in their souls they renounce and submit to their clay and its promptings.
Else could the heart of Troy have recoiled from the loom of the shadow
Cast by Achilles’ spear or shrunk at the sound of his car-wheels?
Now he has graven an oath austere in his spirit unpliant
Victor at last to constrain in his stride the walls of Apollo
Burning Troy ere he sleeps. ’Tis the vow of a high-crested nature;
Shall it break ramparted Troy? Yea, the soul of a man too is mighty
More than the stone and the mortar! Troy had a soul once, O Trojans,
Firm as her god-built ramparts. When by the spears overtaken,
Strong Sarpedon fell and Zeus averted his visage,
Xanthus red to the sea ran sobbing with bodies of Trojans,
When in the day of the silence of heaven the far-glancing helmet
Ceased from the ways of the fight, and panic slew with Achilles
Hosts who were left unshepherded pale at the fall of their greatest,
Godlike Troy lived on. Do we speak mid a city’s ruins?
Lo! she confronts her heavens as when Tros and Laomedon ruled her.
All now is changed, these mutter and sigh to you, all now is ended;
Strength has renounced you, Fate has finished the thread of her spinning.
Hector is dead, he walks in the shadows; Troilus fights not;
Resting his curls on the asphodel he has forgotten his country:
Strong Sarpedon lies in Bellerophon’s city sleeping:
Memnon is slain and the blood of Rhesus has dried on the Troad:
All of the giant Asius sums in a handful of ashes.
Grievous are these things; our hearts still keep all the pain of them treasured,
Hard though they grow by use and iron caskets of sorrow.
Hear me yet, O fainters in wisdom snared by your pathos,
Know this iron world we live in where Hell casts its shadow.
Blood and grief are the ransom of men for the joys of their transience,
For we are mortals bound in our strength and beset in our labour.
This is our human destiny; every moment of living
Toil and loss have gained in the constant siege of our bodies.
Men must sow earth with their hearts and their tears that their country may prosper;
Earth who bore and devours us that life may be born from our remnants.
Then shall the Sacrifice gather its fruits when the war-shout is silent,
Nor shall the blood be in vain that our mother has felt on her bosom
Nor shall the seed of the mighty fail where Death is the sower.
Still from the loins of the mother eternal are heroes engendered,
Still Deiphobus shouts in the war-front trampling the Argives,
Strong Aeneas’ far-borne voice is heard from our ramparts,
Paris’ hands are swift and his feet in the chases of Ares.
Lo, when deserted we fight by Asia’s soon-wearied peoples,
Men ingrate who enjoyed the protection and loathed the protector,
Heaven has sent us replacing a continent Penthesilea!
Low has the heart of Achaia sunk since it shook at her war-cry.
Ajax has bit at the dust; it is all he shall have of the Troad;
Tall Meriones lies and measures his portion of booty.
Who is the fighter in Ilion thrills not rejoicing to hearken
Even her name on unwarlike lips, much more in the mellay
Shout of the daughter of battles, armipotent Penthesilea?
If there were none but these only, if hosts came not surging behind them,
Young men burning-eyed to outdare all the deeds of their elders,
Each in his beauty a Troilus, each in his valour a Hector,
Yet were the measures poised in the equal balance of Ares.
Who then compels you, O people unconquered, to sink down abjuring
All that was Troy? For O, if she yield, let her use not ever
One of her titles! shame not the shades of Teucer and Ilus,
Soil not Tros! Are you awed by the strength of the swift-foot Achilles?
Is it a sweeter lure in the cadenced voice of Antenor?
Or are you weary of Time and the endless roar of the battle?
Wearier still are the Greeks! their eyes look o’er the waters
Nor with the flight of their spears is the wing of their hopes towards Troya.
Dull are their hearts; they sink from the war-cry and turn from the spear-stroke
Sullenly dragging backwards, desiring the paths of the Ocean,
Dreaming of hearths that are far and the children growing to manhood
Who are small infant faces still in the thoughts of their fathers.
Therefore these call you to yield lest they wake and behold in the dawn-light
All Poseidon whitening lean to the west in his waters
Thick with the sails of the Greeks departing beaten to Hellas.
Who is it calls? Antenor the statesman, Antenor the patriot,
Thus who loves his country and worships the soil of his fathers!
Which of you loves like him Troya? which of the children of heroes
Yearns for the touch of a yoke on his neck and desires the aggressor?
If there be any so made by the gods in the nation of Ilus,
Leaving this city which freemen have founded, freemen have dwelt in,
Far on the beach let him make his couch in the tents of Achilles,
Not in this mighty Ilion, not with this lioness fighting,
Guarding the lair of her young and roaring back at her hunters.
We who are souls descended from Ilus and seeds of his making,
Other-hearted shall march from our gates to answer Achilles.
What! shall this ancient Ilion welcome the day of the conquered?
She who was head of the world, shall she live in the guard of the Hellene
Cherished as slavegirls are, who are taken in war, by their captors?
Europe shall walk in our streets with the pride and the gait of the victor?
Greeks shall enter our homes and prey on our mothers and daughters?
This Antenor desires and this Ucalegon favours.
Traitors! whether 'tis cowardice drives or the sceptic of virtue,
Cold-blooded age, or gold insatiably tempts from its coffers
Pleading for safety from foreign hands and the sack and the plunder.
Leave them, my brothers! spare the baffled hypocrites! Failure
Sharpest shall torture their hearts when they know that still you are Trojans.
Silence, O reason of man! for a voice from the gods has been uttered!
Dardanans, hearken the sound divine that comes to you mounting
Out of the solemn ravines from the mystic seat on the tripod!
Phoebus, the master of Truth, has promised the earth to our peoples.
Children of Zeus, rejoice! for the Olympian brows have nodded
Regal over the world. In earth’s rhythm of shadow and sunlight
Storm is the dance of the locks of the God assenting to greatness,
Zeus who with secret compulsion orders the ways of our nature;
Veiled in events he lives and working disguised in the mortal
Builds our strength by pain, and an empire is born out of ruins.
Then if the tempest be loud and the thunderbolt leaping incessant
Shatters the roof, if the lintels flame at last and each cornice
Shrieks with the pain of the blast, if the very pillars totter,
Keep yet your faith in Zeus, hold fast to the word of Apollo.
Not by a little pain and not by a temperate labour
Trained is the nation chosen by Zeus for a dateless dominion.
Long must it labour rolled in the foam of the fathomless surges,
Often neighbour with death and ere Ares grow firm to its banners
Feel on the pride of its Capitol tread of the triumphing victor,
Hear the barbarian knock at its gates or the neighbouring foeman
Glad of the transient smile of his fortune suffer insulting; —
They, the nation eternal, brook their taunts who must perish!
Heaviest toils they must bear; they must wrestle with Fate and her Titans,
And when some leader returns from the battle sole of his thousands
Crushed by the hammers of God, yet never despair of their country.
Dread not the ruin, fear not the storm-blast, yield not, O Trojans.
Zeus shall rebuild. Death ends not our days, the fire shall not triumph.
Death? I have faced it. Fire? I have watched it climb in my vision
Over the timeless domes and over the rooftops of Priam;
But I have looked beyond and have seen the smile of Apollo.
After her glorious centuries, after her world-wide triumphs,
If near her ramparts outnumbered she fights, by the nations forsaken,
Lonely again on her hill, by her streams, and her meadows and beaches,
Once where she revelled, shake to the tramp of her countless invaders,
Testings are these from the god. For Fate severe like a mother
Teaches our wills by disaster and strikes down the props that would weaken,
Fate and the Thought on high that is wiser than yearnings of mortals.
Troy has arisen before, but from ashes, not shame, not surrender!
Souls that are true to themselves are immortal; the soulless for ever
Lingers helpless in Hades a shade among shades disappointed.
Now is the god in my bosom mighty compelling me, Trojans,
Now I release what my spirit has kept and it saw in its vision;
Nor will be silent for gibe of the cynic or sneer of the traitor.
Troy shall triumph! Hear, O ye peoples, the word of Apollo.
Hear it and tremble, O Greece, in thy youth and the dawn of thy future;
Rather forget while thou canst, but the gods in their hour shall remind thee.
Tremble, O nations of Asia, false to the greatness within you.
Troy shall surge back on your realms with the sword and the yoke of the victor.
Troy shall triumph! Though nations conspire and gods lead her foemen, 
Fate that is born of the spirit is greater than they and will shield her. 
Foemen shall help her with war; her defeats shall be victory’s moulders. 
Walls that restrain shall be rent; she shall rise out of sessions unsettled. 
Oceans shall be her walls at the end and the desert her limit; 
Indus shall send to her envoys; her eyes shall look northward from Thule. 
She shall enring all the coasts with her strength like the kingly Poseidon, 
She shall o’ervault all the lands with her rule like the limitless azure.”

Ceasing from speech Laocoon, girt with the shouts of a nation, 
Lapsed on his seat like one seized and abandoned and weakened; nor ended 
Only in iron applause, but throughout with a stormy approval 
Ares broke from the hearts of his people in ominous thunder. 
Savage and dire was the sound like a wild beast’s tracked out and hunted, 
Wounded, yet trusting to tear out the entrails live of its hunters, 
Savage and cruel and threatening doom to the foe and opponent. 
Yet when the shouting sank at last, Ucalegon rose up 
Trembling with age and with wrath and in accents hurried and piping 
Falterd a senile fierceness forth on the maddened assembly. 
“Ah, it is even so far that you dare, O you children of Priam, 
Favourites vile of a people sent mad by the gods, and thou risest, 
Dark Laocoon, prating of heroes and spurning as cowards, 
Smiting for traitors the aged and wise who were grey when they spawned thee!”

Imp of destruction, mane of mischief! Ah, spur us with courage, 
Thou who hast never prevailed against even the feeblest Achaian. 
Rather twice hast thou raced in the rout to the ramparts for shelter, 
Leading the panic, and shrieked as thou ranst to the foemen for mercy 
Who were a mile behind thee, O matchless and wonderful racer. 
Safely counsel to others the pride and the firmness of heroes. 
Thou wilt not die in the battle! For even swiftest Achilles 
Could not o’ertake thee, I ween, nor wind-footed Penthesilea. 
Mask of a prophet, heart of a coward, tongue of a trickster, 
Timeless Ilion thou alone ruinest, helped by the Furies. 
I, Ucalegon, first will rend off the mask from thee, traitor. 
For I believe thee suborned by the cynic wiles of Odysseus 
And thou conspirest to sack this Troy with the greed of the Cretan.”

Hasting unstayed he pursued like a brook that scolds amid pebbles,
Voicing angers shrill; for the people astonished were silent.
Long he pursued not; a shouting broke from that stupor of fury,
Men sprang pale to their feet and hurled out menaces lethal;
All that assembly swayed like a forest swept by the stormwind.
Obstinate, straining his age-dimmed eyes Ucalegon, trembling
Worse yet with anger, clamoured feebly back at the people,
Whelmed in their roar. Unheard was his voice like a swimmer in surges
Lost, yet he spoke. But the anger grew in the throats of the people
Lion-voiced, hurting the heart with sound and daunting the nature,
Till from some stalwart hand a javelin whistling and vibrant
Missing the silvered head of the senator rang disappointed
Out on the distant wall of a house by the side of the market.
Not even then would the old man hush or yield to the tempest.
Wagging his hoary beard and shifting his aged eyeballs,
Tossing his hands he stood; but Antenor seized him and Aetor,
Dragged him down on his seat though he strove, and chid him and silenced,
“Cease, O friend, for the gods have won. It were easier piping
High with thy aged treble to alter the rage of the Ocean
Than to o’erbear this people stirred by Laocoon. Leave now
Effort unhelpful, wrap thy days in a mantle of silence;
Give to the gods their will and dry-eyed wait for the ending.”
So now the old men ceased from their strife with the gods and with Troya;
Cowed by the storm of the people’s wrath they desisted from hoping.
But though the roar long swelled, like the sea when the winds have subsided,
One man yet rose up unafraid and beckoned for silence,
Not of the aged, but ripe in his look and ruddy of visage,
Stalwart and bluff and short-limbed, Halamus son of Antenor.
Forward he stood from the press and the people fell silent and listened,
For he was ever first in the mellay and loved by the fighters.
He with a smile began: “Come, friends, debate is soon ended
If there is right but of lungs and you argue with javelins. Wisdom
Rather pray for her aid in this dangerous hour of your fortunes.
Not to exalt Laocoon, too much praising his swiftness,
Trojans, I rise; for some are born brave with the spear in the war-car,
Others bold with the tongue, nor equal gifts unto all men
Zeus has decreed who guides his world in a round that is devious
Carried this way and that like a ship that is tossed on the waters.
Why should we rail then at one who is lame by the force of Cronion? Not by his will is he lame; he would race, if he could, with the swiftest. Yet is the halt man no runner, nor, friends, must you rise up and slay me, If I should say of this priest, he is neither Sarpedon nor Hector.

Then, if my father whom once you honoured, ancient Antenor, Hugs to him Argive gold which I see not, his son in his mansion, Me too accusest thou, prophet Laocoön? Friends, you have watched me Sometimes fight. Did you see with my house’s allies how I gambolled, Changed, when with sportive spear I was tickling the ribs of my Argives, Nudges of friendly counsel inviting to entry in Troya?

Men, these are visions of lackbrains; men, these are myths of the market. Let us have done with them, brothers and friends; hate only the Hellene. Prophet, I bow to the oracles. Wise are the gods in their silence, Wise when they speak; but their speech is other than ours and their wisdom Hard for a mortal mind to hold and not madden or wander;

But for myself I see only the truth as a soldier who battles Judging the strength of his foes and the chances of iron encounter. Few are our armies, many the Greeks, and we waste in the combat Bound to our numbers, — they by the ocean hemmed from their kinsmen, We by our fortunes, waves of the gods that are harder to master, They like a rock that is chipped, but we like a mist that disperses.

Then if Achilles, bound by an oath, bring peace to us, healing, Bring to us respite, help, though bought at a price, yet full-measured, Strengths of the North at our side and safety assured from the Achaian, For he is true though a Greek, will you shun this mighty advantage? Peace at least we shall have, though gold we lose and much glory; Peace we will use for our strength to breathe in, our wounds to recover, Teaching Time to prepare for happier wars in the future.

Pause ere you fling from you life; you are mortals, not gods in your glory. Not for submission to new ally or to ancient foeman Peace these desire; for who would exchange wide death for subjection? Who would submit to a yoke? Or who shall rule Trojans in Troya? Swords are there still at our sides, there are warriors’ hearts in our bosoms. Peace your senators welcome, not servitude, breathing they ask for. But if for war you pronounce, if a noble death you have chosen, That I approve. What fitter end for this warlike nation, Knowing that empires at last must sink and perish all cities,
Than to preserve to the end posterity's praise and its greatness
Ceasing in clangour of arms and a city's flames for our death-pyre?
Choose then with open eyes what the dread gods offer to Troya.
Hope not now Hector is dead and Sarpedon, Asia inconstant,
We but a handful, Troy can prevail over Greece and Achilles.
Play not with dreams in this hour, but sternly, like men and not children,
Choose with a noble and serious greatness fates fit for Troya.
Stark we will fight till buried we fall under Ilion's ruins,
Or, unappeased, we will curb our strength for the hope of the future.”
Not without praise of his friends and assent of the thoughtfuller Trojans,
Halamus spoke and ceased. But now in the Ilian forum
Bright, of the sungod a ray, and even before he had spoken
Sending the joy of his brilliance into the hearts of his hearers,
Paris arose. Not applauded his rising, but each man towards him
Eagerly turned as if feeling that all before which was spoken
Were but a prelude and this was the note he has waited for always.
Sweet was his voice like a harp's, when it chants of war, and its cadence
Softened with touches of music thoughts that were hard to be suffered,
Sweet like a string that is lightly struck, but it penetrates wholly.
“Calm with the greatness you hold from your sires by the right of
your nature
I too would have you decide before Heaven in the strength of your spirits,
Not to the past and its memories moored like the thoughts of Antenor
Hating the vivid march of the present, nor towards the future
Panting through dreams like my brother Laocoon vexed by Apollo.
Dead is the past; the void has possessed it; its drama is ended,
Finished its music. The future is dim and remote from our knowledge;
Silent it lies on the knees of the gods in their luminous stillness.
But to our gaze God's light is a darkness, His plan is a chaos.
Who shall foretell the event of a battle, the fall of a footstep?
Oracles, visions and prophecies voice but the dreams of the mortal,
And 'tis our spirit within is the Pythoness tortured in Delphi.
Heavenly voices to us are a silence, those colours a whiteness.
Neither the thought of the statesman prevails nor the dream of the prophet,
Whether one cry, 'Thus devise and thy heart shall be given its wanting;'
Vainly the other, 'The heavens have spoken; hear then their message.'
Who can point out the way of the gods and the path of their travel,
Who shall impose on them bounds and an orbit? The winds have their
treading,—
They can be followed and seized, not the gods when they move towards
their purpose.

They are not bound by our deeds and our thinkings. Sin exalted
Seizes secure on the thrones of the world for her glorious portion,
Down to the bottomless pit the good man is thrust in his virtue.
Leave to the gods their godhead and, mortal, turn to thy labour;
Take what thou canst from the hour that is thine and be fearless in spirit;
This is the greatness of man and the joy of his stay in the sunlight.

Now whether over the waste of Poseidon the ships of the Argives
Empty and sad shall return or sacred Ilion perish,
Priam be slain and for ever cease this imperial nation,
These things the gods are strong to conceal from the hopings of mortals.
Neither Antenor knows nor Laocoon. Only of one thing
Man can be sure, the will in his heart and his strength in his purpose:
This too is Fate and this too the gods, nor the meanest in Heaven.
Paris keeps what he seized from Time and from Fate while unconquered
Life speeds warm through his veins and his heart is assured of the sunlight.
After 'tis cold, none heeds, none hinders. Not for the dead man
Earth and her wars and her cares, her joys and her gracious concessions,
Whether for ever he sleeps in the chambers of Nature unmindful
Or into wideness wakes like a dreamer called from his visions.
Ilion in flames I choose, not fallen from the heights of her spirit.
Great and free has she lived since they raised her twixt billow and mountain,
Great let her end; let her offer her freedom to fire, not the Hellene.
She was not founded by mortals; gods erected her ramparts,
Lifted her piles to the sky, a seat not for slaves but the mighty.
All men marvelled at Troy; by her deeds and her spirit they knew her
Even from afar, as the lion is known by his roar and his preying.
Sole she lived royal and fell, erect in her leonine nature.
So, O her children, still let her live unquelled in her purpose
Either to stand with your feet on the world oppressing the nations
Or in your ashes to lie and your name be forgotten for ever.
Justly your voices approve me, armipotent children of Ilus;
Straight from Zeus is our race and the Thunderer lives in our nature.
Long I have suffered this taunt that Paris was Ilion’s ruin
Born on a night of the gods and of Ate, clothed in a body,
Scornful I strode on my path secure of the light in my bosom,
Turned from the muttering voices of envy, their hates who are fallen,
Voices of hate that cling round the wheels of the triumphing victor;
Now if I speak, 'tis the strength in me answers, not to belittle,
That excusing which most I rejoice in and glory for ever,
Tyndaris' rape whom I seized by the will of divine Aphrodite.
Mortal this error that Greece would have slumbered apart in her mountains,
Sunk, by the trumpets of Fate unaroused and the morning within her,
Only were Paris unborn and the world had not gazed upon Helen.
Fools, who say that a spark was the cause of this giant destruction!
War would have stridden on Troy though Helen were still in her Sparta
Tending an Argive loom, not the glorious prize of the Trojans,
Greece would have banded her nations though Paris had drunk not Eurotas.
Coast against coast I set not, nor Ilion opposite Argos.
Phryx accuse who upreared Troy's domes by the azure Aegean,
Curse Poseidon who fringed with Greece the blue of his waters:
Then was this war first decreed and then Agamemnon was fashioned;
Armed he strode forth in the secret Thought that is womb of the future.
Fate and Necessity guided those vessels, captained their armies.
When they stood mailed at her gates, when they cried in the might of their union,
'Troy, renounce thy alliances, draw back humbly from Hellas,'
Should she have hearkened persuading her strength to a shameful compliance,
Ilion queen of the world whose voice was the breath of the storm-gods?
Should she have drawn back her foot as it strode towards the hills of the Latins?
Thrace left bare to her foes, recoiled from Illyrian conquests?
If all this without battle were possible, people of Priam,
Blame then Paris, say then that Helen was cause of the struggle.
But I have sullied the hearth, I have trampled the gift and the guest-rite,
Heaven I have armed with my sin and unsealed the gaze of the Furies,
So was Troy doomed who righteous had triumphed, locked with the Argive.
Fools or hypocrites! Meanest falsehood is this among mortals,
Veils of purity weaving, names misplacing ideal
When our desires we disguise and paint the lusts of our nature.
Men, ye are men in your pride and your strength, be not sophists and
tonguesters.
Lie not! prate not that nations live by righteousness, justice
Shields them, gods out of heaven look down wroth on the crimes of the
mighty!
Known have men what thing has screened itself mouthing these
semblances. Crouching
Dire like a beast in the green of the thickets, selfishness silent
Crunches the bones of its prey while the priest and the statesman are glozing.
So are the nations soothe and deceived by the clerics of virtue,
Taught to reconcile fear of the gods with their lusts and their passions;
So with a lie on their lips they march to the rapine and slaughter.
Truly the vanquished were guilty! Else would their cities have perished,
Shrieked their ravished virgins, their peasants been hewn in the vineyards?
Truly the victors were tools of the gods and their glorious servants!
Else would the war-cars have ground triumphant their bones whom they
hated?

Servants of God are they verily, even as the ape and the tiger.
Does not the wild-beast too triumph enjoying the flesh of his captives?
Tell us then what was the sin of the antelope, wherefore they doomed her,
Wroth at her many crimes? Come, justify God to his creatures!
Not to her sins was she offered, not to the Furies or Justice,
But to the strength of the lion the high gods offered a victim,
Force that is God in the lion’s breast with the forest for altar.
What, in the cities stormed and sacked by Achilles in Troas
Was there no just man slain? Was Brises then a transgressor?
Hearts that were pierced in his walls, were they sinners tracked by the Furies?
No, they were pious and just and their altars burned for Apollo,
Reverent flamed up to Pallas who slew them aiding the Argives.
Or if the crime of Paris they shared and his doom has embraced them,
Whom had the island cities offended, stormed by the Locrian,
Wave-kissed homes of peace but given to the sack and the spoiler?
Was then King Atreus just and the house accursèd of Pelops,
Tantalus’ race, whose deeds men shuddering hear and are silent?
Look! they endure, their pillars are firm, they are regnant and triumph.
Or are Thyestean banquets sweet to the gods in their savour?
Only a woman’s heart is pursued in their wrath by the Furies!
No, when the wrestlers meet and embrace in the mighty arena,
Not at their sins and their virtues the high gods look in that trial;
Which is the strongest, which is the subtlest, this they consider.
Nay, there is none in the world to befriend save ourselves and our courage;
Prowess alone in the battle is virtue, skill in the fighting
Only helps, the gods aid only the strong and the valiant.
Put forth your lives in the blow, you shall beat back the banded aggressors.
Neither believe that for justice denied your subjects have left you
Nor that for justice trampled Pallas and Hera abandon.
Two are the angels of God whom men worship, strength and enjoyment.
Into this life which the sunlight bounds and the greenness has cradled,
Armed with strength we have come; as our strength is, so is our joyance.
What but for joyance is birth and what but for joyance is living?
But on this earth that is narrow, this stage that is crowded, increasing
One on another we press. There is hunger for lands and for oxen,
Horses and armour and gold desired; possession allures us
Adding always as field to field some fortunate farmer.
Hearts too and minds are our prey; we seize on men's souls and their bodies,
Slaves to our works and desires that our hearts may bask golden in leisure.
One on another we prey and one by another are mighty.
This is the world and we have not made it; if it is evil,
Blame first the gods; but for us, we must live by its laws or we perish.
Power is divine; divinest of all is power over mortals.
Power then the conqueror seeks and power the imperial nation,
Even as luminous, passionless, wonderful, high over all things
Sit in their calmness the gods and oppressing our grief-tortured nations
Stamp their wills on the world. Nor less in our death-besieged natures
Gods are and altitudes. Earth resists, but my soul in me widens
Helped by the toil behind and the agelong effort of Nature.
Even in the worm is a god and it writhes for a form and an outlet.
Workings immortal obscurely struggling, hints of a godhead
Labour to form in this clay a divinity. Hera widens,
Pallas aspires in me, Phoebus in flames goes battling and singing,
Ares and Artemis chase through the fields of my soul in their hunting.
Last in some hour of the Fates a Birth stands released and triumphant;
Poured by its deeds over earth it rejoices fulfilled in its splendour.
Conscious dimly of births unfinished hid in our being
Rest we cannot; a world cries in us for space and for fullness.
Fighting we strive by the spur of the gods who are in us and o'er us,
Stamping our image on men and events to be Zeus or be Ares.
Love and the need of mastery, joy and the longing for greatness
Rage like a fire unquenchable burning the world and creating,
Nor till humanity dies will they sink in the ashes of Nature.
All is injustice of love or all is injustice of battle.
Man over woman, woman o'er man, over lover and foeman
Wrestling we strive to expand in our souls, to be wide, to be happy.
If thou wouldst only be just, then wherefore at all shouldst thou conquer?
Not to be just, but to rule, though with kindness and high-seated mercy,
Taking the world for our own and our will from our slaves and our subjects,
Smiting the proud and sparing the suppliant, Trojans, is conquest.
Justice was base of thy government? Vainly, O statesman, thou liest.
If thou wert just, thou wouldst free thy slaves and be equal with all men.
Such were a dream of some sage at night when he muses in fancy,
Imaging freely a flawless world where none were afflicted,
No man inferior, all could sublimely equal and brothers
Live in a peace divine like the gods in their luminous regions.
This, O Antenor, were justice known but in words to us mortals.
But for the justice thou vauntest enslaving men to thy purpose,
Setting an iron yoke, nor regarding their need and their nature,
Then to say 'I am just; I slay not, save by procedure,
Rob not save by law,' is an outrage to Zeus and his creatures.
Terms are these feigned by the intellect making a pact with our yearnings,
Lures of the sophist within us draping our passions with virtue.
When thou art weak, thou art just, when thy subjects are strong and
remember.

Therefore, O Trojans, be firm in your will and, though all men abandon,
Bow not your heads to reproach nor your hearts to the sin of repentance;
For you have done what the gods desired in your breasts and are blameless.
Proudly enjoy the earth that they gave you, enthroning their natures,
Fight with the Greeks and the world and trample down the rebellious,
What you have lost, recover, nor yield to the hurricane passing.
You cannot utterly die while the Power lives untired in your bosoms;
When 'tis withdrawn, not a moment of life can be added by virtue.
Faint not for helpers fled! Though your yoke had been mild as a father's
They would have gone as swiftly. Strength men desire in their masters; 
All men worship success and in failure and weakness abandon. 
Not for his justice they clung to Teucer, but for their safety, 
Seeing in Troy a head and by barbarous foemen afflicted. 
Faint not, O Trojans, cease not from battle, persist in your labour! 
Conquer the Greeks, your allies shall be yours and fresh nations your subjects.

One care only lodge in your hearts, how to fight, how to conquer. 
Peace has smiled out of Phthia; a hand comes outstretched from the Hellene. 
Who would not join with the godlike? who would not grasp at Achilles? 
There is a price for his gifts; it is such as Achilles should ask for, 
Never this nation concede. O Antenor's golden phrases 
Glorifying rest to the tired and confuting patience and courage, 
Garbed with a subtlety lax and the hopes that palliate surrender! 
Charmed men applaud the skilful purpose, the dexterous speaker; 
This they forget that a Force decides, not the wiles of the statesman.

'Now let us yield,' do you say, 'we will rise when our masters are weakened'? 
Nay, then, our master's master shall find us an easy possession! 
Easily nations bow to a yoke when their virtue relaxes; 
Hard is the breaking fetters once worn, for the virtue has perished. 
Hope you when custom has shaped men into the mould of a vileness, 
Hugging their chains when the weak feel easier trampled than rising 
Or though they groan, yet have heart nor strength for the anguish of effort, 
Then to cast down whom, armed and strong, you were mastered opposing? 
Easy is lapse into uttermost hell, not easy salvation. 
Or have you dreamed that Achilles, this son of the gods and the ocean, 
Aught else can be with the strong and the bold save pursuer or master? 
Know you so little the mood of the mighty? Think you the lion 
Only will lick his prey, that his jaws will refrain from the banquet? 
Rest from thy bodings, Antenor! Not all the valour of Troya 
Perished with Hector, nor with Polydamas vision has left her; 
Troy is not eager to slay her soul on a pyre of dishonour. 
Still she has children left who remember the mood of their mother. 
Helen none shall take from me living, gold not a drachma 
Travels from coffers of Priam to Greece. Let another and older 
Pay down his wealth if he will and his daughters serve Menelaus. 
Rather from Ilion I will go forth with my brothers and kinsmen;
Troy I will leave and her shame and live with my heart and my honour
Refuged with lions on Ida or build in the highlands a city
Or in an isle of the seas or by dark-driven Pontic waters.
Dear are the halls of our childhood, dear are the fields of our fathers,
Yet to the soul that is free no spot on the earth is an exile.
Rather wherever sunlight is bright, flowers bloom and the rivers
Flow in their lucid streams to the Ocean, there is our country.
So will I live in my soul's wide freedom, never in Troya
Shorn of my will and disgraced in my strength and the mock of my rivals.
First had you yielded, shame at least had not stained your surrender.
Strength indulges the weak! But what Hector has fallen refusing,
Men! what through ten loud years we denied with the spear for our answer,
That what Trojan will ever renounce, though his city should perish?
Once having fought we will fight to the end nor that end shall be evil.
Clamour the Argive spears on our walls? Are the ladders erected?
Far on the plain is their flight, on the farther side of the Xanthus.
Where are the deities hostile? Vainly the eyes of the tremblers
See them stalking vast in the ranks of the Greeks and the shoutings
Dire of Poseidon they hear and are blind with the aegis of Pallas.
Who then sustained so long this Troy, if the gods are against her?
Even the hills could not stand save upheld by their concert immortal.
Now not with Tydeus' son, not now with Odysseus and Ajax
Trample the gods in the sound of their chariot-wheels, victory leading:
Argos falls red in her heaps to their scythes; they shelter the Trojans;
Victory unleashed follows and fawns upon Penthesilea.
Ponder no more, O Ilion, city of ancient Priam!
Rise, O beloved of the gods, and go forth in thy strength to the battle.
Not by the dreams of Laocoon strung to the faith that is febrile,
Nor with the tremblings vain and the haunted thoughts of Antenor,
But with a noble and serious strength and an obstinate valour
Suffer the shock of your foes, O nation chosen by Heaven;
Proudly determine on victory, live by disaster unshaken.
Either Fate receive like men, nay, like gods, nay, like Trojans."
So like an army that streams and that marches, speeding and pausing,
Drawing in horn and wing or widened for scouting and forage,
Bridging the floods, avoiding the mountains, threading the valleys,
Fast with their flashing panoply clad in gold and in iron
Moved the array of his thoughts; and throughout delight and approval
Followed their march, in triumph led but like prisoners willing,
Glad and unbound to a land they desire. Triumphant he ended,
Lord of opinion, though by the aged frowned on and censured,
But to this voice of their thoughts the young men vibrated wholly.
Loud like a storm on the ocean mounted the roar of the people.
“Cease from debate,” men cried, “arise, O thou warlike Aeneas!
Speak for this nation, launch like a spear at the tents of the Hellene
Ilion’s voice of war!” Then up mid a limitless shouting
Stern and armed from his seat like a war-god helmèd Aeneas
Rose by King Priam approved in this last of Ilion’s sessions,
Holding the staff of the senate’s authority. “Silence, O commons,
Hear and assent or refuse as your right is, masters of Troya,
Ancient and sovereign people, act that your kings have determined
Sitting in council high, their reply to the strength of Achilles.
‘Son of the Aeacids, vain is thy offer; the pride of thy challenge
Rather we choose; it is nearer to Dardanus, King of the Hellenes.
Neither shall Helen be led back, the Tyndarid, weeping to Argos,
Nor down the paths of peace revisit her fathers’ Eurotas.
Death and the fire may prevail o’er us, never our wills shall surrender
Lowering Priam’s heights and darkening Ilion’s splendours.
Not of such sires were we born, but of kings and of gods, O Larissan.
Not with her gold Troy traffics for safety, but with her spear-points.
Stand with thy oath in the war-front, Achilles; call on thy helpers
Armed to descend from the calm of Olympian heights to thy succour
Hedging thy fame from defeat; for we all desire thee in battle,
Mighty to end thee or tame at last by the floods of the Xanthus.’”
So Aeneas resonant spoke, stern, fronted like Ares,
And with a voice that conquered the earth and invaded the heavens
Loud they approved their doom and fulfilled their impulse immortal.
Last Deiphobus rose in their meeting, head of their mellay:
“Proudly and well have you answered, O nation beloved of Apollo;
Fearless of death they must walk who would live and be mighty for ever.
Now, for the sun is hastening up the empyrean azure,
Hasten we also. Tasting of food round the call of your captains
Meet in your armèd companies, chariots and hoplites and archers.
Strong be your hearts, let your courage be stern like the sun when it blazes;
Fierce will the shock be today ere he sink blood-red in the waters.”
They with a voice as of Oceans meeting rose from their session, —
Filling the streets with her tread Troy strode from her Ilian forum.
Eagerly, spurred by Ares swift in their souls to the war-cry,
All now pressed to their homes for the food of their strength in the battle.
Ilion turned her thoughts in a proud expectancy seaward
Waiting to hear the sounds that she loved and the cry of the mellay.
Now to their citadel Priam's sons returned with their father,
Now from the gates Talthybius issued grey in his chariot;
But in the halls of Anchises Aeneas not doffing his breastpiece
Hastily ate of the corn of his country, cakes of the millet
Doubled with wild-deer's flesh, from the quiet hands of Creusa.
She, as he ate, with her calm eyes watching him smiled on her husband:
“Ever thou hastest to battle, O warrior, ever thou fightest
Far in the front of the ranks and thou seest out Locrian Ajax,
Turnest thy ear to the roar for the dangerous shout of Tydides;
There, once heard, leaving all thou drivest, O stark in thy courage.
Yet am I blest among women who tremble not, left in thy mansion,
Quiet at old Anchises' feet when I see thee in vision
Sole with the shafts hissing round thee and say to my quivering spirit,
‘Now he is striking at Ajax, now he has met Diomedes.’
Such are the mighty twain who are ever near to protect thee,
Phoebus, the Thunderer's son, and thy mother, gold Aphrodite;
Such are the Fates that demand thee, O destined head of the future.
But though my thoughts for their own are not troubled, always, Aeneas,
Sore is my heart with pity for other Ilian women
Who in this battle are losing their children and well-loved husbands,
Brothers too dear, for the eyes that are wet, for the hearts that are silent.
Will not this war then end that thunders for ever round Troya?”
But to Creusa the hero answered, the son of Anchises:
“Surely the gods protect, yet is Death too always mighty.
Most in his shadowy envy he strikes at the brave and the lovely,
Grudging works to abridge their days and to widow the sunlight.
Most, disappointed, he rages against the belovèd of Heaven;
Striking their lives through their hearts he mows down their loves and their pleasures.
Truly thou sayst, thou needst not to fear for my life in the battle;
Ever for thine I fear lest he find thee out in his anger,
Missing my head in the fight, when he comes here crossed in his godhead.
Yet shall Phoebus protect and my mother, gold Aphrodite."
    But to Aeneas answered the tranquil lips of Creüsa:
    “So may it be that I go before thee, seeing, Aeneas,
Over my dying eyes thy lips bend down for the parting.
Blissfullest end is this for a woman here mid earth’s sorrows;
Afterwards there we hope that the hands shall join which were parted.”
    So she spoke, not knowing the gods: but Aeneas departing
Clasped his father’s knees, the ancient mighty Anchises.
    “Bless me, my father; I go to the battle. Strong with thy blessing
Even today may I hurl down Ajax, slay Diomedes,
And on the morrow gaze on the empty beaches of Troas.”
Troubled and joyless, nought replying to warlike Aeneas
Long Anchises sat unmoving, silent, sombre,
Gazing into his soul with eyes that were closed to the sunlight.
    “Prosper, Aeneas,” slowly he answered him, “son of a goddess,
Prosper, Aeneas; and if for Troy some doom is preparing,
Only they will what Necessity fashions compelled by the Silence.
Labour and war she has given to man as the law of his transience.
Work; she shall give thee the crown of thy deeds or their ending appointed,
Whether glorious thou pass or in silent shadows forgotten.
But what thy mother commands perform ever, loading thy vessels.
Who can know what the gods have hid with the mist of our hopings?”
    Then from the house of his fathers Aeneas rapidly striding
Came to the city echoing now with the wheels of the chariots,
Clanging with arms and astream with the warlike tramp of her thousands.
Fast through the press he strode and men turning knew Aeneas,
Greatened in heart and went on with loftier thoughts towards battle.
He through the noise and the crowd to Antenor’s high-built mansion
Striding came, and he turned to its courts and the bronze of its threshold
Trod which had suffered the feet of so many princes departed.
But as he crossed its brazen square from the hall there came running,
Leaping up light to his feet and laughing with sudden pleasure,
Eurus the youngest son of Polydamas. Clasping the fatal
War-hardened hand with a palm that was smooth as a maiden’s or infant’s,
“Well art thou come, Aeneas,” he said, “and good fortune has sent thee! Now I shall go to the field; thou wilt speak with my grandsire Antenor And he shall hear thee though chid by his heart reluctant. Rejoicing I shall go forth in thy car or warring by Penthesilea, Famous, give to her grasp the spear that shall smite down Achilles.” Smiling answered Aeneas, “Surely will, Eurus, thy prowess Carry thee far to the front; thou shalt fight with Epeus and slay him. Who shall say that this hand was not chosen to pierce Menelaus? But for a while with the ball should it rather strive, O hero, Till in the play and the wrestle its softness is trained for the smiting.” Eagerly Eurus answered, “But they have told me, Aeneas, This is the last of our fights; for today will Penthesilea Meet Achilles in battle and slay him ending the Argives. Then shall I never have mixed in this war that is famous for ever. What shall I say when my hairs are white like the aged Antenor’s? Men will ask, ‘And what were thy deeds in the warfare Titanic? Whom didst thou slay of the Argives, son of Polydamas, venging Bravely thy father?’ Then must I say, ‘I lurked in the city. I was too young and only ascending the Ilian ramparts Saw the return or the flight, but never the deed and the triumph.’ Friend, if you take me not forth, I shall die of grief ere the sunset.” Plucking the hand of Aeneas he drew him into the mansion Vast; and over the floor of the spacious hall they hastened Laughing, the gracious child and the mighty hero and statesman, Flower of a present stock and the burdened star of the future. Meanwhile girt by his sons and the sons of his sons in his chamber Cried to the remnants left of his blood the aged Antenor. “Hearken you who are sprung from my loins and children, their offspring! None shall again go forth to the fight who is kin to Antenor. Weighed with my curse he shall go and the spear-points athirst of the Argives Meet him wroth; he shall die in his sin and his name be forgotten. Oft have I sent forth my blood to be spilled in vain in the battle Fighting for Troy and her greatness earned by my toil and my fathers’. Now all the debt has been paid; she rejects us driven by the immortals. Much do we owe to the mother who bore us, much to our country; But at the last our life is ours and the gods’ and the future’s. Gather the gold of my house and our kin, O ye sons of Antenor.
Warned by a voice in my soul I will go forth tonight from this city
Fleeing the doom and bearing my treasures; the ships shall receive them
Gathered, new-keeled by my care and the gods’, in the narrow Propontis.
Over God’s waters guided, treading the rage of Poseidon,
Bellyng out with their sails let them cleave to the untravelled distance
Ocean’s crests and resign to their Fates the doomed and the evil.”

So Antenor spoke and his children heard him in silence;
Awed by his voice and the dread of his curse they obeyed, though in sorrow.
Halamus only replied to his father: “Dire are the white hairs
Reverend, loved, of a father, dreadful his curse to his children.
Yet in my heart there is one who cries, ’tis the voice of my country,
She for whose sake I would be in Tartarus tortured for ever.
Pardon me then, if thou wilt; if the gods can, then let them pardon.
For I will sleep in the dust of Troy embracing her ashes,
There where Polydamas sleeps and the many comrades I cherished.
So let me go to the darkness remembered or wholly forgotten,
Yet having fought for my country, true in my fall to my nation.”

Then in his aged wrath to Halamus answered Antenor:
“Go then and perish doomed with the doomed and the hated of heaven;
Nor shall the gods forgive thee dying nor shall thy father.”
Out from the chamber Halamus strode with grief in his bosom
Wrestling with wrath and he went to his doom nor looked back at his dear
ones.

Crossing the hall the son of Antenor and son of Anchises
Met in the paths of their fates where they knotted and crossed for the parting,
One with the curse of the gods and his sire fast wending to Hades,
Fortunate, blessed the other; yet equal their minds were and virtues.
Cypris’ son to the Antenorid: “Thee I have sought and thy brothers,
Bough of Antenor; sore is our need today of thy counsels,
Endless our want of their arms that are strong and their hearts that recoil not
Meeting myriads stark with the spear in unequal battle.”
Halamus answered him: “I will go forth to the palace of Priam,
There where Troy yet lives and far from the halls of my fathers;
There will I speak, not here. For my kin they repose in the mansion
Sitting unarmed in their halls while their brothers fall in the battle.”
Eurus eagerly answered the hero: “Me rather, therefore,
Take to the fight with you; I will make war on the Greeks for my uncles;
One for all I will fill their place in the shock with the foemen.”

But from his chamber-door Antenor heard and rebuked him:
“Scamp of my heart, thou torment! in to thy chamber and rest there,
Bound with cords lest thou cease, thou flutter-brain, scourged into quiet;
So shall thy lust of the fight be healed and our mansion grow tranquil.”
Chid by the old man Eurus slunk from the hall discontented,
Yet with a dubious smile like a moonbeam lighting his beauty.
But to Antenor the Dardanid born from the white Aphrodite:
“Late the Antenorids learn to flinch from the spears of the Argives,
Even this boy of their blood has Polydamas’ heart and his valour.
Nor should a life that was honoured and noble be stained in its ending.
Nay, then, the mood of a child would shame a grey-headed wisdom,
If for the fault of the people virtue and Troy were forgotten.
For, though the people hear us not, yet are we bound to our nation:
Over the people the gods are; over a man is his country;
This is the deity first adored by the hearths of the noble.
For by our nation’s will we are ruled in the home and the battle
And for our nation’s weal we offer our lives and our children’s.
Not by their own wills led nor their passions men rise to their manhood,
Selfishly seeking their good, but the gods’ and the State’s and the fathers’.”

Wroth Antenor replied to the warlike son of Anchises:
“Great is the soul in thee housed and stern is thy will, O Aeneas;
Onward it moves undismayed to its goal though a city be ruined.
They too guide thee who deepest see of the ageless immortals,
One with her heart and one in his spirit, Cypris and Phoebus.
Yet might a man not knowing this think as he watched thee, Aeneas,
‘Spurring Priam’s race to its fall he endangers this city,
Hoping to build a throne out of ruins sole in the Troad.’
I too have gods who warn me and lead, Athene and Hera.
Not as the ways of other mortals are theirs who are guided,
They whose eyes are the gods and they walk by a light that is secret.”

Coldly Aeneas made answer, stirred into wrath by the taunting:
“High wert thou always, nurtured in wisdom, ancient Antenor.
Walk then favoured and led, yet watch lest passion and evil
Feign auguster names and mimic the gait of the deathless.”
And with a smile on his lips but wrath in his bosom answered,
Wisest of men but with wisdom of mortals, aged Antenor:
“Led or misled we are mortals and walk by a light that is given;  
Most they err who deem themselves most from error excluded.  
Nor shalt thou hear in this battle the shout of the men of my lineage  
Holding the Greeks as once and driving back Fate from their country.  
His alone will be heard for a space while the stern gods are patient  
Even now who went forth a victim self-offered to Hades,  
Last whom their wills have plucked from the fated house of Antenor.”  
They now with wrath in their bosoms sundered for ever and parted.  
Forth from the halls of Antenor Aeneas rapidly striding  
Passed once more through the city hurrying now with its car-wheels,  
Filled with a mightier rumour of war and the march of its thousands,  
Till at Troy’s upward curve he found the Antenorid crestward  
Mounting the steep incline that climbed to the palace of Priam  
White in her proud and arm’d citadel. Silent, ascending  
Hardly their feet had attempted the hill when behind them they hearkened  
Sweet-tongued a call and the patter and hurry of light-running sandals,  
Turning they beheld with a flush on his cheeks and a light on his lashes  
Challenging mutely and pleading the boyish beauty of Eurus.  
“Racer to mischief,” said Halamus, “couldst thou not sit in thy chamber?  
Surely cords and the rod await thee, Eurus, returning.”  
Answered with laughter the child, “I have broken through ranks of the  
fighters,  
Dived under chariot-wheels to arrive here and I return not.  
I too for counsel of battle have come to the palace of Priam.”  
Burdened with thought they mounted slowly the road of their fathers  
Breasting the Ilian hill where Laomedon’s mansion was seated,  
They from the crest down-gazing saw their country’s housetops  
Under their feet and heard the murmur of Troya below them.  
But in the palace of Priam coming and going of house-thralls  
Filled all the corridors; smoke from the kitchens curled in its plenty  
Rich with savour and breathed from the labouring lungs of Hephaestus.  
Far in the halls and the chambers voices travelled and clustered,  
Anklets jangling ran and sang back from doorway to doorway  
Mocking with music of speed and its laughters the haste of the happy,  
Sound came of arms, there was tread of the great, there were murmurs of  
women,—  
Voices glad of the doomed in Laomedon’s marvellous mansion.
Six were the halls of its splendour, a hundred and one were its chambers
Lifted on high upon columns that soared like the thoughts of its dwellers,
Thoughts that transcended the earth though they sank down at last into ashes;

So had Apollo dreamed to his lyre; and its tops were a grandeur
Domed, as if seeking to roof men's lives with a hint of the heavens;
Marble his columns rose and with marble his roofs were appointed,
Conquered wealth of the world in its largeness suffered, supporting
Purities of marble, glories of gold. Nor only of matter
Blazed there the brutal pomps, but images mystic or mighty
Crowded ceiling and wall, a work that the gods even admire
Hardly believing that forms like these were imagined by mortals
Here upon earth where sight is a blur and the soul lives encumbered.
Scrolls that remembered in gems the thoughts austere of the ancients
Bordered the lines of the stone and the forms of serpent and Naiad
Ran in relief on those walls of pride in the palace of Priam
Mingled with Dryads who tempted and fled and Satyrs who followed,
Sports of the nymphae in the sea and the woods and their meetings with mortals,

Sessions and battles of Trojan demigods, deaths that were famous,
Wars and loves of men and the deeds of the golden immortals.
Pillars sculptured with gods and with giants soared up from bases
Lion-carved or were seated on bulls and bore into grandeur
Amply those halls where they soared, or in lordliness slenderly fashioned,
Dressed in flowers and reeds like virgins standing on Ida,
Guarded the screens of stone and divided alcove and chamber.
Ivory carved and brodered robes and the riches of Indus
Cherished in sandalwood triumphed and teemed in the palace of Priam;
Doors that were carven and fragrant sheltered the joys of its princes.

Here in a chamber of luminous privacy Paris was arming.
Near him moved Helen, a whiteness divine, and intent on her labour
Fastened his cuirass, bound the greaves and settled the hauberk
Thrilling his limbs with her touch that was heaven to the yearning of mortals.
She with her hands of delight caressing the senseless metal
Pressed her lips to his brilliant armour; she bowed down, she whispered:
"Cuirass, allowed by the gods, protect the beauty of Paris;
Keep for me that for which country was lost and my child and my brothers."
Yearning she bent to his feet, to the sandal-strings of her lover;
Then as she gazed up, changed grew her mood; for the Daemon within her
Rose that had banded Greece and was burning Troy into ashes.
Slowly a smile that was perfect and perilous over her beauty
Dawned like the sunlight on Paradise; strangely she looked on her lover.
So might a goddess have gazed as she played with the love of a mortal
Passing an hour on the earth ere she rose up white to Olympus.

“So art thou winner, Paris, yet and thy spirit ascendant
Leads this Troy where thou wilt, O thou mighty one veiled in thy beauty.
First in the dance and the revel, first in the joy of the merriment,
Who would not leave for thy sake and repent it not country and homestead?
Winning thou reignest still over Troy, over Fate, over Helen.
Always so canst thou win? Has Death no claim on thy beauty,
Fate no scourge for thy sins? How the years have passed by in a glory,
Years of this heaven of the gods, O ravisher, since from my hearthstone
Seizing thou borest me compelled to thy ships and my joy on the waters.
Troy is enringed with the spears, her children fall and her glories,
Mighty souls of heroes have gone down prone to the darkness;
Thou and I abide! the mothers wail for our pleasure.
Wilt thou then keep me for ever, O son of Priam, in Troya?
Fate was my mother, they say, and Zeus for this hour begot me.
Art thou a god too, O hero, disguised in this robe of the mortal,
Brilliant, careless of death and of sin as if sure of thy rapture?
What then if Fate today were to lay her hands on thee, Paris?”
Calmly he looked on the face of which Greece was enamoured, the body
For whose desire great Troy was a sacrifice, tranquil regarded
Lovely and dire on the lips he loved that smile of a goddess,
Saw the daughter of Zeus in the woman, yet was not shaken.

“Temptress of Argos,” he answered, “thou snare for the world to be seized in,
Thou then hop’st to escape! But the gods could not take thee, O Helen,
How then thy will that to mine is a captive, or how, though with battle,
He who has lost thee, unhappy, the Spartan, bright Menelaus?
All things yield to a man and Zeus is himself his accomplice
When like a god he wills without remorse or longing.
Thou on this earth art mine since I claimed thee beheld, not speaking,
But with thy lids that fell thou veiledst thy heart of compliance.
Then in whatever beyond I shall know how to take thee, O Helen,
Even as here upon earth I knew, in heaven as in Sparta;
I on Elysian fields will enjoy thee as now in the Troad.”
Silent a moment she lingered like one who is lured by a music
Rapturous, heard by himself alone and his lover in heaven,
Then in her beauty compelling she rose up divine among women.
“Yes, it is good,” she cried, “what the gods do and actions of mortals;
Good is this play of the world; it is good, the joy and the torture.
Praised be the hour of the gods when I wedded bright Menelaus!
Praised, more praised the keels that severed the seas towards Helen
Churning the senseless waves that knew not the bliss of their burden!
Praised to the end the hour when I passed through the doors of my husband
Laughing with joy in my heart for the arms that bore and enchained me!
Never can Death undo what life has done for us, Paris.
Nor, whatsoever betide, can the hour be unlived of our rapture.
This too is good that nations should meet in the shock of the battle,
Heroes be slain and a theme be made for the songs of the poets,
Songs that shall thrill with the name of Helen, the beauty of Paris.
Well is this also that empires should fall for the eyes of a woman;
Well that for Helen Hector ended, Memnon was slaughtered,
Strong Sarpedon fell and Troilus ceased in his boyhood.
Troy for Helen burning, her glory, her empire, her riches,
This is the sign of the gods and the type of things that are mortal.
Thou who art kin to the masters of heaven, unconstrained like thy kindred
High on this ancient stage of the Troad with gods for spectators
Play till the end thy part, O thou wondrous and beautiful actor:
Fight and slay the Greeks, my countrymen; victor returning
Take for reward of the play, thy delight of Argive Helen.
Force from my bosom a hint of the joy denied to the death-claimed,
Rob in the kiss of my lips a pang from the raptures of heaven.”
Clasping him wholly her arms of desire were a girdle of madness,
Cestus divine of the dread Aphrodite. He with her kisses
Flushed like the gods with unearthly wine and rejoiced in his ruin.
Thus while they conversed now in this hour that was near to their
parting

Last upon earth, a fleet-footed slavegirl came to the chamber:
“Paris, thy father and mother desire thee; there in the strangers’
Outer hall Aeneas and Halamus wait for thy coming.”
So with the Argive he wended to Priam’s ample chamber
Far in Laomedon’s house where Troy looked upwards to Ida.
Priam and Hecuba there, the ancient grey-haired rulers,
Waiting him sat in their chairs of ivory calm in their greatness;
Hid in her robes at their feet lay Cassandra crouched from her visions.
“Since, O my father,” said Paris, “thy thoughts have been with me, thy
blessing
Surely shall help me today in my strife with the strength of Achilles.
Surely the gods shall obey in the end the might of our spirits,
Pallas and Hera, flame-sandalled Artemis, Zeus and Apollo.
Ever serve the immortal brightnesses man when he stands up
Firm with his will uplifted a steadfast flame towards the heavens,
Ares works in his heart and Hephaestus burns in his labour.”
Priam replied to his son: “Forewilled by the gods, Alexander,
All things happen on earth and yet we must strive who are mortals,
Knowing all vain, yet we strive; for our nature seizing us always
Drives like the flock that is herded and urged towards shambles or pasture.
So have the high gods fashioned these tools of their action and pleasure;
Failure and grief are their engines no less than the might of the victor;
They in the blow descend and resist in the sobs of the smitten.
Such are their goads that I too must walk in the paths that are common,
Even I who know must send for thee, moved by Cassandra.
Speak, O my child, since Apollo has willed it, once, and be silent.”
But in her raiment hidden Cassandra answered her father:
“No, for my heart has changed since I cried for him, vexed by Apollo.
Why should I speak? For who will believe me in Troy? who believed me
Ever in Troy or the world? Event and disaster approve me
Only, my comrades, not men in their thoughts, not my brothers and kinsmen.
All by their hopes are gladly deceived and grow wroth with the warner,
Half-blind prophets of hope entertained by the gods in the mortal!
Wiser blind, if nothing they saw or only the darkness.
I too once hoped when Apollo pursued me with love in his temple.
Round me already there gleamed the ray of the vision prophetic,
Thrill of that rapture I felt and the joy of the god in his seeing
Nor did I know that the knowledge of mortals is bound unto blindness.
Either only they walk mid the coloured dreams of the senses
Treading the greenness of earth and deeming the touch of things real,
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Or if they see, by the curse of the gods their sight into falsehood
Easily turns and leads them more stumbling astray than the sightless.
So are we either blind in a darkness or dazzled by seeing.
Thus have the gods protected their purpose and baffled the sages;
Over the face of the Truth their shield of gold is extended.
But I deemed otherwise, urged by the Dreadful One, he who sits always
Veiled in us fighting the gods whom he uses. I cried to Apollo,
‘Give me thy vision sheer, not such as thou giv’st to thy prophets,
Troubled though luminous; clear be the vision and ruthless to error,
Far-darting god who art veiled by the sun and by death thou art shielded.
Then I shall know that thou lov’st.’ He gave, alarmed and reluctant,
Driven by Fate and his heart; but I mocked him, I broke from my promise,
Courage fatal helping my heart to its ruin with laughter.
Always now I remember his face that grew tranquil and ruthless,
Hear the voice divine and implacable: ‘Since thou deceivest
Even the gods and thou hast not feared to lie to Apollo,
Speak shalt thou henceforth only truth, but none shall believe thee:
Scorned in thy words, rejected yet more for their bitter fulfilment,
Scourged by the gods thou must speak though thy sick heart yearns to be silent.

For in this play thou hast dared to play with the masters of heaven,
Girl, it is thou who hast lost; thy voice is mine and thy bosom.’
Since then all I foreknow; therefore anguish is mine for my portion:
Since then all whom I love must perish slain by my loving.
Even of that I denied him, violent force shall bereave me
Grasped mid the flames of my city and shouts of her merciless victors.”
But to Cassandra answered gently the voice of her brother:
“Sister of mine, afflicted and seized by the dreadful Apollo,
All whose eyes can pierce that curtain, gaze into dimness;
This they have glimpsed and that they imagine deceived by their natures
Seeing the forms in their hearts of dreadful things and of joyous;
As in the darkness our eyes are deceived by shadows uncertain,
Such is their sight who rend the veil that the dire gods have woven.
Busy our hearts are weaving thoughts and images always:
After their kind they see what here we call truth. So thy nature
Tender and loving, plagued by this war and its fears for thy loved ones,
Sees calamity everywhere; when the event like the vision
Seems, as in every war the beloved must fall and the cherished,
Then the heart cries, ‘It has happened as all shall happen I mourn for.’
All that was bright it misses and only seizes on sorrow.
Dear, on the brightness look and if thou must prophesy, tell us
Rather of great Pelides slain by my spear in the onset."
But with a voice of grief the sister answered her brother:
“Yes, he shall fall and his slayer too perish and Troy with his slayer.”
But in his spirit rejoicing Paris answered Cassandra:
“Let but this word come true; for the rest, the gods shall avert it.
Look once more, O Cassandra, and comfort the heart of thy mother,
See, O seer, my safe return with the spoils of Achilles.”
And with a voice of grief the sister answered her brother:
“You shall return for thy hour while Troy yet stands in the sunshine.”
But in his spirit exultant Paris seizing the omen:
“Hearst thou, my father, my mother? She who still prophesied evil
Now perceives of our night this dawning. Yet is it grievous,
Since through a heart that we love must be pierced the heart of Achilles.
Fate, with this evil satisfied, turn in the end from Troya.
Bless me, my father, and thou, O Hecuba, mother long-patient,
Still forgive that thy children have fallen for Helen and Paris.”
Tenderly yearning his mother drew him towards her and murmured:
“All for thy hyacinth curls was forgiven even from childhood
And for thy sunlit looks, O wonder of charm, O Paris.
Paris, my son, though Troy must fall, thy mother forgives thee,
Blessing the gods who have lent thee to me for a while in their sunshine.
Theirs are fate and result, but ours is the joy of our children;
Even the griefs are dear that come from their hands while they love us.
Fight and slay Achilles, the murderer dire of thy brothers;
Venging Hector return, my son, to the clasp of thy mother.”
But in his calm august to Paris Priam the monarch:
“Victor so mightest thou come, so gladden the heart of thy mother.”
Then to the aged father of Paris Helen the Argive
Bright and immortal and sad like a star that grows near to the dawning
And on its pale companions looks who now fade from its vision:
“Me too pardon and love, my parents, even Helen,
Cause of all bane and all death; but I came from the gods for this ruin
Born as a torch for the burning of empires, cursed with this beauty.
Nor have I known a father’s embrace, a mother’s caresses,
But to the distant gods I was born and nursed as an alien
Here by earth from fear, not affection, compelled by the thunders.
Two are her monstrous births, from the Furies and from the immortals;
Either touching mortality suffers and bears not the contact.
I have been both, a monster of doom and a portent of beauty.”
Slowly Priam the monarch answered to Argive Helen:
“That which thou art the gods have made thee; thou couldst not be other:
That which thou didst, the gods have done; thou couldst not prevent them.
Who here shall blame or whom shall he pardon? Should not my people
Rail at me murmuring, ‘Priam has lost what his fathers had gathered;
Cursed is this king by heaven and cursed who are born as his subjects’?
Masked the high gods act; the doer is hid by his working.
Each of us bears his punishment, fruit of a seed that’s forgotten;
Each of us curses his neighbour protecting his heart with illusions:
Therefore like children we blame each other and hate and are angry.
Take, my child, the joy of the sunshine won by thy beauty.
I who lodge on this earth as an alien bound by the body,
Wearing my sorrow even as I wear the imperial purple,
Praise yet the gods for my days that have seen thee at last in my ending.
Fity Troy may cease having gazed on thy beauty, O Helen.”
He became silent, he ceased from words. But Paris and Helen
Lightly went and gladly; pursuing their footsteps the mother,
Mother once of Troilus, mother once of Hector,
Stood at the door with her death in her eyes, nor returned from her yearning,
But as one after a vanishing sunbeam gazes in prison,
Gazed down the corridors after him, long who had passed from her vision.

Then in the silent chamber Cassandra seized by Apollo
Staggered erect and tossing her snow-white arms of affliction
Cried to the heavens in her pain; for the fierce god tortured her bosom:
“Woe is me, woe for the guile and the bitter gift of Apollo!
Woe, thrice woe, for my birth in Troy and the lineage of Teucer!
So do you deal, O gods, with those who have served you and laboured,
Those who have borne for your sake the evil burden of greatness.
Blessed is he who holds mattock in hand or who bends o’er the furrow
Taking no thought for the good of mankind, with no yearnings for
knowledge.
Woe unto me for my wisdom which none shall value nor hearken!  
Woe unto thee, O King, for thy strength which shall not deliver!  
Better the eye that is sealed, more blest is the spirit that's feeble.  
Vainly your hopes with iron Necessity struggle, O mortals.  
Virtue shall lie in her pangs, for the gods have need of her torture;  
Sin shall be scourged, though her deeds were compelled by the gods in their anger.

None shall avail in the end, the coward shall die and the hero.  
Troy shall fall in her sin and her virtues shall not protect her;  
Argos shall grow by her crimes till the gods shall destroy her for ever.  
Now have I fruit of thy love, O Loxias, dreadful Apollo.  
Woe is me, woe for the flame that approaches the house of my fathers!  
Woe is me, woe for the hand of Ajax laid on my tresses!  
Woe, thrice woe to him who shall ravish and him who shall cherish!  
Woe for the ships that shall bound too swift o'er the azure Aegean!  
Woe for thy splendid shambles of hell, O Argive Mycenae!  
Woe for the evil spouse and the house accursèd of Atreus!"
So with her voice of the swan she clanged out doom on the peoples,  
Over the palace of Priam and over the armed nation  
Marching resolved to the war in the pride of its centuries conquered,  
Centuries slain by a single day of the anger of heaven.  
Dim to the thoughts like a vision of Hades the luminous chamber grew; in his ivory chair King Priam sat like a shadow  
Throned mid the ghosts of departed kings and forgotten empires.  
But in his valiance careless and blithe the Priamd hastened seeking the pillared megaron wide where Deiphobus armoured waited his coming forth with the warlike chiefs of the Trojans.  
Now as he passed by the halls of the women, the chambers that harboured Daughters and wives of King Priam and wives of his sons and their playmates,  
Niches of joy that were peopled with murmurs and sweet-tongued laughters,  
Troubled like trees with their birds in a morning of sun and of shadow where in some garden of kings one walks with his heart in the sunshine,  
Out from her door where she stood for him waiting Polyxena started, seized his hand and looked in his face and spoke to her brother.  
Then not even the brilliant strength of Paris availed him;  
Joyless he turned his face from her eyes of beauty and sorrow.
“So it is come, the hour that I feared, and thou goest, O Paris,
Armed with the strength of Fate to strike at my heart in the battle;
For he is doomed and thou and I, a victim to Hades.
This thou preferrest and neither thy father could move nor thy mother
 Burning with Troy in their palace, nor could thy country persuade thee,
Nor dost thou care for thy sister’s happiness pierced by thy arrows.
Will she remember it all, my sister Helen, in Argos
Passing tranquil days with her husband, bright Menelaus,
Holding her child on her knees? But we shall lie joyless in Hades.”
Paris replied: “O sister Polyxena, blame me not wholly.
We by the gods are ensnared; for the pitiless white Aphrodite
Doing her will with us both compels this. Helpless our hearts are
And when she drives perforce must love, for death or for gladness:
Weighed in unequal scales she deals them to one or another.
Happy who holding his love can go down into bottomless Hades.”
But to her brother replied in her anguish the daughter of Priam:
“Evilly deal with my days the immortals happy in heaven;
Yes, I accuse the gods and I curse them who heed not our sorrow.
This they have done with me, forcing my heart to the love of a foe man,
One whose terrible hands have been stained with the blood of my brothers.
This now they do, they have taken the two whom I love beyond heaven,
Brother and husband, and drive to the fight to be slain by each other.
Nay, go thou forth; for thou canst not help it, nor I, nor can Helen.
Since I must die as a pageant to satisfy Zeus and his daughter,
Since now my heart must be borne as a victim bleeding to please them,
So let it be, let me deck myself and be bright for the altar.”
Into her chamber she turned with her great eyes blind, unregarding;
He for a moment stood, then passed to the megaron slowly;
Dim was the light in his eyes and clouded his glorious beauty.
Meanwhile armed in the palace of Priam Penthesilea.
Near her her captains silent and mighty stood, from the Orient
Distant clouds of war, Surabdas and iron Surenas,
Pharatus planned like the hills, Somaranes, Valarus, Tauron,
High-crested Sumalus, Arithon, Sambus and Artavoruxes.
There too the princes of Phrygian Troya gathered for counsel
And with them Eurus came, Polydams’ son, who most dearly
Loved was of all the Trojan boys by the glorious virgin.
She from her arming stayed to caress his curls and to chide him:
“Eurus, forgotten of grace, dost thou gad like a stray in the city
Eager to mix with the armoured men and the chariots gliding?
High on the roofs wouldst thou watch the swaying speck that is battle?
Better to aim with the dart or seek with thy kind the palaestra;
So wilt thou sooner be part of this greatness rather than straining
Yearn from afar to the distance that veils the deeds of the mighty.”
But with an anxious lure in his smile on her Eurus answered:
“No that remoteness to see have I come to the palace of Priam
Leaving the house of my fathers, but for the spear and the breastpiece.
Hast thou not promised me long I shall fight in thy car with Achilles?”
Doubtful he eyed her, a lion’s cub at play in his beauty,
And mid the heroes who heard him laughter arose for a moment,
Yet with a sympathy stirred; they remembered the days of their childhood,
Thought of Troy still mighty, life in its rose-touched dawning
When they had longed for the clash of the fight and the burden of armour.
Glad, with the pride of the lioness watching her cub in the desert,—
Couchant she lies with her paws before her and joys in his gambols,
Over the prey as he frisks and is careless,—answered the virgin:
“Younger than thou in my nation have mounted the steed and the war-car.
Eurus, arm; from under my shield thou shalt gaze at the Phthian,
Reaching my shafts for the cast from the rim of my car in the battle
Handle perhaps the spear that shall smite down the Phthian Achilles.
What sayst thou, Halamus? Were not such prowess a perfect beginning
Worthy Polydamas’ son and the warlike house of Antenor?”
Halamus started and smiting his hand on the grief of his bosom,
Sombre replied and threatened with Fate the high-hearted virgin.
“Virgin armipotent, wherefore mockst thou thy friend, though unwitting?
Nay,—for the world will know at the end and my death cannot hide it,—
Slain by a father’s curse we fight who are kin to Antenor.
Take not the boy in thy car, lest the Furies, Penthesilea,
Aim through the shield and the shielder to wreak the curse of the grandsire.
They will not turn nor repent for thy strength nor his delicate beauty.”
Swiftly to Halamus answered the high-crested might of the virgin:
“Curses leave lightly the lips when the soul of a man is in anger
Even as blessings easily crowd round the head that is cherished.
Yet have I never seen that a curse has sharpened a spear-point;
Never Death drew back from the doomed by the power of a blessing. 
Valour and skill and chance are Fate and the gods and the Furies.
Give me the boy; a hero shall come back formed from the onset.”
“Do as thou wilt,” replied Halamus; “Fate shall guard or shall end him.”
Then to the boy delighted and smiling-eyed and exultant
Cried with her voice like the call of heaven’s bugles waking the heroes,
Blown by the lips of gold-haired Valkyries, Penthesilea.
“Go, find the spear, gird the sword, don the cuirass, child of the mighty.
Armed when thou standst on the plain of the Xanthus, field of thy fathers,
See that thou fight on this day like the comrade of Penthesilea.
Bud of a hero, gaze unalarmed in the eyes of Achilles.”
Light as a hound released he ran to the hall of the armour
Where were the shields of the mighty, the arms of the mansion of Teucer;
There from the house-thralls he wrung the greaves and the cuirass and helmet
Troilus wore, the wonderful boy who, ere ripened his prowess,
Conquered the Greeks and drove to the ships and fought with Achilles.
These on his boyish limbs he donned and ran back exulting
Bearing spears and a sword and rejoiced in the clank on his armour.

Meanwhile Deiphobus, head of the mellay, moved by Aeneas
Opened the doors of their warlike debate to the strength of the virgin:
“Well do I hope that our courage outwearing every opponent
Triumph shall lift to her ancient seat on the Pergaman turrets;
Clouds from Zeus come and pass; his sunshine eternal survives them.
Yet we are few in the fight and armoured nations besiege us.
Surging on Troy today a numberless foe well-captained
Hardly pushed back in shock after shock with the Myrmidon numbers
Swelled returns; they fight with a hope that broken refashion
Helpful skies and a man now leads them who conquers and slaughters,
One of the sons of the gods and armed by the gods for the struggle.
We unhelped save by Ares stern and the mystic Apollo
And but as mortals striving with stubborn mortal courage,
Hated and scorned and alone in the world, by the nations rejected,
Fight with the gods and mankind and Achilles and numbers against us
Keeping our country from death in this bitter hour of her fortunes.
Therefore have prudence and hardihood severed contending our counsels
Whether far out to fight on the seaward plain with the Argives
Or behind Xanthus the river impetuous friendly to Troya.
This my brother approves and the son of Antenor advises,
Prudent masters of war who prepare by defence their aggression.
But for myself from rashness I seek a more far-seeing wisdom,
Not behind vain defences choosing a tardy destruction,
Rather as Zeus with his spear of the lightning and chariot of tempest
Scatters and chases the heavy mass of the clouds through the heavens,
So would I hunt the Greeks through the plains to their lair by the Ocean,
Straight at the throat of my foeman so would I leap in the battle.
Swiftly to smite at the foe is prudence for armies outnumbered.”

Then to the Dardanid answered the high-crested Penthesilea:
“There where I find my foe I will fight him, whether by Xanthus
Or at the fosse of the ships where they crouch behind bulwarks for shelter,
Or if they dare by Scamander the higher marching on Troya.”
Sternly approved her the Trojan, “So should they fight who would triumph
Meeting the foe ere he move in his will to the clash of encounter.”

But with his careless laughter the brilliant Priamid Paris:
“Joy of the battle, joy of the tempest, joy of the gamble
Mated are in thy blood, O virgin, daughter of Ares.
Thou like the deathless wouldst have us combat, us who are human?
Come, let the gods do their will with us, Ares let lead and his daughter!
Always the blood is wiser and knows what is hid from the thinker.
Life and treasure and fame to cast on the wings of a moment,
Fiercer joy than this the gods have not given to mortals.”

Highly to Paris the virgin armipotent Penthesilea,
“Paris and Halamus, shafts of the war-god, fear not for Troya.
Not as a vaunt do I speak it, you gods who stern-thoughted watch us,
But in my vision of strength and the soul that is seated within me,
Not while I live and war shall the host of the Myrmidon fighters
Forcing the currents lave, as once they were wont, in Scamander
Vaunting their victor car-wheels red with the blood of the vanquished.
Then when I lie by some war-god slain on the fields of the Troad,
Fight again if you will behind high-banked fast-flowing Xanthus.”
Halamus answered her, “Never so by my will would I battle
Flinging Troy as a stake on the doubtful diceboard of Ares.
But you have willed it and so let it be; yet hearken my counsel.
Massed in the fight let us aim the storm of our spears at one greatness,
Mighty Pelides’ head who gives victory still to the Argives.
Easy the Greeks to destroy lay Achilles once slain on the Troad,
But if the Peleid lives the fire shall yet finish with Troya.
Join then Orestes’ speed to the stubborn might of Aeneas,
Paris’ fatal shafts and the missiles of Penthesilea.
Others meanwhile, a puissant screen of our bravest and strongest,
Fighting shall hold back Pylos and Argolis, Crete and the Locrian.
Thou, Deiphobus, front the bronze-clad stern Diomedes,
I with Polydamas’ spear will dare to restrain and discourage
Ajax’ feet though they yearn for pursuit and are hungry for swiftness.
Knot of retreat behind let some strong experienced captain
Stand with our younger levies guarding the fords of the Xanthus,
Fortify the wavering line and dawn as fresh strength on the wearied.
Then if the fierce gods prevail we shall perish not driven like cattle
Over the plains, but draw back sternly and slowly to Troya.”
Answered the Priamid, “Wise is thy counsel, branch of Antenor.
Chaff are the southern Achaians, only the hardihood Hellene,
Only the savage speed of the Locrian rescues their legions.
Marshal we so this field. Stand, Halamus, covering Xanthus,
Helping our need when the foe press hard on the Ilian fighters.
Paris, my brother, thou with our masses aid the Eoan.
I with Aeneas’ single spear am enough for the Argive.”
“Gladlier” Halamus cried “would I fight in the front with the Locrian!
This too let be as you will; for one is the glory and service
Fighting in front or guarding behind the fate of our country.”
So in their thoughts they ordered battle. Meanwhile Eurus
Gleaming returned and the room grew glad with the light of his armour.
Glad were its conscious walls of that vision of boyhood and valour;
Gods of the household sighed and smiled at his courage and beauty,
They who had seen so many pass over their floors and return not
Hasting to battle, the fair and the mighty, the curled and the grizzled,
All of them treading one path like the conscious masks of one pageant
Winding past through the glare of a light to the shadows beyond them.
But on her captains proudly smiling Penthesilea
Seized him and cried aloud, her wild and warlike nature
Moved by the mother’s heart that the woman loses not ever.
“Who then shall fear for the fate of Troy when such are her children?
Verily, Eurus, yearning has seized me to meet thee in battle.
Rather than Locrian Ajax, rather than Phthian Achilles,
There acquiring a deathless fame I would make thee my captive,
Greedy and glad who feel as a lioness eyeing her booty.
Nay, I can never leave thee behind, my delicate Trojan,
But, when this war ends, will bear thee away to the hills of my country
And, as a robber might, with my captive glad and unwilling
Bring thee a perfect gift to my sisters Ditis and Anna.
Eurus, there in my land thou shalt look on such hills as thy vision
Gazed not on yet, with their craggy tops besieging Cronion,
Sheeted in virgin white and chilling his feet with their vastness.
Thou shalt rejoice in our wooded peaks and our fruit-bearing valleys,
Lakes of Elysium dreaming and wide and rivers of wonder.
All day long thou shalt glide between mystic woodlands in silence
Broken only by call of the birds and the plashing of waters.
There shalt thou see, O Eurus, the childhood of Penthesilea.
Thou shalt repose in my father's house and walk in the gardens
Green where I played at the ball with my sisters, Ditis and Anna.”
Musing she ceased, but if any god had touched her with prescience
Bidding her think for the last time now of the haunts of her childhood,
Gaze in her soul with a parting love at the thought of her sisters
And of the lovely and distant land where she played through her summers,
Brief was the touch; for she changed at once and only of triumph
Dreamed and only yearned in her heart for the shock of Achilles.

So they passed from the halls of Priam fated and lofty,
Halls where the air seemed sobbing yet with the cry of Cassandra;
Clad in their brilliant armour, bright in their beauty and courage,
Sons of the passing demigods, they to their latest battle
Down the ancestral hill of the Pergamans moved to the gateway.
Loud with an endless march, with a tireless gliding to meet them,
All Troy streamed from her streets and her palaces armed for the combat.
Then to the voice of Deiphobus clanging high o'er the rumour
Wide the portals swung that shall close on a blood-red evening,
Slow, foreboding, reluctant, and through the yawn of the gateway
Drove with a cry her steeds the virgin Penthesilea
Calling aloud, “O steeds of my east, we drive to Achilles.”
Blithe in the car behind her Eurus scouted around him
Scared with his eyes lest Antenor his grandsire should rise in the gateway,
Hardly believing his fate that led him safe through the portals.
After her trampled and crashed the ranks of her orient fighters.
Paris next with his hosts came brilliant, gold on his armour,
Gold on his helm; a mighty bow hung slack on his shoulder,
Propped o’er his arm a spear, as he drove his car through the gateway.
Next Deiphobus drove and the hero strong Aeneas,
Leading their numbers on. Behind them Dus and Polites,
Helenus, Priam’s son, Thrasy machus, grizzled Aretes,
Came like the tempest his father, Adamas, son of the Northwind —
Orus old in the fight and Eumachus, kin to Aeneas,
Who was Creusa’s brother and richest of men in the Troad
After Antenor only and Priam, Ilion’s monarch.
Halamus drove and Arintheus led on his Lycian levies.
Who were the last to speed out of Troya of all those legions
Doomed to the sword? for never again from the ancient city
Foot would march or chariots crash in their pride to the Xanthus.
Aetor the old and Tryas the conqueror known by the Oxus.
They in the portals met and their ancient eyes on each other
Looked amazed, admiring on age the harness of battle.
They in the turreted head of the gateway halted and conversed.
“Twenty years have passed, O Tryas, chief of the Trojans,
Since in the battle thy car was seen and the arm of thy prowess
Age has wronged. Why now to the crowded ways of the battle
Move once more thy body infirm and thy eyes that are faded?”
And to Antenor’s brother the Teucrian, “Thou too, O Aetor,
Old and weary hast sat in thy halls and desisted from battle.
Now in Troy’s portals I meet thee driving forth to the mellay.”
Aetor answered, “Which then is better, to wretchedly perish
Crushed by the stones of my falling house or slain like a victim
Dragged through the blood of my kin on the sacred hearth of my fathers,
Or in the battle to cease mid the war-cry and hymn of the chariots
Knowing that Troy yet stands in her pride though doomed in her morrows?
So have the young men willed and the old like thee who age not,
Old are thy limbs, but thy heart is still young and hot for the war-din.”
Tryas replied, “To perish is better for man or for nation
Nobly in battle, nor end disgraced by disease or subjection.
So have I come here to offer this shoulder Laomedon leaned on,
Arms that have fought by the Oxus and conquered the Orient’s heroes
Famous in Priam’s wars, and a heart that is faithful to Troya.
These I will offer to death on his splendid altar of battle,
Tribute from Ilion. If she must fall, I shall see not her ending.”
Aetor replied to Tryas, “Then let us perish together,
Joined by the love of our race who in life were divided in counsel.
All things embrace in death and the strife and the hatred are ended.”
Silent together they drove for the last time through Ilion’s portals
Out with the rest to the fight towards the sea and the spears of the Argives.
Only once, as they drove, they gazed back silent on Troya
Lifting her marble pride in the golden joy of the morning.
So through the ripening morn the army, crossing Scamander,
Filling the heavens with the dust and the war-cry, marched on the Argives.
Far in front Troy’s plain spread wide to the echoing Ocean.
Meanwhile grey from the Trojan gates Talthybius journeyed
Spurred by the secret thought of the Fates who change not nor falter.
Simois sighed round his wheels and Xanthus roared at his passing,
Troas’ god like a lion wroth and afraid; to meet him
Whistling the ocean breezes came and Ida regarded.
So with his haste in the wheels the herald oceanward driving
Came through the gold of the morn, o’er the trampled green of the pastures
Back to the ships and the roar of the sea and the iron-hooped leaguer.
Wide to the left his circle he wrote where the tents of Achilles
Trooped like a flock of the sea-fowl pensive and still on the margin.
He past the outposts rapidly coursed to the fosse of the Argives.
In with a quavering cry to the encampment over the causeway
Bridging the moat of the ships Talthybius drove in his chariot
Out of the wide plains azure-roofed and the silence of Nature
Passing in to the murmur of men and the thick of the leaguer.
There to a thrall of the Hellene he cast his reins and with labour
Down from the high seat climbed of the war-car framed for the mighty.
Then betwixt tent-doors endless, vistaed streets of the canvas,
Slowly the old man toiled with his eager heart, and to meet him
Sauntering forth from his tent at the sound of the driving car-wheels
Strong Automedon came who was charioteer of Achilles.

“Grey Talthybius, whence art thou coming? From Troya the ancient?
Or from a distant tent was thy speed and the King Agamemnon?
What in their armoured assembly counsel the kings of the Argives?”
“Not from the host but from Troy, Automedon, come I with tidings,
Nor have I mixed with the Greeks in their cohorts ranked by the Ocean,
Nor have I stood in their tents who are kings in sceptred Achaia,
But from Achilles sent to Achilles I bring back the message.
Tell me, then, what does Pelides, whether his strength he reposes
Soothed by the lyre or hearing the chanted deeds of the mighty
Or does he walk as he loves by the shore of the far-sounding waters?”
And to the Argive herald grey Automedon answered:
“Now from the meal he rests and Briseis lyres to him singing
One of the Ilian chants of old in the tongue of the Trojans.”
“Early, then, he has eaten, Automedon, early reposes?”
“Early the meat was broached on the spits, Talthybius, early
High on the sands or under the tents we have eaten and rested.
None knows the hour of the hunt, red, fierce, nor the prey he shall leap on,
All are like straining hounds; for Achilles shares not his counsels,
But on the ships, in the tents the talk has run like Peneus;
These upon Troy to be loosed and the hard-fighting wolf-brood of Priam,
These hope starkly with Argos embraced to have done with the Spartan,
Ending his brilliance in blood or to sport on the sands of the margent
Playing at bowls with the heads of the Cretan and crafty Odysseus.
Welcome were either or both; we shall move in the dances of Ares,
Quicken heart-beats dulled and limbs that are numb with reposing.
War we desire and no longer this ease by the drone of the waters.”

So as they spoke, they beheld far-off the tent of Achilles
Splendid and spacious even as the hall of a high-crested chieftain,
Lofty, held by a hundred stakes to the Phrygian meadow,
Hung were its sides with memories bronze and trophies of armour,
Sword and spear and helmet and cuirass of fallen heroes
Slain by the hand of the mighty Achilles warring with Troya.
Teemed in its canvas rooms the plundered riches of Troas,
Craftsman’s work and the wood well-carved and the ivory painted,
Work of bronze and work of gold and the dreams of the artist.
And in those tents of his pride, in the dreadful guard of the Hellene,
Noble boys and daughters of high-born Phrygians captive,
Borne from the joyless ruins that now were the sites of their childhood,
Served in the land of their sires the will of the Phthian Achilles.
There on a couch reclined in his beauty mighty and golden,
Loved by the Fates and doomed by them, spear of their will against Troya,
Peleus’ hero son by the foam-white child of the waters
Dreaming reposed and his death-giving hand hung lax o’er the couch-side.
Near him dark-eyed Briseis, the fatal and beautiful captive,
Sang to the Grecian victor chants of the land of her fathers,
Sang the chant of Ilus, the tale of the glories of Troya.
 Trojan boys and maidens sat near the singer and listened
Heart-delighted if with some tears; for easy are mortal
Hearts to be bent by Fate and soon we consent to our fortunes.
But in the doorway Automedon stood with the shadowy Argive
Ilion – Book V

And at the ominous coming the voice of the singer faltered,
Faltering hushed like a thought melodious ceasing in heaven.

But from his couch the Peleid sprang and he cried to the herald.
“Long hast thou lingered in Ilion, envoy, mute in the chambers
Golden of Priam old, while around thee darkened the counsels
Wavering blindly and fiercely of minds that revolt from compulsion,
Natures at war with the gods and their fortunes. Fain would I fathom
What were the thoughts of Deiphobus locked in that nature of iron
Now that he stands confronting his fate in the town of his fathers.
Peace dwells not in thy aspect. Sowst thou a seed then of ruin
Cast from the inflexible heart and the faltering tongue of Aeneas,
Or with the golden laugh of the tameless bright Alexander?”

Grey Talthybius answered, “Surely their doom has embraced them
Wrapping her locks round their ears and their eyes, lest they see and escape
Kissing their tongue with her fatal lips and dictating its answers.
Dire is the hope of their chiefs and fierce is the will of their commons.
‘Son of the Aeacids, spurned is thy offer. The pride of thy challenge
Rather we choose; it is nearer to Dardanus, King of the Hellenes.
Neither shall Helen captive be dragged to the feet of her husband,
Nor down the paths of peace revisit her fathers’ Eurotas.
Death and the fire may prevail on us, never our wills shall surrender
Lowering Priam’s heights and darkening Ilion’s splendours;
Not of such sires were we born, but of kings and of gods. Larissan,
Not with her gold Troy purchases safety but with her spear-point.
Stand with thy oath in the war-front, Achilles, call on thy helpers
Armed to descend from the calm of Olympian heights to thy succour
Hedging thy fame from defeat; for we all desire thee in battle,
Mighty to end thee or tame at last by the floods of the Xanthus.’
So they reply; they are true to their death, they are constant for ruin.
Humbler answer hope not, O hero, from Penthesilea;
Insolent, warlike, regal and swift as herself is her message.
‘Sea of renown and of valour that fillest the world with thy rumour,
Speed of the battle incarnate, mortal image of Ares!
Terror and tawny delight like a lion one hunts or is hunted!
Dread of the world and my target, swift-footed glorious hero!
Thus have I imaged thee, son of Peleus, dreaming in countries
Far from thy knowledge, in mountains that never have rung to thy war-cry.
O, I have longed for thee, warrior! Therefore today by thy message
So was I seized with delight that my heart was hurt with its rapture,
Knowing today I shall gaze with my eyes on that which I imaged
Only in air of the mind or met in the paths of my dreaming.
Thus have I praised thee first with my speech; with my spear I would answer.
Yet for thy haughty scorn who deeming of me as some Hellene
Or as a woman weak of these plains fit but for the distaff,
Promisest capture in war and fame as thy slavegirl in Phthia,—
Surely I think that death today will reply to that promise,—
Now I will give thee my answer and warn thee ere we encounter.
Know me queen of a race that never was conquered in battle!
Know me armed with a spear that never has missed in the combat!
There where my car-wheels run, good fruit gets the husbandman after.
This thou knowest. Ajax has told thee, thy friend, in his dying.
Has not Meriones’ spirit come in thy dreams then to warn thee?
Didst thou not number the Argives once ere I came to the battle?
Number them now and measure the warrior Penthesilea.
Such am I then whom thy dreams have seen meek-browed in Larissa,
And in the battle behind me thunder the heroes Eoan,
Ranks whose feeblest can match with the vaunted chiefs of the Argives.
Never yet from the shock have they fled; if they turn from the foeman,
Always ’tis to return like death recircling on mortals.
Yet being such, having such for my armies, this do I promise:
I on the left of the Trojans war with my bright-armed numbers,
Thou on the Argive right come forth, Achilles, and meet me!
If thou canst drive us with rout into Troy, I will own thee for master,
Do thy utmost will and make thee more glorious than gods are
Serving thy couch in Phthia and drawing the jar from thy rivers.
Nay, if thou hast that strength, then hunt me, O hunter, and seize me,
If ’tis thy hope indeed that the sun can turn back from the Orient,
But if thou canst not, death of myself or thyself thou shalt capture.’”
Musing heard and was silent awhile the strength of Achilles,
Musing of Fate and the wills of men and the purpose of Heaven,
Then from his thoughts he broke and turned in his soul towards battle.
“Well did I know what reply would come winged from the princes of Troya.
Prone are the hearts of heroes to wrath and to God-given blindness
When from their will they are thrust and harried by Fate and disaster:
Fierceness then is the armour of strength against grief and its yieldings.
So have the gods made man for their purpose, cunningly fashioned.
Once had defiance waked from my depths a far-striding fury,
Flaming for justice and vengeance, nor had it, satisfied, rested,
Sunk to its lair, till the insulter died torn or was kneeling for pardon.
Fierce was my heart in my youth and exulted in triumph and slaughter.
Now as I grow in my spirit like to my kin the immortals,
Joy more I find in saving and cherishing than in the carnage.
Greater it seems to my mind to be king over men than their slayer,
Nobler to build and to govern than what the ages have laboured
Putting their godhead forth to create or the high gods have fashioned,
That to destroy in our wrath of a moment. Ripened, more widely
Opens my heart to the valour of man and the beauty of woman,
Works of the world and delight; the cup of my victory sweetens
Not with the joys of hate, but the human pride of the triumph.
Yet was the battle decreed for the means supreme of the mortal
Placed in a world where all things strive from the worm to the Titan.
So will I seize by the onset what peace from my soul would sequester,
So will I woo with the sword and with love the delight of my foeman,
Troy and Polyxena, beauty of Paris and glory of Priam.
This was the ancient wrestling, this was the spirit of warfare
Fit for the demigods. Soon in the city of gold and of marble,
There where Ilius sat and Tros, where Laomedon triumphed,
Peleus' house shall reign, the Hellene sit where the Trojan
Thought himself deathless. Arise, Automedon! Out to the people!
Send forth the cry through the ships and the tents of the Myrmidon nation.
Let not a man be found then lingering when o'er the causeway
Thunder my chariot-wheels, nor let any give back in the battle,
Good if he wills from me, till through the conquered gates of the foeman
Storming we herd in their remnants and press into Troy as with evening
Helios rushing sinks to the sea. But thou, Briseis,
Put by thy lyre, O girl; it shall gladden my heart in my triumph
Victor returned from Troy to listen pleased to thy singing,
Bearing a captive bound to my car-wheels Penthesilea,
Bearing my valour's reward, Polyxena, daughter of Priam,
Won in despite of her city and brothers and spears of her kindred.
So by force it is best to take one's will and be mighty.”
Joyful, Automedon ran through the drowsy camp of the Hellenes
Changing the hum of the tents as he raced into shoutings of battle;
For with the giant din of a nation triumphant arising
Hellas sprang from her irksome ease and mounted her war-car;
Donning her armour bright she rejoiced in the trumpets of battle.

But to the herald grey the Peleid turned and the old man
Shuddered under his gaze and shrank from the voice of the hero:
“Thou to the tents of thy Kings, Talthybius, herald of Argos!
Stand in the Argive assembly, voice of the strength of Achilles.
Care not at all though the greatest and fiercest be wroth with thy message.
Deem not thyself, old man, as a body and flesh that is mortal,
Rather as living speech from the iron breast of the Hellene.
Thus shalt thou cry to the vanquished chiefs who fled from a woman,
Thus shalt thou speak my will to the brittle and fugitive legions:
‘Now Achilles turns towards Troya and fast-flowing Xanthus,
Now he leaps at the iron zone, the impregnable city.
Two were the forms of the Gods that o'erhung the sails of Pelides
When with a doubtful word in his soul he came wind-helped from Hellas
Cleaving the Aegean deep towards the pine-crested vision of Ida.
Two are the Fates that stride with the hero counting his exploits.
Over all earthly things the soul that is fearless is master,
Only on death he can reckon not whether it comes in the midnight
Treading the couch of Kings in their pride or speeds in the spear-shaft.
Now will I weigh down that double beam of the Olympian balance
Claiming one of the equal Fates that stand robed for the fighter,
For to my last dire wrestle I go with the Archer of heaven,
And ere the morning gleam have awakened the eagles on Ida,
Troy shall lie prone or the earth shall be empty of Phthian Achilles.
But for whatever Fate I accept from the ageless Immortals,
Whether cold Hades dim or Indus waits for my coming
Pouring down vast to the sea with the noise of his numberless waters,
I with Zeus am enough. Your mortal aid I desire not,
Rushing to Troy like the eagle of Zeus when he flies towards the thunders,—
Winged with might, the bird of the spaces, upbuoying his pinions.
Nor shall my spirit look back for the surge of your Danaan fighters,
Tramp of the Argive multitudes helping my lonely courage,
Neither the transient swell of the cry Achaian behind me
Seek, nor the far-speeding voice of Atrides guiding his legions.
Need has he none for a leader who himself is the soul of his action.
Zeus and his fate and his spear are enough for the Phthian Achilles.
Rest, O wearied hosts; my arm shall win for you Troya,
Quelled when the stern Eoans break and Penthesilea
Lies like a flower in the dust at my feet. Yet if Ares desire you,
Come then and meet him once more mid the cry and the trampling! Assemble
Round the accustomed chiefs, round the old victorious wrestlers
Wearied strengths Deiphobus leaves you or sternest Aeneas.
But when my arm and my Fate have vanquished their gods and Apollo,
Brilliant with blood when we stand amid Ilion’s marble splendours,
Then let none seat deaf flame on the glory of Phrygia’s marbles
Or with his barbarous rapine shatter the chambers of sweetness
Slaying the work of the gods and the beauty the ages have lived for.
For he shall moan in the night remote from the earth and her greenness,
Spurred like a steed to its goal by my spear dug deep in his bosom;
Fast he shall fleet to the waters of wailing, the pleasureless pastures.
Touch not the city Apollo built, where Poseidon has laboured.
Seized and dishelmed and disgirdled of Apollonian ramparts,
Empty of wide-rolling wheels and the tramp of a turbulent people
Troy with her marble domes shall live for our nations in beauty
Hushed mid the trees and the corn and the pictured halls of the ancients,
Watching her image of dreams in the gliding waves of Scamander,
Sacred and still, a city of memory spared by the Grecians.’
So shalt thou warn the arrogant hearts of Achaia’s chieftains
Lest upon Greece an evil should fall and her princes should perish.
Herald, beware how thou soften my speech in the ears of thy nation
Sparing their pride and their hearts but dooming their lives to the
death-stroke.
Even thy time-touched snows shall not shield thy days from my sword-edge.”
Wroth the old man’s heart, but he feared Achilles and slowly
Over the margin grey on the shore of the far-sounding ocean
Silent paced to the tents of the Greeks and the Argive assembly.
There on the sands while the scream of the tide as it dragged at the pebbles
Strove in vain with their droning roar, awaiting their chieftains
Each in his tribe and his people far down the margin Aegean
Argolis’ sons and Epirote spears and the isles and the southron,
Locris’ swarms and Messene’s pikes and the strength of the Theban,
Hosts bright-armed, bright-eyed, bright-haired, time-hardened to Ares,
Stretched in harsh and brilliant lines with a glitter of spear-points
Far as the eye could toil. All Europe helmeted, armoured
Swarmed upon Asia’s coasts disgorged from her ships in their hundreds.
There in the wide-winged tent of the council that peered o’er the margin,
High where the grass and the meadow-bloom failed on the sand-riifted
sward-edge,

Pouring his argent voice Epeus spoke to the princes,
Rapid in battle and speech; and even as a boy in a courtyard
Tosses his ball in the air and changes his hands for the seizing
So he played with counsel and thought and rejoiced in his swiftness.
But now a nearing Fate he felt and his impulse was silenced.
Stilled were his thoughts by the message that speeds twixt our minds in
their shadows
Dumb, unthought, unphrased, to us dark, but the caverns of Nature
Hear its cry when God’s moment changing our fate comes visored
Silently into our lives and the spirit too knows, for it watches.
Quiet he fell and all men turned to the face of the herald.
Mute and alone through the ranks of the seated and silent princes
Old Talthybius paced, nor paused till he stood at the midmost
Fronting that council of Kings and nearest to Locrian Ajax
And where Sthenelus sat and where sat the great Diomedes,
Chiefs of the South, but their love was small for the Kings of the Spartans.
There like one close to a refuge he lifted his high-chanting accents.
High was his voice like the wind’s when it whistles shrill o’er a forest
Sole of all sounds at night, for the kite is at rest and the tiger
Sleeps from the hunt returned in the deepest hush of the jungle.
“Hearken, O Kings of the world, to the lonely will of the Phthian!
One is the roar of the lion heard by the jungle’s hundreds,
One is the voice of the great and the many shall hear it inclining.
Lo, he has shaken his mane for the last great leap upon Troya
And when the eagle’s scream shall arise in the dawn over Ida,
Troy shall have fallen or earth shall be empty of Phthian Achilles.
But by whatever Fate he is claimed that waits for the mortal,
Whether the fast-closed hands above have kept for his morrows
Chill of the joyless shades or earth and her wooings of sunlight
Still shall detain his days with the doubtful meed of our virtues,
He and Zeus shall provide, not mortals. Chaff are men’s armies
Threshed by the flails of Fate; 'tis the soul of the hero that conquers.
Not on the tramp of the multitudes, not on the cry of the legions
Founds the strong man his strength but the god that he carries within him.
Zeus and his Fate and his spear are enough for the Phthian Achilles.
Prudence of men shall curb no more his god-given impulse.
He has no need of thy voice, O Atrides, guiding the legions,
He is the leader, his is the soul of magnificent emprise.
Rest, O ye sons of the Greeks, the Phthian shall conquer for Hellas!
Rest! expose not your hearts to the war-cry of Penthesilea.
Yet if the strength in you thirsts for the war-din, if Ares is hungry,
Meet him stark in the mellay urging Deiphobus’ courser,
Guiding Aeneas’ spear; recover the souls of your fathers.
Bronze must his heart be who looks in the eyes of the implacable war-god!
But when his Fate has conquered their gods and slaughtered their heroes,
And in this marble Ilion forced to the tread of her foemen
Watched by the ancient domes you stand, by the timeless turrets,
Then let no chieftain garbed for the sacrifice lift against Troya,
Counselled of Ate, torch of the burning, hand of the plunder
Groping for gold but finding death in her opulent chambers.
For he shall moan in the night regretting the earth and her greenness,
Spurred by the spear in his arrogant breast like a steed to the gorges:
Fast he shall fleet to the flowerless meadows, the sorrowful pastures.
Touch not the city Apollo built, where Poseidon has laboured,
Slay not the work of the gods and the glory the ages have lived for.
Mute of the voice of her children, void of the roll of her war-cars
Timeless Troy leave solitary dreaming by ancient Scamander
Sacred and still, a city of memory spared by the Phthian.”
So Talthybius spoke and anger silenced the Argives.
Mute was the warlike assembly, silent Achaia’s princes.
Wrath and counsel strove in the hush for the voice of the speakers.
BOOK VI

The Book of the Chieftains

Then as from common hills great Pelion rises to heaven
So from the throng uprearing a brow that no crown could ennoble,
Male and kingly of front like a lion conscious of puissance
Rose a form august, the monarch great Agamemnon.
Wroth he rose yet throwing a rein on the voice of his passion,
Governing the beast and the demon within by the god who is mighty.
“Happy thy life and my fame that thou com’st with the aegis of heaven
Shadowing thy hoary brows, thou herald of pride and of insult.
Well is it too for his days who sent thee that other and nobler
Heaven made my heart than his who insults and a voice of the immortals
Cries to my soul forbidding its passions. O hardness of virtue,
Thus to be seized and controlled as in fetters by Zeus and Athene.
Free is the peasant to smite in the pastures the mouth that has wronged him,
Chained in his soul is Atrides. Bound by their debt to the fathers,
Curbed by the god in them painfully move the lives of the noble,
Forced to obey the eye that watches within in their bosoms.
Ever since Zeus Cronion turned in our will towards the waters,
Scourged by the heavens in my dearest, wronged by men and their clamours,
Griefs untold I have borne in Argos and Aulis and Troas,
Yoked to this sacred toil of the Greeks for their children and country,
Bound by the gods to a task that is heavy, a load that is bitter.
Seeing the faces of foes in the mask of friends I was silent.
Hateful I hold him who sworn to a cause that is holy and common
Broods upon private wrongs or serving his lonely ambition
Studies to reap his gain from the labour and woe of his fellows.
Mire is the man who hears not the gods when they cry to his bosom.
Grief and wrath I coerced nor carried my heart to its record
All that has hurt its chords and wounded the wings of my spirit.
Nobler must kings be than natures of earth on whom Zeus lays no burden.
Other is Peleus’ son than the race of his Aeacid fathers,
Nor like his sire of the wise-still heart far-sighted and patient
Bearing the awful rein of the gods, but hastes to his longings,
Dire in his wrath and pursued by the band of his giant ambitions.
Measure and virtue forsake him as Ate grows in his bosom.
Yet not for tyrant wrong nor to serve as a sword for our passions
Zeus created our strength, but that earth might have help from her children.
Not of our moulding its gifts to our soul nor were formed by our labour!
When did we make them, where were they forged, in what workshop or
furnace?

Found in what aeon of Time, that pride should bewilder the mortal?
Bowed to our will are the folk and our prowess dreadful and godlike?
Shadows are these of the gods which the deep heavens cast on our spirits.
Transient, we made not ourselves, but at birth from the first we were
fashioned

Valiant or fearful and as was our birth by the gods and their thinkings
Formed, so already enacted and fixed by their wills are our fortunes.
What were the strength of Atrides and what were the craft of Odysseus
Save for their triumphing gods? They would fail and be helpless as infants.
Stronger a woman, wiser a child were favoured by Heaven.
Ceased not Sarpedon slain who was son of Zeus and unconquered?
Not to Achilles he fell, but Fate and the gods were his slayers.
Kings, to the arrogant shaft that was launched, the unbearable insult,
Armoured wisdoms oppose, let not Ate seize on your passions.
Be not as common souls, O you who are Greece and her fortunes,
Nor of your spirits of wrath take counsel but of Athene.
Merit the burden laid by Zeus, his demand from your natures
Suffer, O hearts of his seed, O souls who are chosen and mighty,
All forgetting but Greece and her good; resolve what is noble.
I will not speak nor advise, for ’tis known we are rivals and foemen.”

Calmed by his words and his will he sat down mighty and kinglike;
But Menelaus arose, the Spartan, the husband of Helen,
Atreus’ younger son from a lesser womb, in his brilliance
Dwarfed by the other’s port, yet tall was he, gracile and splendid,
As if a panther might hunt by a lion’s side in the forest.
Smiting his thigh with his firm-clenched hand he spoke mid the Argives:
“Woe to me, shameless, born to my country a cause of affliction,
Since for my sake all wrongs must be borne and all shames be encountered;
And for my sake you have spun through the years down the grooves of
disaster

Bearing the shocks of the Trojans and ravaged by Zeus and by Hector,
Slaughtered by Rhesus and Memnon, Sarpedon and Penthesilea;
Or by the Archer pierced, the hostile dreadful Apollo,
Evilly end the days of the Greeks remote from their kindred —
Slain on an alien soil by Asian Xanthus and Ida.
Doomed to the pyre we have toiled for a woman ungracious who left us
Passing serenely my portals to joy in the chambers of Troya.
Here let it cease, O my brother! how much wilt thou bear for this graceless
Child of thy sire, cause still of thy griefs and never of blessing?
Easily Zeus afflicts who trouble their hearts for a woman;
But in our ships that sailed close-fraught with this dolorous Ate
Worse was the bane they bore which King Peleus begot on white Thetis.
Evil ever was sown by the embrace of the gods with a mortal!
Alien a portent is born and a breaker of men and their labours,
One who afflicts with his light or his force mortality’s weakness
Stripping for falsehoods their verities, shaking the walls they erected.
Hostile all things the scourge divine overbears or, if helpful,
Neither without him his fellows can prosper, nor will his spirit
Fit in the frame of things earthly but shatters their rhythm and order
Rending the measures just that the wise have decreed for our growing.
So have our mortal plannings broken on this fateful Achilles
And with our blood and our anguish Heaven has fostered his greatness.
It is enough; let the dire gods choose between Greece and their offspring.
Even as he bids us, aloof let our hosts twixt the ships and the Xanthus
Stand from the shock and the cry where Hellene meets with Eoan,
Troy and Phthia locked, Achilles and Penthesilea,
Nor any more than watchers care who line an arena;
Calm like the impartial gods, approve the bravest and swiftest.
Sole let him fight! The fates shall preserve him he vaunts of or gather,
Even as death shall gather us all for memory’s clusters,
All in their day who were great or were little, heroes or cowards.
So shall he slay or be slain, a boon to mankind and his country.
Since if he mow down this flower of bale, this sickle by Hades
Whirled if he break, — for the high gods ride on the hiss of his spear-shaft, —
Ours is the gain who shall break rejoicing through obdurate portals
Praising Pallas alone and Hera daughter of Heaven.
But if he sink in this last of his fights, as they say it is fated, —
Nor do I deem that the man has been born in Asia or Hellas
Who in the dreadful field can prevail against Penthesilea, —
If to their tents the Myrmidons fleeing cumber the meadows
Slain by a girl in her speed and leaving the corpse of their leader,
Ours is the gain, we are rid of a shame and a hate and a danger.
True is it, Troy shall exultant live on in the shadow of Ida,
Yet shall our hearts be light because earth is void of Achilles.
And for the rest of the infinite loss, what we hoped, what we suffered,
Let it all go, let the salt floods swallow it, fate and oblivion
Bury it out in the night; let us sail o’er the waves to our country
Leaving Helen in Troy since the gods are the friends of transgressors.”
So Menelaus in anger and grief miscounselfled the Argives.

Great Idomeneus next, the haughty king of the Cretans,
Raised his brow of pride in the lofty Argive assembly.
Tall like a pine that stands up on the slope of Thessalian mountains
Overpeering a cascade’s edge and is seen from the valleys,
Such he seemed to their eyes who remembered Greece and her waters,
Heard in their souls the torrent’s leap and the wind on the hill-tops.
“Oft have I marvelled, O Greeks, to behold in this levy of heroes
Armies so many, chieftains so warlike suffer in silence
Pride of a single man when he thunders and lightens in Troas.
Doubtless the nations that follow his cry are many and valiant,
Doubtless the winds of the north have made him a runner and spearman.
Shall not then force be the King? is not strength the seal of the Godhead?
This my soul replies, ‘Agamemnon the Atreid only
Choosing for leader and king I have come to the toil and the warfare.
Wisdom and greatness he owns and the wealth and renown of his fathers.’
But for this whelp of the northlands, nursling of rocks and the sea-cliff
Who with his bleak and rough-hewn Myrmidons hastes to the carnage,
Leader of wolves to their prey, not the king of a humanised nation,
Not to such head of the cold-drifting mist and the gloom-vigilled Chaos,
Crude to our culture and light and void of our noble fulfilsments
Minos shall bend his knee nor Crete, a barbarian’s vassal,
Stain her old glories. Oh, but he boasts of a goddess for mother
Born in the senseless seas mid the erring wastes of the Ocean,
White and swift and foam-footed, vast Oceanus’ daughter.
Gods we adore enough in the heavens, and if from us Hades
Claim one more of this breed, we can bear that excess of his glories,
Not upon earth these new-born deities huge-passioned, sateless
Who with their mouth as of Orcus and stride of the ruinous Ocean
Sole would be seen mid her sons and devour all life’s joy and its greatness.
Millions must empty their lives that a man may o’ershadow the nations,
Numberless homes must weep, but his hunger of glory is sated!
Troy shall descend to the shadow; gods and men have condemned her,
Weary, hating her fame. Her dreams, her grandeur, her beauty,
All her greatness and deeds that now end in miserable ashes,
Ceasing shall fade and be as a tale that was forged by the poets.
Only a name shall go down from her past and the woe of her ending
Naked to hatred and rapine and punished with rape and with slaughter.
Never again must marble pride high-domed on her hill-top
Look forth dominion and menace over the crested Aegean
Shadowing Achaia. Fire shall abolish the fame of her ramparts,
Earth her foundations forget. Shall she stand affronting the azure?
Dire in our path like a lioness once again must we meet her,
Leap and roar of her led by the spear of Achilles, not Hector?
Asia by Peleus guided shall stride on us after Antenor?
Though one should plan in the night of his thoughts where no eye can
pursue him,
Instincts of men discover their foe and like hounds in the darkness
Bay at a danger hid. No silence of servitude trembling
Trains to bondage sons of the race of whom Aeolus father
Storm-voiced was and free, nor like other groupings of mortals
Moulded we were by Zeus, but supremely were sifted and fashioned.
Other are Danaus’ sons and other the lofty Achaians:
Chainless like Nature’s tribes in their many-voiced colonies founded
They their god-given impulse shall keep and their natures of freedom.
Only themselves shall rule them, only their equal spirits
Bowed to the voice of a law that is just, obeying their leaders,
Awed by the gods. So with order and balance and harmony noble
Life shall move golden, free in its steps and just in its measure,
Glad of a manhood complete, by excess and defect untormented.
Freedom is life to the Argive soul, to Aeolia’s peoples.
Dulled by a yoke our nations would perish, or live but as shadows,
Changed into phantoms of men with the name of a Greek for a byword.
Not like the East and her sons is our race, they who bow to a mortal.
Gods there may be in this flesh that suffers and dies; Achaia
Knows them not. Need if he feels of a world to endure and adore him, 
Hearts let him seek that are friends with the dust, overpowered by their heavens,

Here in these Asian vastnesses, here where the heats and the perfumes 
Sicken the soul and the sense and a soil of indolent plenty 
Breed like the corn in its multitudes natures accustomed to thraldom. 
Here let the northern Achilles seek for his slaves and adorers, 
Not in the sea-ringed isles and not in the mountains Achaian. 
Ten long years of the shock and the war-cry twixt rampart and ocean 
Hurting our hearts we have toiled; shall they reap not their ease in the vengeance?

Troas is sown with the lives of our friends and with ashes remembered; 
Shall not Meriones slain be reckoned in blood and in treasure? 
Cretan Idomeneus girt with the strength of his iron retainers 
Slaying and burning will stride through the city of music and pleasure, 
Babes of her blood borne high on the spears at the head of my column, 
Wives of her princes dragged through her streets in its pomp to their passion, 
Gold of Troy stream richly past in the gaze of Achilles. 
Then let him threaten my days, then rally the might of his triumphs, 
Yet shall a Cretan spear make search in his heart for his godhead. 
Limbs of this god can be pierced; not alone shall I fleet down to Hades.”

After him rose from the throng the Locrian, swift-footed Ajax.
“Kings of the Greeks, throw a veil on your griefs, lay a curb on your anger. 
Moved man’s tongue in its wrath looses speech that is hard to be pardoned, 
Afterwards stilled we regret, we forgive. If all were resented, 
None could live on this earth that is thick with our stumblings. Always 
This is the burden of man that he acts from his heart and his passions, 
Stung by the goads of the gods he hews at the ties that are dearest. 
Lust was the guide they sent us, wrath was a whip for his coursers, 
Madness they made the heart’s comrade, repentance they gave for its scourger. 

This too our hearts demand that we bear with our friend when he chides us. 
Insult forgive from the noble embittered soul of Achilles! 
When with the scorn and the wrath of a lover our depths are tormented, 
Who shall forbid the cry and who shall measure the anguish? 
Sharper the pain that looses the taunt than theirs who endure it. 
Rage has wept in my blood as I lived through the flight o’er the pastures,
Shame coils a snake in my back when thought whispers of Penthesilea. 
Bright shine his morns if he mows down this hell-bitch armed by the Furies! 
But for this shaft of his pity it came from a lesser Pelides, 
Not from the slayer of Hector, not from the doom of Sarpedon, 
Memnon’s mighty o’erthrower, the blood-stained splendid Achilles. 
These are the Trojan snares and the fateful smile of a woman! 
This thing the soul of a man shall not bear that blood of his labour 
Vainly has brought him victory leaving life to the hated; 
This is a wound to our race that a Greek should whisper of mercy. 
Who can pardon a foe though a god should descend to persuade him? 
Justice is first of the gods, but for Pity ’twas spawned by a mortal, 
Pity that only disturbs God’s measures and false and unrighteous 
Holds man back from the joy he might win and troubles his bosom. 
Troy has a debt to our hearts; she shall pay it all down to the obol, 
Blood of the fall and anguish of flight when the heroes are slaughtered, 
Days without joy while we labour and see not the eyes of our parents, 
Toil of the war-cry, nights that drag past upon alien beaches, 
Helen ravished, Paris triumphant, endless the items 
Crowd on a wrath in the memory, kept as in bronze the credit 
Stretches out long and blood-stained and savage. Most for the terror 
Graved in the hearts of our fathers that still by our youth is remembered, 
Hellas waiting and crouching, dreading the spear of the Trojan, 
Flattering, sending gifts and pale in her mortal anguish, 
Agony long of a race at the mercy of iron invaders, 
This she shall pay most, the city of pride, the insolent nation, 
Pay with her temples charred and her golden mansions in ruins, 
Pay with the shrieks of her ravished virgins, the groans of the aged 
Burned in their burning homes for our holiday. Music and dancing 
Shall be in Troy of another sort than she loved in her greatness 
Merry with conquered gold and insulting the world with her flutings. 
All that she boasted of, statue and picture, all shall be shattered; 
Out of our shame she chiselled them, rich with our blood they were coloured. 
This not the gods from Olympus crowding, this not Achilles, 
This not your will, O ye Greeks, shall deny to the Locrian Ajax. 
Even though Pallas divine with her aegis counselling mercy 
Cumbered my path, I would push her aside to leap on my victims. 
Learn shall all men on that day how a warrior deals with his foemen.”
Darting flames from his eyes the barbarian sat, and there rose up
Frowning Tydeus’ son, the Tirynthian, strong Diomedes.
“Ajax Oileus, thy words are foam on the lips of a madman.
Cretan Idomeneus, silence the vaunt that thy strength can fulfil not.
Strong art thou, fearless in battle, but not by thy spear-point, O hero,
Hector fell, nor Sarpedon, nor Troilus leading the war-cry.
These were Achilles’ deeds which a god might have done out of heaven.
Him we upbraid who saved, nor would any now who revile him
Still have a living tongue for ingratitude but for the hero.
Much to the man forgive who has saved his race and his country:
Him shall the termless centuries praise when we are forgotten.
Curb then your speech, crush down in your hearts the grief and the choler;
Has not Atrides curbed who is greatest of all in our nations
Wrath in the heart and the words that are winged for our bale from our
bosoms?

For as a load to be borne were these passions given to mortals.
Honour Achilles, conquer Troy by his god-given valour.
Now of our discords and griefs debate not for joy of our foemen!
First over Priam's corpse stand victors in Ilion's ramparts;
Discord then let arise or concord solder our nations.”
Rugged words and few as fit for the soul that he harboured
Great Tydides spoke and ceased; and there rose up impatient
Tall from the spears of the north the hero king Prothoênor,
Prince in Cadmeian Thebes who with Leitus led on his thousands.

“Loudly thou vauntest thy freedom Ionian Minos recalling,
Lord of thy southern isles who gildst with tribute Mycenae.
We have not bowed our neck to Pelops’ line, at Argos’
Iron heel have not crouched, nor clasped like thy time-wearied nations,
Python-befriended, gripped in the coils of an iron protection,
Bondage soothed by a name and destruction masked as a helper.
We are the young and lofty and free-souled sons of the Northland.
Nobly Peleus, the Aeacid, seer of a vaster Achaia,
Pride of his strength and his deeds renouncing for joy of that vision,
Yielded his hoary right to the sapling stock of Atrides.
Noble, we gave to that nobleness freely our grandiose approval.
Not as a foe then, O King, who angered sharpens his arrows,
Fits his wrath and hate to the bow and aims at the heart-strings.
But from the Truth that is seated within me compelling my accents,
Taught by my fathers stern not to lie nor to hide what I harbour,
Truth the goddess I speak, nor constrain the voice in my bosom.
Monarch, I own thee first of the Greeks save in valour and counsel,
Brave, but less than Achilles, wise, but not as Odysseus,
First still in greatness and calm and majesty. Yet, Agamemnon,
Love of thy house and thy tribe disfigures the king in thy nature;
Thou thy brother preferrest, thy friends and thy nations unjustly,
Even as a common man whose heart is untaught by Athene,
Beastlike favours his brood forgetting the law of the noble.
Therefore Ajax grew wroth and Teucer sailing abandoned
Over the angry seas this fierce-locked toil of the nations;
Therefore Achilles has turned in his soul and gazed towards the Orient.
Yet are we fixed in our truth like hills in heaven, Atrides;
Greece and her safety and good our passions strive to remember.
Not of this stamp was thy brother's speech; such words Lacedaemon
Hearing may praise in her kings; we speak not in Thebes what is shameful.
Shamefuller thoughts have never escaped from lips that were high-born.
We will not send forth earth's greatest to die in a friendless battle,
Nor will forsake the daughter of Zeus and white glory of Hellas,
Helen the golden-haired Tyndarid, left for the joy of our foemen,
Chained to Paris' delight, earth's goddess the slave of the Phrygian,
Though Menelaus the Spartan abandon his wife to the Trojans
And from the field where he lavished the unvalued blood of his people
Flee to a hearth dishonoured. Not the Atreid's sullied grandeurs,
Greece to defend we have toiled through the summers and lingering autumns
Blind with our blood; for our country we bleed repelling her foemen.
Dear is that loss to our veins and still that expense we would lavish
Claiming its price from the heavens, though thou sail with thy brother and
cohorts.

Weakling, flee! take thy southern ships, take thy Spartan levies.
Still will the Greeks fight on in the Troad helped by thy absence.
For though the beaches vast grow empty, the tents can be numbered
Standing friendless and few on the huge and hostile champaign,
Always a few will be left whom the threatenings of Fate cannot conquer,
Always souls are born whose courage waits not on fortune;
Hellas' heart will be firm confronting the threat of the victor,
Sthenelus war and Tydides, Odysseus and Locrian Ajax,
Thebes’ unconquered sons and the hero chiefs of the northland.
Stern and persistent as Time or the seas and as deaf to affliction
We will clash on in the fight unsatisfied, fain of the war-cry,
Helped by the gods and our cause through the dawns and the 

Rising in armour with morn and outstaying the red of the sunset,
Till in her ashes Troy forgets that she lusted for empire
Or in our own the honour and valour of Greece are extinguished.”
So Prothoênor spoke nor pleased with his words Agamemnon;
But to the northern kings they were summer rain on the visage.

Last Laertes’ son, the Ithacan, war-wise Odysseus,
Rose up wide-acclaimed; like an oak was he stunted in stature,
Broad-shouldered, firm-necked, lone and sufficient, as on some island
Regnant one peak whose genial streams flow down to the valley,
Dusk on its slopes are the olives, the storms butt in vain at its shoulders,—
Such he stood and pressed the earth with his feet like one vanquished,
Striving, but held to his will. So Atlas might seem were he mortal,
Atlas whose vastness free from impatience suffers the heavens,
Suffering spares the earth, the thought-haunted motionless Titan,
Bearer of worlds. In those jarring tribes no man was his hater;
For as the Master of all guides humanity, so this Odysseus
Dealt with men and helped and guided them, careful and selfless,
Crafty, tender and wise,— like the Master who bends o’er His creatures,
Suffers their sins and their errors and guides them screening the guidance;
Each through his nature He leads and the world by the lure of His wisdom.

“Princes of Argolis, chiefs of the Locrians, spears of the northland,
Warriors vowed to a sacred hate and a vengeance that’s holy,
Sateless still is that hate, that vengeance cries for its victims,
Still is the altar unladen, the priest yet waits with the death-knife.
Who while the rites are unfinished, the god unsatisfied, impious
Turns in his heart to the feuds of his house and his strife with his equals?
None will approve the evil that fell from the younger Atrides;
But it was anger and sorrow that spoke, it was not Menelaus.
Who would return from Troy and arrive with his war-wasted legions
Back to his home in populous city or orcharded island;
There from his ships disembarked look round upon eyes that grow joyless
Seeking a father or husband slain, a brother heart-treasured,
Mothers in tears for their children, and when he is asked, ‘O our chieftain,
What dost thou bring back in place of our dead to fill hearts that are empty?’
Who then will say, ‘I bring back my shame and the shame of my nation;
Troy yet stands confronting her skies and Helen in Troya’?
Not for such foil will I go back to Ithaca or to Laertes,
Rather far would I sail in my ships past southern Cythera,
Turning away in silence from waters where on some headland
Gazing south o’er the waves my father waits for my coming,
Leaving Sicily’s shores and on through the pillars of Gades.
Far I would sail whence sound of me never should come to Achaia
Out into tossing worlds and weltering reaches of tempest
Dwarving the swell of the wide-wayed Aegean, — Oceans unbounded
Either by cliff or by sandy margin, only the heavens
Ever receding before my keel as it ploughs on for ever
Frail and alone in a world of waves. Even there would I venture
Seeking some island unknown, not return with shame to my fathers.
Well might they wonder how souls like theirs begot us for their offspring.
Fighters war-afflicted, champions banded by heaven,
Wounds and defeat you have borne; bear too their errors who lead you.
Mortals are kings and have hearts; our leaders too have their passions.
Then if they err, yet still obey lest anarchy fostered,
Discord and deaf rebellion that speed like a poison through kingdoms,
Break all this army in pieces while Ate mocking at mortals
Trails to a shameful end this lofty essay of the nations.
Who among men has not thoughts that he holds for the wisest, though foolish?
Who, though feeble and nought, esteems not his strength o’er his fellow’s?
Therefore the wisest and strongest choose out a king and a leader,
Not as a perfect arbiter armed with impossible virtues
Far o’er our heads and our ken like a god high-judging his creatures,
But as a man among men who is valiant, wise and far-seeing,
One of ourselves and the knot of our wills and the sword of our action.
Him they advise and obey and cover his errors with silence.
Not Agamemnon the Atreid, Greeks, we obey in this mortal;
Greece we obey; for she walks in his gait and commands by his gestures.
Evil he works then who loosens this living knot of Achaia;
Falling apart from his nation who, wed to a solitary virtue,
Deeming he does but right, renounces the yoke of his fellows,
Errs more than hearts of the mire that in blindness and weakness go
stumbling.

Man when he spurns his kind, when he equals himself with the deathless,
Even in his virtues sins and, erring, calls up Ate:
For among men we were born, not as wild-beasts sole in a fastness.
Oft with a name are misled the passionate hearts of the noble;
Chasing highly some image of good they trample its substance.
Evil is worked, not justice, when into the mould of our thinking
God we would force and enchain to the throb of our hearts the immortals,—
Justice and Virtue, her sister,— for where is justice mid creatures
Perfectly? Even the gods are betrayed by our clay to a semblance.
Evil not good he sows who lifted too high for his fellows,
Dreams by his light or his force to compel this deity earth-born,
Evil though his wisdom exceeded the gathered light of the millions,
Evil though his single fate were vaster than Troy and Achaia.
Less is our gain from gods upon earth than from men in our image;
Just is the slow and common march, not a lonely swiftness
Far from our human reach that is vowed to impossible strivings.
Better the stumbling leader of men than inimitable paces.
If he be Peleus’ son and his name the Phthian Achilles,
Worse is the bane: lo, the Ilian battlefield strewn with his errors!
Yet, O ye Greeks, if the heart returns that was loved, though it wandered,
Though with some pride it return and reproaching the friends that it fled
from,

Be not less fond than heart-satisfied parents who yearn o’er that coming,
Smile at its pride and accept the wanderer. Happier music
Never has beat on my grief-vexed ears than the steps of Achilles
Turning back to this Greece and the cry of his strength in its rising.
Zeus is awake in this man who his dreadful world-slaying puissance
Gave in an hour of portentous birth to the single Achilles.
Taken today are Ilion’s towers, a dead man is Priam.
Cross not the hero’s will in his hour, Agamemnon Atrides,
Cross not the man whom the gods have chosen to work out their purpose
Then when he rises; his hour is his, though thine be all morrows.
First in the chambers of Paris’ delight let us stable our horses,
Afterwards bale that is best shall be done persuading Achilles;  
Doubt not the gods’ decisions, awful, immutable, ruthless.  
Flame shall lick Troy’s towers and the limbs of her old men and infants.  
O not today nor now remember the faults of the hero!  
Follow him rather bravely and blindly as children their leader,  
Guide your fate through the war-surge loud in the wake of his exploits.  
Rise, O ye kings of the Greeks! leave debate for the voices of battle.  
Peal forth the war-shout, pour forth the spear-sleet, surge towards Troya.  
Ilion falls today; we shall turn in our ships to our children.”  
So Odysseus spoke and the Achaians heard him applauding;  
Ever the pack by the voice of the mighty is seized and attracted!  
Then from his seat Agamemnon arising his staff to the herald  
Gave and around him arose the Kings of the west and its leaders,  
Loud their assembly broke with a stern and martial rumour.
BOOK VII

The Book of the Woman

So to the voice of their best they were bowed and obeyed undebating;
Men whose hearts were burning yet with implacable passion
Felt Odysseus' strength and rose up clay to his counsels.
King Agamemnon rose at his word, the wide-ruling monarch,
Rose at his word the Cretan and Locrian, Thebes and Epirus,
Nestor rose, the time-tired hoary chief of the Pylians.
Round Agamemnon the Atreid Europe surged in her chieftains
Forth from their tent on the shores of the Troad, splendid in armour,
Into the golden blaze of the sun and the race of the sea-winds.
Fierce and clear like a flame to the death-gods bright on its altar
Shone in their eyes the lust of blood and of earth and of pillage;
For in their hearts those fires replaced the passions of discord
Forging a brittle peace by a common hatred and yearning.
Joyous they were of mood; for their hopes were already in Troya
Sating with massacre, plunder and rape and the groans of their foemen
Death and Hell in our mortal bosoms seated and shrouded;
There they have altars and seats, in mankind, in this fair-built temple,
Made for purer gods; but we turn from their luminous temptings;
Vainly the divine whispers seek us; the heights are rejected.
Man to his earth drawn always prefers his nethermost promptings,
Man, devouring, devoured who is slayer and slain through the ages
Since by the beast he soars held and exceeds not that pedestal's measure.
They now followed close on the steps of the mighty Atrides
Glued like the forest pack to the war-scarred coat of its leader,
Glued as the pack when wolves follow their prey like Doom that can turn not.
Perfect forms and beautiful faces crowded the tent-door,
Brilliant eyes and fierce of souls that remembered the forest,
Wild-beasts touched by thought and savages lusting for beauty.
Dire and fierce and formidable chieftains followed Atrides,
Merciless kings of merciless men and the founders of Europe,
Sackers of Troy and sires of the Parthenon, Athens and Caesar.
Here they had come to destroy the ancient perishing cultures;
For, it is said, from the savage we rose and were born to a wild-beast.
So when the Eye supreme perceives that we rise up too swiftly,
Drawn towards height but fullness contemning, called by the azure,
Life when we fail in, poor in our base and forgetting our mother,
Back we are hurled to our roots; we recover our sap from the savage.
So were these sent by Zeus to destroy the old that was grandiose.
Such were those frames of old as the sons of Heaven might have chosen
Who in the dawn of eternity wedded the daughters of Nature,
Cultures touched by the morning star, vast, bold and poetic,
Titans’ works and joys, but thrust down from their puissance and pleasure
Fainting now fell from the paces of Time or were left by his ages.
So were these born from Zeus to found the new that should flower
Lucid and slender and perfectly little as fit for this mortal
Ever who sinks back fatigued from immortality’s stature;
Man, repelled by the gulfs within him and shrinking from vastness,
Form of the earth accepts and is glad of the lap of his mother.
Safe through the infinite seas could his soul self-piloted voyage,
Chasing the dawns and the wondrous horizons, eternity’s secrets
Drawn from her luminous gulfs! But he journeys rudderless, helmless,
Driven and led by the breath of God who meets him with tempest,
Hurls at him Night. The earth is safer, warmer its sunbeams;
Death and limits are known; so he clings to them hating the summons.
So might one dwell who has come to take joy in a fair-lighted prison;
Amorous grown of its marble walls and its noble adornments,
Lost to mightier cares and the spaces boundlessly calling
Lust of the infinite skies he forgets and the kiss of the stormwind.
So might one live who inured to his days of the field and the farm-yard
Shrinks from the grandiose mountain-tops; shut up in lanes and in hedges
Only his furrows he leads and only orders his gardens,
Only his fleeces weaves and drinks of the yield of his vine-rows:
Lost to his ear is the song of the waterfall, wind in the forests.
Now to our earth we are bent and we study the skies for its image.
That was Greece and its shining, that now is France and its keenness,
That still is Europe though by the Christ-touch troubled and tortured,
Seized by the East but clasping her chains and resisting our freedom.
Then was all founded, on Phrygia’s coasts, round Ilion’s ramparts,
Then by the spear of Achilles, then in the Trojan death-cry;
Bearers mute of a future world were those armoured Achaians.
So they arrived from Zeus, an army led by the death-god.
So one can see them still who has sight from the gods in the trance-sleep
Out from the tent emerging on Phrygia’s coasts in their armour;
Those of the early seed Pelasgian slighter in stature,
Dark-haired, hyacinth-curled from the isles of the sea and the southron,
Soft-eyed men with pitiless hearts; bright-haired the Achaians,
Hordes of the Arctic Dawn who had fled from the ice and the death-blast;
Children of conquerors lured to the coasts and the breezes and olives,
Noons of Mediterranean suns and the kiss of the southwind
Mingled their brilliant force with the plastic warmth of the Hamite.
There they shall rule and their children long till Fate and the Dorian
Break down Hellene doors and trample stern through the passes.
Mixed in a glittering rout on the Ocean beaches one sees them,
Perfect and beautiful figures and fronts, not as now are we mortals
Marred and crushed by our burden long of thought and of labour;
Perfect were these as our race bright-imaged was first by the Thinker
Seen who in golden lustres shapes all the glories we tarnish,
Rich from the moulds of Gods and unmarred in their splendour and
swiftness.

Many and mighty they came over the beaches loud of the Aegean,
Roots of an infant world and the morning stars of this Europe,
Great Agamemnon’s kingly port and the bright Menelaus,
Tall Idomeneus, Nestor, Odysseus Atlas-shouldered,
Helmeted Ajax, his chin of the beast and his eyes of the dreamer.
Over the sands they dispersed to their armies ranked by the Ocean.

But from the Argive front Acirrous loosed by Tydides
Parted as hastens a shaft from the string and he sped on intently
Swift where the beaches were bare or threading the gaps of the nations;
Crossing Thebes and Epirus he passed through the Lemnian archers,
Ancient Gnossus’ hosts and Meriones’ leaderless legions.
Heedless of cry and of laughter calling over the sea-sands
Swiftly he laboured, wind in his hair and the sea to him crying,
Straight he ran to the Myrmidon hosts and the tents of Achilles.
There he beheld at his tent-door the Phthian gleaming in armour,
Glittering-helmed with the sun that climbed now the cusp of Cronion,
Nobly tall, excelling humanity, planned like Apollo.
Proud at his side like a pillar upreared of snow or of marble,
Golden-haired, hard and white was the boy Neoptolemus, fire-eyed.
New were his feet to the Trojan sands from the ships and from Scyros:
Led to this latest of all his father's fights in the Troad
He for his earliest battle waited, the son of Achilles.
So in her mood had Fate brought them together, the son and the father,
Even as our souls travelling different paths have met in the ages
Each for its work and they cling for an hour to the names of affection,
Then Time's long waves bear them apart for new forms we shall know not,
So these two long severed had met in the shadow of parting.
Often he smote his hand on the thigh-piece for sound of the armour,
Bent his ear to the plains or restless moved like a war-horse
Curbed by his master's will, when he stands new-saddled for battle
Hearing the voice of the trumpets afar and pawing the meadows.
Over the sands Acirrous came to them running and toiling,
Known from far off, for he ran unhelmeted. High on the hero
Sunlike smiled the golden Achilles and into the tent-space
Seized by the hand and brought him and seated. “War-shaft of Troezen,
Whence was thy speed, Acirrous? Com'st thou, O friend, to my tent-side
Spurred by thy eager will or the trusted stern Diomedes?
Or from the Greeks like the voice still loved from a heart that is hollow?
What say the banded princes of Greece to the single Achilles?
Bringest thou flattery pale or an empty and futureless menace?”
But to the strength of Pelides the hero Acirrous answered:
“Response none make the Greeks to thy high-voiced message and challenge;
Only their shout at thy side will reply when thou leapst into Troya.
So have their chieftains willed and the wisdom calm of Odysseus.”
But with a haughty scorn made answer the high-crested Hellene:
“Wise is Odysseus, wise are the hearts of Achaia's chieftains.
Ilion's chiefs are enough for their strength and life is too brittle
Hurrying Fate to advance on the spear of the Phthian Achilles.”
“Not from the Greeks have I sped to thy tents, their friendship or quarrel
Urged not my feet; but Tiryns' chieftain strong Diomedes
Sent me claiming a word long old that first by his war-car
Young Neoptolemus come from island Scyros should enter
Far-crashing into the fight that has lacked this shoot of Achilles,
Pressing in front with his father's strength in the playground of Ares,
Shouting his father's cry as he clashed to his earliest battle.
So let Achilles' son twin-carred fight close by Tydides,
Seal of the ancient friendship new-sworn twixt your sires in their boyhood
Then when they learned the spear to guide and strove in the wrestle.”
So he spoke recalling other times and regretted
And to the Argive’s word consented the strength of Pelides.
He on the shoulder white of his son with a gesture of parting
Laid his fateful hand and spoke from his prescient spirit:
  “Pyrrhus, go. No mightier guide couldst thou hope into battle
Opening the foemen’s ranks than the hero stern Diomedes.
Noble that rugged heart, thy father’s friend and his father’s.
Journey through all wide Greece, seek her prytanies, schools and palaestras,
Traverse Ocean’s rocks and the cities that dream on his margin,
Phocian dales, Aetolia’s cliffs and Arcady’s pastures,
Never a second man wilt thou find, but alone Diomedes.
Pyrrhus, follow his counsels always losing thy father,
If in this battle I fall and Fate has denied to me Troya.
Pyrrhus, be like thy father in virtue, thou canst not excel him;
Noble be in peace, invincible, brave in the battle,
Stern and calm to thy foe, to the suppliant merciful. Mortal
Favour and wrath as thou walkst heed never, son of Achilles.
Always thy will and the right impose on thy friend and thy foeman.
Count not life nor death, defeat nor triumph, Pyrrhus.
Only thy soul regard and the gods in thy joy or thy labour.”
Pyrrhus heard and erect with a stride that was rigid and stately
Forth with Aciirrous went from his sire to the joy of the battle.
Little he heeded the word of death that the god in our bosom
Spoke from the lips of Achilles, but deemed at sunset returning,
Slaying Halamus, Paris or dangerous mighty Aeneas,
Proudly to lay at his father’s feet the spoils of the foeman.

But in his lair alone the godlike doomed Pelides
Turned to the door of his tent and was striding forth to the battle,
When from her inner chamber Briseis parting the curtain, —
Long had she stood there spying and waiting her lonely occasion, —
Came and caught and held his hand like a creeper detaining
Vainly a moment the deathward stride of the kings of the forest.
  “Tarry awhile, Achilles; not yet have the war-horns clamoured,
Nor have the scouts streamed yet from Xanthus fierily running.
Lose a moment for her who has only thee under heaven.
Nay, had war sounded, thou yet wouldst squander that moment, Achilles, 
Hearkening a woman's fears and the voice of a dream in the midnight. 
Art thou not gentle even as terrible, lion of Hellas? 
Others have whispered the deeds of thy wrath; we have heard, but not seen it; 
Marvelling much at their pallor and awe we have listened and wondered. 
Never with thrall or slavegirl or captive saw I thee angered, 
Hero, nor any humble heart ever trembled to near thee. 
Pardoning rather our many faults and our failures in service 
Lightly thou layedst thy yoke on us kind as the clasp of a lover 
Sparing the weak as thou breakest the mighty, O godlike Achilles. 
Only thy equals have felt all the dread of the death-god within thee; 
We have presumed and have played with the strength at which nations 
have trembled. 

Lo, thou hast leaned thy mane to the clutch of the boys and the maidens.”

But to Briseis white-armed made answer smiling Achilles: 
“Something sorely thou needst, for thou flatterest long, O Briseis. 
Tell me, O woman, thy fear or thy dream that my touch may dispel it, 
White-armed net of bliss slipped down from the gold Aphrodite.”

And to Achilles answered the captive white Briseis: 
“Long have they vexed my soul in the tents of the Greeks, O Achilles, 
Telling of Thetis thy mother who bore thee in caves of the Ocean 
Clasped by a mortal and of her fear from the threats of the Ancients, 
Weavers of doom who play with our hopes and smile at our passions 
Painting Time with the red of our hearts on the web they have woven, 
How on the Ocean's bosom she hid thee in vine-tangled Scyros 
Clothed like a girl among girls with the daughters of King Lycomedes, — 
Art thou not fairer than woman's beauty, yet great as Apollo? — 
Fearing Paris’ shafts and the anger of Delian Phoebus. 

Now in the night has a vision three times besieged me from heaven. 
Over the sea in my dream an argent bow was extended; 
Nearing I saw a terror august over moonlit waters, 
Cloud and a fear and a face that was young and lovely and hostile. 
Then three times I heard arise in the grandiose silence, — 
Still was the sky and still was the land and still were the waters, — 
Echoing a mighty voice, ‘Take back, O King, what thou gavest; 
Strength, take thy strong man, sea, take thy wave, till the warfare eternal 
Need him again to thunder through Asia’s plains to the Ganges.’
That fell silent, but nearer the beautiful Terror approached me,
Clang I heard of the argent bow and I gazed on Apollo.
Shrilly I cried; it was thee that the shaft of the heavens had yearned for,
Thee that it sought like a wild thing in anger straight at its quarry,
Quivering into thy heel. I awoke and found myself trembling,
Held thee safe in my arms, yet hardly believed that thou livest.
Lo, in the night came this dream; on the morn thou arisest for battle.”
But to Briseis white-armed made answer the golden Achilles:
“This was a dream indeed, O princess, daughter of Brises!
Will it restrain Achilles from fight, the lion from preying?
Come, thou hast heard of my prowess and knowest what man is Achilles.
Deemst thou so near my end? or does Polyxena vex thee,
Jealousy shaping thy dreams to frighten me back from her capture?”
Passionate, vexed Briseis, smiting his arm with her fingers,
Yet with a smile half-pleased made answer to mighty Achilles.
“Thinkst thou I fear thee at all? I am brave and will chide thee and threaten.
See that thou recklessly throw not, Achilles, thy life into battle
Hurting this body, my world, nor venture sole midst thy foemen,
Leaving thy shielders behind as oft thou art wont in thy war-rage
Lured by thy tempting gods who seek their advantage to slay thee,
Fighting divinely, careless of all but thy spear and thy foeman.
Cover thy limbs with thy shield, speed slowly restraining thy coursers.
Dost thou not know all the terrible void and cold desolation
Once again my life must become if I lose thee, Achilles?
Twice then thus wilt thou smite me, O hero, a desolate woman?
I will not stay behind on an earth that is empty and kingless.
Into the grave I will leap, through the fire I will burn, I will follow
Down into Hades’ depths or wherever thy footsteps go clanging,
Hunting thee always, — didst thou not seize me here for thy pleasure? —
Stronger there by my love as thou than I here, O Achilles.
Thou shalt not dally alone with Polyxena safe in the shadows.”
But to Briseis answered the hero, mighty Pelides,
Holding her delicate hands like gathered flowers in his bosom,
Pressing her passionate mouth like a rose that trembles with beauty.
“There then follow me even as I would have drawn thee, O woman,
Voice that chimes with my soul and hands that are eager for service,
Beautiful spoil beloved of my foemen, perfect Briseis.
But for the dreams that come to us mortals sleeping or waking,
Shadows are these from our souls and who shall discern what they figure?
Fears from the heart speak voiced like Zeus, take shape as Apollo.
But were they truer than Delphi’s cavern voice or Dodona’s
Moan that seems wind in his oaks immemorable, how should they alter
Fate that the stern gods have planned from the first when the earth was
unfashioned,
Shapeless the gyre of the sun? For dream or for oracle adverse
Why should man swerve from the path of his feet? The gods have invented
Only one way for a man through the world, O my slavegirl Briseis,
Valiant to be and noble and truthful and just to the humble,
Only one way for a woman, to love and serve and be faithful.
This observe, thy task in thy destiny noble or fallen;
Time and result are the gods’; with these things be not thou troubled.”
So he spoke and kissed her lips and released her and parted.
Out from the tent he strode and into his chariot leaping
Seized the reins and shouted his cry and drove with a far-borne
Sound of wheels mid the clamour of hooves and the neigh of the war-steeds
Swift through the line of the tents and forth from the heart of the leaguer.
Over the causeway Troyward thundered the wheels of Achilles.
After him crashing loud with a fierce and resonant rumour
Chieftains impetuous prone to the mellay and swift at the war-cry
Came, who long held from the lust of the spear and the joy of the war-din
Rushed over earth like hawks released through the air; a shouting
Limitless rolled behind, for nations followed each war-cry.
Lords renowned of the northern hills and the plains and the coast-lands,
Many a Dorian, many a Phthian, many a Hellene,
Names now lost to the ear though then reputed immortal!
Night has swallowed them, Zeus has devoured the light of his children;
Drawn are they back to his bosom vast whence they came in their fierceness
Thinking to conquer the earth and dominate Time and his ages.
Nor on their left less thick came numerous even as the sea-sands
Forth from the line of the leaguer that skirted the far-sounding waters,
Ranked behind Tydeus’ son and the Spartan, bright Menelaus,
Ithaca’s chief and Epeus, Idomeneus lord of the Cretans,
Acamas, Nestor, Neleus’ son, and the brave Ephialtus,
Prothous, Meges, Leitus the bold and the king Prothoënor,
Wise Alceste’s son and the Lemnian, stern Philoctetes,
These and unnumbered warlike captains marching the Argives.
Last in his spacious car drove shaping the tread of his armies,
Even as a shepherd who follows his flock to the green of the pastures,
Atreus’ far-famed son, the monarch great Agamemnon.
They on the plain moved out and gazing far over the pastures
Saw behind Xanthus rolling with dust like a cloud full of thunder,
Ominous, steadily nearing, shouting their war-cry the Trojans.
BOOK VIII

The Book of the Gods

So on the earth the seed that was sown of the centuries ripened;
Europe and Asia, met on their borders, clashed in the Troad.
All over earth men wept and bled and laboured, world-wide
Sowing Fate with their deeds and had other fruit than they hoped for,
Out of desires and their passionate griefs and fleeting enjoyments
Weaving a tapestry fit for the gods to admire, who in silence
Joy, by the cloud and the sunbeam veiled, and men know not their movers.
They in the glens of Olympus, they by the waters of Ida
Or in their temples worshipped in vain or with heart-strings of mortals
Sated their vast desire and enjoying the world and each other
Sported free and unscourged; for the earth was their prey and their playground.

But from his luminous deep domain, from his estate of azure
Zeus looked forth; he beheld the earth in its flowering greenness
Spread like an emerald dream that the eyes have enthroned in the sunlight,
Heard the symphonies old of the ocean recalling the ages
Lost and dead from its marches salt and unharvested furrows,
Felt in the pregnant hour the unborn hearts of the future.
Troubled kingdoms of men he beheld, the hind in the furrow,
Lords of the glebe and the serf subdued to the yoke of his fortunes,
Slavegirls tending the fire and herdsmen driving the cattle,
Artisans labouring long for a little hire in men’s cities,
Labour long and the meagre reward for a toil that is priceless.
Kings in their seats august or marching swift with their armies
Founded ruthlessly brittle empires. Merchant and toiler
Patiently heaped up our transient wealth like the ants in their hillock.
And to preserve it all, to protect this dust that must perish,
Hurting the eternal soul and maiming heaven for some metal
Judges condemned their brothers to chains and to death and to torment,
Criminals scourgers of crime, — for so are these ant-heaps founded, —
Punishing sin by a worse affront to our crucified natures.
All the uncertainty, all the mistaking, all the delusion
Naked were to his gaze; in the moonlit orchards there wandered
Lovers dreaming of love that endures — till the moment of treason;
Helped by the anxious joy of their kindred supported their anguish
Women with travail racked for the child who shall rack them with sorrow.
Hopes that were confident, fates that sprang dire from the seed of a moment,
Yearning that claimed all time for its date and all life for its fuel,
All that we wonder at gazing back when the passion has fallen,
Labour blind and vain expense and sacrifice wasted,
These he beheld with a heart unshaken; to each side he studied
Seas of confused attempt and the strife and the din and the crying.
All things he pierced in us gazing down with his eyelids immortal,
Lids on which sleep dare not settle, the Father of men on his creatures;
Nor by the cloud and the mist was obscured which baffles our eyeballs,
But he distinguished our source and saw to the end of our labour.
He in the animal racked knew the god that is slowly delivered;
Therefore his heart rejoiced. Not alone the mind in its trouble
God beholds, but the spirit behind that has joy of the torture.
Might not our human gaze on the smoke of a furnace, the burning
Red, intolerable, anguish of ore that is fused in the hell-heat,
Shrink and yearn for coolness and peace and condemn all the labour?
Rather look to the purity coming, the steel in its beauty,
Rather rejoice with the master who stands in his gladness accepting
Heat of the glorious god and the fruitful pain of the iron.
Last the eternal gaze was fixed on Troy and the armies
Marching swift to the shock. It beheld the might of Achilles
Helmed and armed, knew all the craft in the brain of Odysseus,
Saw Deiphobus stern in his car and the fates of Aeneas,
Greece of her heroes empty, Troy enringed by her slayers,
Paris a setting star and the beauty of Penthesilea.
These things he saw delighted; the heart that contains all our ages
Blessed our toil and grew full of its fruits, as the Artist eternal
Watched his vehement drama staged twixt the sea and the mountains,
Phrased in the clamour and glitter of arms and closed by the firebrand,
Act itself out in blood and in passions fierce on the Troad.
Yet as a father his children, who sits in the peace of his study
Hearing the noise of his brood and pleased with their play and their quarrels,
So he beheld our mortal race. Then, turned from the armies,
Into his mind he gazed where Time is reflected and, conscient,
Knew the iron knot of our human fates in their warfare.
Calm he arose and left our earth for his limitless kingdoms.
Far from this lower blue and high in the death-scorning spaces
Lifted o’er mortal mind where Time and Space are but figures
Lightly imagined by Thought divine in her luminous stillness,
Zeus has his palace high and there he has stabled his war-car.
Thence he descends to our mortal realms; where the heights of our
mountains
Meet with the divine air, he touches and enters our regions.
Now he ascended back to his natural realms and their rapture,
There where all life is bliss and each feeling an ecstasy mastered.
Thence his eagle Thought with its flashing pinions extended
Winged through the world to the gods, and they came at the call, they
ascended
Up from their play and their calm and their works through the infinite azure.
Some from our mortal domains in grove or by far-flowing river
Cool from the winds of the earth or quivering with perishable fragrance
Came, or our laughter they bore and the song of the sea in their paces.
Some from the heavens above us arrived, our vital dominions
Whence we draw breath; for there all things have life, the stone like the ilex,
Clay of those realms like the children of men and the brood of the giants.
There Enceladus groans oppressed and draws strength from his anguish
Under a living Aetna and flames that have joy of his entrails.
Fiercely he groans and rejoices expecting the end of his foemen
Hastened by every pang and counts long Time by his writhings.
There in the champaigns unending battle the gods and the giants,
There in eternal groves the lovers have pleasure for ever,
There are the faery climes and there are the wonderful pastures.
Some from a marvellous Paradise hundred-realmed in its musings,
Million-ecstasied, climbed like flames that in silence aspire
Windless, erect in a motionless dream, yet ascending for ever.
All grew aware of the will divine and were drawn to the Father.
Grandiose, calm in her gait, imperious, awing the regions,
Hera came in her pride, the spouse of Zeus and his sister.
As at her birth from the foam of the spaces white Aphrodite
Rose in the cloud of her golden hair like the moon in its halo.
Aegis-bearing Athene, shielded and helmeted, answered
Rushing the call and the heavens thrilled with the joy of her footsteps
Dumbly repeating her name, as insulted and trampled by beauty
Thrill might the soul of a lover and cry out the name of its tyrant.
Others there were as mighty; for Artemis, archeress ancient,
Came on her sandals lightning-tasselled. Up the vast incline
Shaking the world with the force of his advent thundered Poseidon;
Space grew full of his stride and his cry. Immortal Apollo
Shone and his silver clang was heard with alarm in our kingdoms.
Ares’ impetuous eyes looked forth from a cloud-drift of splendour;
Themis’ steps appeared and Ananke, the mystic Erinny;
Nor was Hephaestus’ flaming strength from his father divided.
Even the ancient Dis to arrive dim-featured, eternal,
Seemed; but his rays are the shades and his voice is the call of the silence.

Into the courts divine they crowded, radiant, burning,
Perfect in utter grace and light. The joy of their spirits
Calls to eternal Time and the glories of Space are his answer:
Thence were these bright worlds born and persist by the throb of their

Not in the forms that mortals have seen when assisted they scatter
Mists of this earthly dust from their eyes in their moments of greatness
Shone those unaging Powers; nor as in our centuries radiant
Mortal-seeming bodies they wore when they mixed with our nations.
Then the long youth of the world had not faded still out of our natures,
Flowers and the sunlight were felt and the earth was glad like a mother.
Then for a human delight they were masked in this denser vesture
Earth desires for her bliss, — thin veils, for the god through them glimmered.
Quick were men’s days with the throng of the brilliant presences near them:
Gods from the wood and the valley, gods from the obvious wayside,
Gods on the secret hills leaped out from their light on the mortal.
Oft in the haunt and the grove they met with our kind and their touches
Seized and subjected our clay to the greatness of passions supernal,
Glorifying the earthly virgin and forcing heaven on this death-dust.
Glorifying human beauty Apollo roamed in our regions
Clymene when he pursued or yearned in vain for Marpessa;
Glorifying earth with a human-seeming face of the beauty
Brought from her heavenly climes Aphrodite mixed with Anchises.
Glimpsed in the wilds were the Satyrs, seen in the woodlands the Graces,
Dryad and Naiad in river and forest, Oreads haunting
Glens and the mountain-glades where they played with the manes of our lions  
Glimmered on death-claimed eyes; for the gods then were near us and clasped us,   
Heaven leaned down in love with our clay and yearned to its transience.  
But we have coarsened in heart and in mood; we have turned in our natures  
Nearer our poorer kindred; leaned to the ant and the ferret.  
Sight we have darkened with sense and power we have stifled with labour,  
Likened in mood to the things we gaze at and are in our vestures:  
Therefore we toil unhelped; we are left to our weakness and blindness.  
Not in those veils now they rose to their skies, but like loose-fitting mantles  
Dropped in the vestibules huge of their vigorous realms that besiege us  
All that reminded of earth; then clothed with raiment of swiftness  
Straight they went quivering up in a glory like fire or the storm-blast.  
Even those natural vestures of puissance they leave when they enter  
Mind’s more subtle fields and agree with its limitless regions  
Peopled by creatures of bliss and forms more true than earth’s shadows,—  
Mind that pure from this density, throned in her splendours immortal  
Looks up at Light and suffers bliss from ineffable kingdoms  
Where beyond Mind and its rays is the gleam of a glory supernal:  
There our sun cannot shine and our moon has no place for her lustres,  
There our lightnings flash not, nor fire of these spaces is suffered.  
They with bodies impalpable here to our touch and our seeing,  
But for a higher delight, to a brighter sense, with more sweetness  
Palpable there and visible, thrilled with a lordlier joyance,  
Came to the courts of Zeus and his heavens sang to their footsteps.  
Harmonies flowed through the blissful coils of the kingdoms of rapture.  
Then by his mighty equals surrounded the Thunderer regnant  
Veiled his thought in sound that was heard in their souls as they listened.  
Veiled are the high gods always lest there should dawn on the mortal  
Light too great from the skies and men to their destiny clear-eyed  
Walk unsustained like the gods; then Night and Dawn were defeated  
And of their masks the deities robbed would be slaves to their subjects.  

“Children of Immortality, gods who are joyous for ever,  
Rapture is ours and eternity measures our lives by his aeons.  
For we desireless toil who have joy in the fall as the triumph,  
Knowledge eternal possessing we work for an end that is destined
Long already beyond by the Will of which Time is the courser. 
Therefore death cannot alter our lives nor pain our enjoyment. 
But in the world of mortals twilight is lord of its creatures. 
Nothing they perfectly see, but all things seek and imagine, 
Out of the clod who have come and would climb from their mire to our heavens.

Yet are the heavenly seats not easy even for the chosen: 
Rough and remote is that path; that ascent is too hard for the death-bound. 
Hard are God's terms and few can meet them of men who are mortal. 
Mind resists; their breath is a clog; by their tools they are hampered, 
Blindly mistaking the throb of their mortal desires for our guidance. 
How shall they win in their earth to our skies who are clay and a life-wind, 
But that their hearts we invade? Our shocks on their lives come incessant, 
Ease discourage and penetrate coarseness; sternness celestial 
Forces their souls towards the skies and their bodies by anguish are sifted. 
We in the mortal wake an immortal strength by our tortures
And by the flame of our lightnings choose out the vessels of godhead. 
This is the nature of earth that to blows she responds and by scourgings 
Travails excited; pain is the bed of her blossoms of pleasure. 
Earth that was wakened by pain to life and by hunger to thinking 
Left to her joys rests inert and content with her gains and her station. 
But for the unbearable whips of the gods back soon to her matter 
She would go glad and the goal would be missed and the aeons be wasted. 
But for the god in their breasts unsatisfied, but for his spurrings 
Soon would the hero turn beast and the sage reel back to the savage; 
Man from his difficult heights would recoil and be mud in the earth-mud. 
This by pain we prevent; we compel his feet to the journey. 
But in their minds to impression made subject, by forms of things captured 
Blind is the thought and presumptuous the hope and they swerve from our goading;

Blinded are human hearts by desire and fear and possession, 
Darkened is knowledge on earth by hope the helper of mortals. 

"Now too from earth and her children voices of anger and weeping 
Beat at our thrones; 'tis the grief and the wrath of fate-stricken creatures, 
Mortals struggling with destiny, hearts that are slaves to their sorrow. 
We unmoved by the cry will fulfil our unvarying purpose. 
Troy shall fall at last and the ancient ages shall perish.
You who are lovers of Ilion turn from the moans of her people,
Chase from your hearts their prayers, blow back from your nostrils the incense.

Let not one nation resist by its glory the good of the ages.
Twilight thickens over man and he moves to his winter of darkness.
Troy that displaced with her force and her arms the luminous ancients,
Sinks in her turn by the ruder strength of the half-savage Achaians.
They to the Hellene shall yield and the Hellene fall by the Roman.
Rome too shall not endure, but by strengths ill-shaped shall be broken,
Nations formed in the ice and mist, confused and crude-hearted.
So shall the darker and ruder always prevail o’er the brilliant
Till in its turn to a ruder and darker it falls and is shattered.
So shall mankind make speed to destroy what ’twas mighty creating.
Ever since knowledge failed and the ancient ecstasy slackened,
Light has been helper to death and darkness increases the victor.
So shall it last till the fallen ages return to their greatness.
For if the twilight be helped not, night o’er the world cannot darken;
Night forbidden how shall a greater dawn be effected?
Gods of the light who know and resist that the doomed may have succour,
Always then shall desire and passion strive with Ananke?
Conquer the cry of your heart-strings that man too may conquer his sorrow,
Stilled in his yearnings. Cease, O ye gods, from the joy of rebellion.
Open the eye of the soul, admit the voice of the Silence.”

So in the courts of Heaven august the Thunderer puissant
Spoke to his sons in their souls and they heard him, mighty in silence.
Then to her brother divine the white-armed passionless Hera:
“Zeus, we remember; thy sons forget, Apollo and Ares.”
“Hera, queen of the heavens, they forget not, but choose to be mindless.
This is the greatness of gods that they know and can put back the knowledge;
Doing the work they have chosen they turn not for fruit nor for failure,
Griefless they walk to their goal and strain not their eyes towards the ending.
Light that they have they can lose with a smile, not as souls in the darkness
Clutch at every beam and mistake their one ray for all splendour.
All things are by Time and the Will eternal that moves us,
And for each birth its hour is set in the night or the dawning.
There is an hour for knowledge, an hour to forget and to labour.”

Great Cronion ceased and high in the heavenly silence
Rose in their midst the voice of the loud impetuous Ares
Sounding far in the luminous fields of his soul as with thunder.
“Father, we know and we have not forgotten. This is our godhead,
Still to strive and never to yield to the evil that conquers.
I will not dwell with the Greeks nor aid them save forced by Ananke
And because lives of the great and the blood of the strong are my portion.
This too thou knowest, our nature enjoys in mankind its fulfilment.
War is my nature and greatness and hardness, the necks of the vanquished;
Force is my soul and strength is my bosom; I shout in the battle
Breaking cities like toys and the nations are playthings of Ares:
Hither and thither I shove them and throw down or range on my table.
Constancy most I love, nobility, virtue and courage;
Fugitive hearts I abhor and the nature fickle as sea-foam.
Now if the ancient spirit of Titan battle is over,—
Tros fights no more on the earth, nor now Heracles tramples and struggles,
Bane of the hydra or slaying the Centaurs o’er Pelion driven,—
Now if the earth no more must be shaken by Titan horsehooves,
Since to a pettier framework all things are fitted consenting,
Yet will I dwell not in Greece nor favour the nurslings of Pallas.
I will await the sons of my loins and the teats of the she-wolf,
Consuls browed like the cliffs and plebeians stern of the wolf-brood,
Senates of kings and armies of granite that grow by disaster;
Such be the nation august that is fit for the favour of Ares!
They shall fulfil me and honour my mother, imperial Hera.
Then with an iron march they shall move to their world-wide dominion,
Through the long centuries rule and at last because earth is impatient,
Slowly with haughtiness perish compelled by mortality’s transience
Leaving a Roman memory stamped on the ages of weakness.”
But to his son far-sounding the Father high of the Immortals:
“So let it be since such is the will in thee, mightiest Ares;
Thou shalt till sunset prevail, O war-god, fighting for Troya.”
So he decreed and the soul of the Warrior sternly consented.
He from his seats arose and down on the summits of Ida
Flaming through Space in his cloud in a headlong glory descended,
Prone like a thunderbolt flaming down from the hand of the Father.
Thence in his chariot drawn by living fire and by swiftness,
Thundered down to earth’s plains the mighty impetuous Ares.
Far where Deiphobus stern was labouring stark and outnumbered
Smiting the Achaian myriads back on the right of the carnage,
Over the hosts in his car he stood and darkened the Argives.

But in the courts divine the Thunderer spoke to his children:
“Ares resisting a present Fate for the hope of the future,
Gods, has gone forth from us. Choose thou thy paths, O my daughter,
More than thy brother assailed by the night that darkens o’er creatures.
Choose the silence in heaven or choose the struggle mid mortals,
Golden joy of the worlds, O thou roseate white Aphrodite.”

Then with her starry eyes and bosom of bliss from the immortals
Glowing and rosy-limbed cried the wonderful white Aphrodite,
Drawing her fingers like flowers through the flowing gold of her tresses,
Calm, discontented, her perfect mouth like a rose of resistance
Chidingly budded ’gainst Fate, a charm to their senses enamoured.

“Well do I know thou hast given my world to Hera and Pallas.
What though my temples shall stand in Paphos and island Cythera
And though the Greek be a priest for my thoughts and a lyre for my singing,
Beauty pursuing and light through the figures of grace and of rhythm,—
Forms shall he mould for men’s eyes that the earth has forgotten and
mourns for,

Mould even the workings of Pallas to commune with Paphia’s sweetness,
Mould Hephaestus’ craft in the gaze of the gold Aphrodite,—
Only my form he pursues that I wear for a mortal enchantment,
He to whom now thou givest the world, the Ionian, the Hellene,
But for my might is unfit which Babylon worshipped and Sidon
Palely received from the past in images faint of the gladness
Once that was known by the children of men when the thrill of their members
Was but the immortal joy of the spirit overflowing their bodies,
Wine-cups of God’s desire; but their clay from my natural greatness
Falters betrayed to pain, their delight they have turned into ashes.
Nor to my peaks shall he rise and the perfect fruit of my promptings,
There where the senses swoon but the heart is delivered by rapture:
Never my touch can cling to his soul nor reply from his heart-strings.
Once could my godhead surprise all the stars with the seas of its rapture;
Once the world in its orbit danced to a marvellous rhythm.
Men in their limits, gods in their amplitudes answered my calling;
Life was moved by a chant of delight that sang from the spaces,
Sang from the Soul of the Vast, its rapture clasping its creatures.
Sweetly agreed my fire with their soil and their hearts were as altars.
Pure were its crests; ‘twas not dulled with earth, ‘twas not lost in the hazes
Then when the sons of earth and the daughters of heaven together
Met on lone mountain peaks or, linked on wild beach and green meadow,
Twining embraced. For I danced on Taygetus’ peaks and o’er Ida
Naked and loosing my golden hair like a nimbus of glory
O’er a deep-ecstasied earth that was drunk with my roses and whiteness.
There was no shrinking nor veil in our old Saturnian kingdoms.
Equals were heaven and earth, twin gods on the lap of Dione.
Now shall my waning greatness perish and pass out of Nature.
For though the Romans, my children, shall grasp at the strength of their
mother,
They shall not hold the god, but lose in unsatisfied orgies
Yet what the earth has kept of my joy, my glory, my puissance,
Who shall but drink for a troubled hour in the dusk of the sunset
Dregs of my wine Pandemian missing the Uranian sweetness.
So shall the night descend on the greatness and rapture of living;
Creeds that refuse shall persuade the world to revolt from its mother.
Pallas’ adorers shall loathe me and Hera’s scorn me for lowness;
Beauty shall pass from men’s work and delight from their play and their
labour;
Earth restored to the Cyclops shall shrink from the gold Aphrodite.
So shall I live diminished, owned but by beasts in the forest,
Birds of the air and the gods in their heavens, but disgraced in the mortal.”
Then to the discontented rosy-mouthed Aphrodite
Zeus replied, the Father divine: “O goddess Astarte,
What are these thoughts thou hast suffered to wing from thy rose-mouth
immortal?
Bees that sting and delight are the words from thy lips, Cytherea.
Art thou not womb of the world and from thee are the thronging of
creatures?
And didst thou cease the worlds too would cease and the aeons be ended.
Suffer my Greeks; accept who accept thee, O gold Dionaean.
They in the works of their craft and their dreams shall enthrone thee for ever,
Building thee temples in Paphos and Eryx and island Cythera,
Building the fane more enduring and bright of thy golden ideal.
Even if natures of men could renounce thee and God do without thee,
Rose of love and sea of delight, O my child Aphrodite,
Still wouldst thou live in the worship they gave thee protected from fading,
Splendidly statued and shrined in men’s works and men’s thoughts,
Cytherea."

Pleased and blushing with bliss of her praise and the thought of her empire

Answered, as cries a harp in heaven, the gold Aphrodite:
“Father, I know and I spoke but to hear from another my praises.
I am the womb of the world and the cause of this teeming of creatures,
And if discouraged I ceased, God’s world would lose heart and would perish.
How will you do then without me your works of wisdom and greatness,
Hera, queen of heaven, and thou, O my sister Athene?
Yes, I shall reign and endure though the pride of my workings be conquered.
What though no second Helen find a second Paris,
Lost though their glories of form to the earth, though their confident gladness
Pass from a race misled and forgetting the sap that it sprang from,
They are eternal in man in the worship of beauty and rapture.
Ever while earth is embraced by the sun and hot with his kisses
And while a Will supernal works through the passions of Nature,
Me shall men seek with my light or their darkness, sweetly or crudely,
Cold on the ice of the north or warm in the heats of the southland,
Slowly enduring my touch or with violence rapidly burning.
I am the sweetness of living, I am the touch of the Master.
Love shall die bound to my stake like a victim adorned as for bridal,
Life shall be bathed in my flames and be purified gold or be ashes.
I, Aphrodite, shall move the world for ever and ever.
Yet now since most to me, Father of all, the ages arriving,
Hostile, rebuke my heart and turn from my joy and my sweetness,
I will resist and not yield, nor care what I do, so I conquer.
Often I curbed my mood for your sakes and was gracious and kindly,
Often I lay at Hera’s feet and obeyed her commandments
Tranquil and proud or o’ercome by a honeyed and ancient compulsion
Fawned on thy pureness and served thy behests, O my sister Pallas.
Deep was the love that united us, happy the wrestle and clasping;
Love divided, Love united, Love was our mover.
But since you now overbear and would scourge me and chain and control me,
War I declare on you all, O my Father and brothers and sisters.  
Henceforth I do my will as the joy in me prompts or the anger.  
Ranging the earth with my beauty and passion and golden enjoyments  
All whom I can, I will bind; I will drive at the bliss of my workings,  
Whether men's hearts are seized by the joy or seized by the torture.  
Most I will plague your men, your worshippers and in my malice  
Break up your works with confusion divine, O my mother and sister;  
Then shall you fume and resist and be helpless and pine with my torments.  
Yet will I never relent but always be sweet and malignant,  
Cruel and tyrannous, hurtful and subtle, a charm and a torture.  
Thou too, O father Zeus, shalt always be vexed with my doings;  
Called in each moment to judge thou shalt chafe at our cry and our quarrels,  
Often grope for thy thunderbolt, often frown magisterial  
Joining in vain thy awful brows o'erre thy turbulent children.  
Yet in thy wrath recall my might and my wickedness, Father;  
Hurt me not then too much lest the world and thyself too should suffer.  
Save, O my Father, life and grace and the charm of the senses;  
Love preserve lest the heart of the world grow dulled and forsaken.”  
Smiling her smile immortal of love and of mirth and of malice  
White Aphrodite arose in her loveliness armed for the conflict.  
Golden and careless and joyous she went like a wild bird that winging  
Flits from bough to bough and resumes its chant interrupted.  
Love where her white feet trod bloomed up like a flower from the spaces;  
Mad round her touches billowed incessantly laughter and rapture.  
Thrilled with her feet was the bosom of Space, for her amorous motion  
Floated, a flower on the wave of her bliss or swayed like the lightning.  
Rich as a summer fruit and fresh as Spring's blossoms her body  
Gleaming and blushing, veiled and bare and with ecstasy smiting  
Burned out rosy and white through her happy ambrosial raiment,  
Golden-tressed and a charm, her bosom a fragrance and peril.  
So was she framed to the gaze as she came from the seats of the Mighty,  
So embodied she visits the hearts of men and their dwellings  
And in her breathing tenement laughs at the eyes that can see her.  
Swift-footed down to the Troad she hastened thrilling the earth-gods.  
There with ambrosial secrecy veiled, admiring the heroes  
Strong and beautiful, might of the warring and glory of armour,  
Over her son Aeneas she stood, his guard in the battle.
But in the courts divine the Thunderer spoke mid his children:
“Thou for a day and a night and another day and a nightfall,
White Aphrodite, prevail; o’er thee too the night is extended.
She has gone forth who made men like gods in their glory and gladness.
Now in the darkness coming all beauty must wane or be tarnished;
Joy shall fade and mighty Love grow fickle and fretful;
Even as a child that is scared in the night, he shall shake in his chambers.
Yet shall a portion be kept for these, Ares and white Aphrodite.
Thou whom already thy Pythoness bears not, torn by thy advent,
Caverned already who sittest in Delphi knowing thy future,
What wilt thou do with the veil and the night, O burning Apollo?”
Then from the orb of his glory unbearable save to immortals
Bright and austere replied the beautiful mystic Apollo:
“Zeus, I know that I fade; already the night is around me.
Dusk she extends her reign and obscures my lightnings with error.
Therefore my prophets mislead men’s hearts to the ruin appointed,
Therefore Cassandra cries in vain to her sire and her brothers.
All I endure I foresee and the strength in me waits for its coming;
All I foresee I approve; for I know what is willed, O Cronion.
Yet is the fierce strength wroth in my breast at the need of approval
And for the human race fierce pity works in my bosom;
Wroth is my splendid heart with the cowering knowledge of mortals,
Wroth are my burning eyes with the purblind vision of reason.
I will go forth from your seats and descend to the night among mortals
There to guard the flame and the mystery; vast in my moments
Rare and sublime to sound like a sea against Time and its limits,
Cry like a spirit in pain in the hearts of the priest and the poet,
Cry against limits set and disorder sanities bounded.
Jealous for truth to the end my might shall prevail and for ever
Shatter the moulds that men make to imprison their limitless spirits.
Dire, overpowering the brain I shall speak out my oracles splendid.
Then in their ages of barren light or lucidity fruitful
Whenso the clear gods think they have conquered earth and its mortals,
Hidden God from all eyes, they shall wake from their dream and recoiling
Still they shall find in their paths the fallen and darkened Apollo.”
So he spoke, repressing his dreadful might in his bosom,
And from their high seats passed, his soul august and resplendent
Drawn to the anguish of men and the fierce terrestrial labour.
Down he dropped with a roar of light invading the regions,
And in his fierce and burning spirit intense and uplifted
Sure of his luminous truth and careless for weakness of mortals
Flaming oppressed the earth with his dire intolerant beauty.
Over the summits descending that slept in the silence of heaven,
He through the spaces angrily drew towards the tramp and the shouting
Over the speeding of Xanthus and over the pastures of Troy.
Clang of his argent bow was the wrath restrained of the mighty,
Stern was his pace like Fate’s; so he came to the warfare of mortals
And behind Paris strong and inactive waited God’s moment
Knowing what should arrive, nor disturbed like men by their hopings.

But in the courts of Heaven Zeus to his brother immortal
Turned like a menaced king on his counsellor smiling augustly:
“Seest thou, Poseidon, this sign that great gods revolting have left us,
Follow their hearts and strive with Ananke? Yet though they struggle,
Thou and I will do our will with the world, O earth-shaker.”

Answered to Zeus the besieger of earth, the voice of the waters:
“This is our strength and our right, for we are the kings and the masters.
Too much pity has been and yielding of Heaven to mortals.
I will go down with my chariot drawn by my thunder-maned coursers
Into the battle and thrust down Troy with my hand to the silence,
Even though she cling round the snowy knees of our child Aphrodite
Or with Apollo’s sun take refuge from Night and her shadows.
I will not pity her pain, who am ruthless even as my surges.
Brother, thou knowest, O Zeus, that I am a king and a trader;
For on my paths I receive earth’s skill and her merchandise gather,
Traffic richly in pearls and bear the swift ships on my bosom.
Blue are my waves and they call men’s hearts to wealth and adventure.
Lured by the shifting surges they launch their delight and their treasures
Trust ing the toil of years to the perilous moments of Ocean.
Huge man’s soul in its petty frame goes wrestling with Nature
Over her vasts and his fragile ships between my horizons
Buffeting death in his solitudes labour through swell and through storm-blast
Bound for each land with her sons and watched for by eyes in each haven.
I from Tyre up to Gades trace on my billows their trade-routes
And on my vast and spuming Atlantic suffer their rudders.
Carthage and Greece are my children, the marts of the world are my
term-posts.

Who then deserves the earth if not he who enriches and fosters?
But thou hast favoured thy sons, O Zeus; O Hera, earth's sceptres
Still were denied me and kept for strong Ares and brilliant Apollo.
Now all your will shall be done, so you give me the earth for my nations.
Gold shall make men like gods and bind their thoughts into oneness;
Peace I will build with gold and heaven with the pearls of my caverns.”

Smiling replied to his brother's craft the mighty Cronion:
“Lord of the boundless seas, Poseidon, soul of the surges,
Well thou knowest that earth shall be seized as a booth for the trader.
Rome nor Greece nor France can drive back Carthage for ever.
Always each birth of the silence attaining the field and the movement
Takes from Time its reign; for it came for its throne and its godhead.
So too shall Mammon take and his sons their hour from the ages.
Yet is the flame and the dust last end of the silk and the iron,
And at their end the king and the prophet shall govern the nations.
Even as Troy, so shall Babylon flame up to heaven for the spoiler
Wailed by the merchant afar as he sees the red glow from the ocean.”

Up from the seats of the Mighty the Earth-shaker rose. His raiment
Round him purple and dominant rippled and murmured and whispered,
Whispered of argosies sunk and the pearls and the Nereids playing,
Murmured of azure solitudes, sounded of storm and the death-wail.
Even as the march of his waters so was the pace of the sea-god
Flowing on endless through Time; with the glittering symbol of empire
Crowned were his fatal brows; in his grasp was the wrath of the trident,
Tripled force, life-shattering, brutal, imperial, sombre.
Resonant, surging, vast in the pomp of his clamorous greatness
Proud and victorious he came to his home in the far-spuming waters.
Even as a soul from the heights of thought plunges back into living,
So he plunged like a rock through the foam; for it falls from a mountain
Overpeering the waves in some silence of desolate waters
Left to the wind and the sea-gull where Ocean alone with the ages
Dreams of the calm of the skies or tosses its spray to the wind-gods,
Tosses for ever its foam in the solitude huge of its longings
Far from the homes and the noises of men. So the dark-browed Poseidon
Came to his coral halls and the sapphire stables of Nereus
Ever where champ their bits the harnessed steeds of the Ocean
Watched by foam-white girls in the caverns of still Amphitrite.
There was his chariot yoked by the Tritons, drawn by his coursers
Born of the fleeing sea-spray and shod with the northwind who journey
Black like the front of the storm and clothed with their manes as with
thunder.

This now rose from its depths to the upper tumults of Ocean
Bearing the awful brows and the mighty form of the sea-god
And from the roar of the surges fast o’er the giant margin
Came remembering the storm and the swiftness wide towards the Troad.
So among men he arrived to the clamorous labours of Ares,
Close by the stern Diomedes stood and frowned o’er the battle.
He for the Trojan slaughter chose for his mace and his sword-edge
Iron Tydeus’ son and the adamant heart of young Pyrrhus.

But in the courts divine the Father high of the immortals
Turned in his heart to the brilliant offspring born of his musings,
She who tranquil observes and judges her father and all things.
“What shall I say to the thought that is calm in thy breasts, O Athene?
Have I not given thee earth for thy portion, throned thee and armoured,
Darkened Cypris’ smile, dimmed Hera’s son and Latona’s?
Swift in thy silent ambition, proud in thy radiant sternness,
Girl, thou shalt rule with the Greek and the Saxon, the Frank and the Roman.
Worker and fighter and builder and thinker, light of the reason,
Men shall leave all temples to crowd in thy courts, O Athene.
Go then and do my will, prepare man’s tribes for their fullness.”

But with her high clear smile on him answered the mighty Athene,—
Wisely and soberly, tenderly smiled she chiding her father
Even as a mother might rail at her child when he hides and dissembles:
“Zeus, I see and I am not deceived by thy words in my spirit.
We but build forms for thy thought while thou smilest down high o’er our
toiling;

Even as men are we tools for thee, who are thy children and dear ones.
All this life is thy sport and thou workst like a boy at his engines
Making a toil of the game and a play of the serious labour.
Then to that play thou callest us wearing a sombre visage,
This consulting, that to our wills confiding, O Ruler;
Choosing thy helpers, hastened by those whom thou lurest to oppose thee
Guile thou usest with gods as with mortals, scheming, deceiving,
And at the wrath and the love thou hast prompted laughest in secret.
So we two who are sisters and enemies, lovers and rivals,
Fondled and baffled in turn obey thy will and thy cunning,
I, thy girl of war, and the rosy-white Aphrodite.
Always we served but thy pleasure since our immortal beginnings,
Always each other we helped by our play and our wrestlings and quarrels.
This too I know that I pass preparing the paths of Apollo
And at the end as his sister and slave and bride I must sojourn
Rapt to his courts of mystic light and unbearable brilliance.
Was I not ever condemned since my birth from the toil of thy musings
Seized like a lyre in my body to sob and to laugh out his music,
Shake as a leaf in his fierceness and leap as a flame in his splendours!
So must I dwell overpowered and so must I labour subjected
Robbed of my loneliness pure and coerced in my radiant freedom,
Now whose clearness and pride are the sovereign joy of thy creatures.
Such the reward that thou keepest for my labour obedient always.
Yet I work and I do thy will, for 'tis mine, O my father."
Proud of her ruthless lust of thought and action and battle,
Swift-footed rose the daughter of Zeus from her sessions immortal:
Breasts of the morning unveiled in a purity awful and candid,
Head of the mighty Dawn, the goddess Pallas Athene!
Strong and rapacious she swooped on the world as her prey and her booty
Down from the courts of the Mighty descending, darting on Ida.
Dire she descended, a god in her reason, a child in her longings, —
Joy and woe to the world that is given to the whims of the child-god
Greedy for rule and play and the minds of men and their doings!
So with her aegis scattering light o'er the heads of the nations
Shining-eyed in her boyish beauty severe and attractive
Came to the fields of the Troad, came to the fateful warfare,
Veiled, the goddess calm and pure in her luminous raiment
Zoned with beauty and strength. Rejoicing, spurring the fighters
Close o'er Odysseus she stood and clear-eyed governed the battle.

Zeus to Hephaestus next, the Cyclopean toiler
Turned, Hephaestus the strong-souled, priest and king and a bond-slave,
Servant of men in their homes and their workshops, servant of Nature,
He who has built these worlds and kindles the fire for a mortal.
“Thou, my son, art obedient always. Wisdom is with thee, Therefore thou know’st and obeyest. Submission is wisdom and knowledge; He who is blind revolts and he who is limited struggles: Strife is not for the infinite; wisdom observes to accomplish. Troy and her sons and her works are thy food today, O Hephaestus.”

And to his father the Toiler answered, the silent Seer:

“Thou obey thee, my Father, and That which than thou is more mighty; Even as thou obeyest by rule, so I by my labour. Now must I heap the furnace, now must I toil at the smithy, I who have flamed on the altar of sacrifice helping the sages. I am the Cyclops, the lamester, who once was pure and a high-priest. Holy the pomp of my flames ascendant from pyre and from altar Robed men’s souls for their heavens and my smoke was a pillar to Nature. Though I have burned in the sight of the sage and the heart of the hero, Now is no nobler hymn for my ear than the clanging of metal, Breath of human greed and the dolorous pant of the engines. Still I repine not, but toil; for to toil I was yoked by my Maker. I am your servant, O Gods, and his of whom you are servants.”

But to the toiler Zeus replied, to the servant of creatures:

“What is the thought thou hast uttered betrayed by thy speech, O Hephaestus? True is it earth shall grow as a smithy, the smoke of the furnace Fill men’s eyes and their souls shall be stunned with the clang of the hammers; Yet in the end there is rest on the peak of a labour accomplished. Nor shall the might of the thinker be quelled by that iron oppression, Nor shall the soul of the warrior despair in the darkness triumphant; For when the night shall be deepest, dawn shall increase on the mountains And in the heart of the worst the best shall be born by my wisdom. Pallas thy sister shall guard man’s knowledge fighting the earth-smoke. Thou too art mighty to live through the clamour even as Apollo. Work then, endure; expect from the Silence an end and thy wages.”

So King Hephaestus arose and passed from the courts of his father; Down upon earth he came with his lame omnipotent motion; And with uneven steps absorbed and silent the Master Worked employed mid the wheels of the cars as a smith in his smithy, But it was death and bale that he forged, not the bronze and the iron. Stark, like a fire obscured by its smoke, through the spear-casts he laboured
Helping Ajax’ war and the Theban and Phocian fighters.

Zeus to his grandiose helper next, who proved and unmoving,
Calm in her greatness waited the mighty command of her husband:
“Hera, sister and spouse, what my will is thou knowest, O consort.
One are our blood and our hearts, nor the thought for the words of the speaker
Waits, but each other we know and ourselves and the Vast and the heavens,
Life and all between and all beyond and the ages.
That which Space not knows nor Time, we have known, O my sister.
Therefore our souls are one soul and our minds become mirrors of oneness.
Go then and do my will, O thou mighty one, burning down Troya.”

Silent she rose from the seats of the Blissful, Hera majestic,
And with her flowing garment and mystical zone through the spaces Haloed came like the moon on an evening of luminous silence
Down upon Ida descending, a snow-white swan on the greenness,
Down upon Ida the mystic haunted by footsteps immortal
Ever since out of the Ocean it rose and lived gazing towards heaven.
There on a peak of the mountains alone with the sea and the azure Voiceless and mighty she paused like a thought on the summits of being Clasped by all heaven; the winds at play in her gust-scattered raiment Sported insulting her gracious strength with their turbulent sweetness, Played with their mother and queen; but she stood absorbed and unheeding, Mute, with her sandalled foot for a moment thrilling the grasses,
Dumbly adored by a soul in the mountains, a thought in the rivers, Roared to loud by her lions. The voice of the cataracts falling Entered her soul profound and it heard eternity’s rumour.
Silent its gaze immense contained the wheeling of aeons.
Huge-winged through Time flew her thought and its grandiose vast revolutions
Turned and returned. So musing her timeless creative spirit,
Master of Time, its instrument, grieveless hastening forward Parted with greatnesses dead and summoned new strengths from their stables;
Maned they came to her call and filled with their pacings the future. Calm, with the vision satisfied, thrilled by the grandeurs within her, Down in a billow of whiteness and gold and delicate raiment Gliding the daughter of Heaven came to the earth that received her
Glad of the tread divine and bright with her more than with sunbeams.
King Agamemnon she found and smiling on Sparta’s levies
Mixed unseen with the far-glimping spears of haughty Mycenae.

Then to the Mighty who tranquil abode and august in his regions
Zeus, while his gaze over many forms and high-seated godheads
Passed like a swift-fleeing eagle over the peaks and the glaciers
When to his eyrie he flies alone through the vastness and silence:
“Artemis, child of my loins and you, O legioned immortals,
All you have heard. Descend, O ye gods, to your sovereign stations,
Labour rejoicing whose task is joy and your bliss is creation;
Shrink from no act that Necessity asks from your luminous natures.
Thee I have given no part in the years that come, O my daughter,
Huntress swift of the worlds who with purity all things pursues.
Yet not less is thy portion intended than theirs who o’erpass thee:
Helped are the souls that wait more than strengths soon fulfilled and
exhausted.

Archeress, brilliance, wait thine hour from the speed of the ages.”

So they departed, Artemis leading lightning-tasselled.
Ancient Themis remained and awful Dis and Ananke.
Then mid these last of the gods who shall stand when all others have
perished,

Zeus to the Silence obscure under iron brows of that goddess,—
Griefless, unveiled was her visage, dire and unmoved and eternal:
“Thou and I, O Dis, remain and our sister Ananke.
That which the joyous hearts of our children, radiant heaven-moths
Flitting mid flowers of sense for the honey of thought have not captured,
That which Poseidon forgets mid the pomp and the roar of his waters,
We three keep in our hearts. By the Light that I watch for unsleeping,
By thy tremendous consent to the silence and darkness, O Hades,
By her delight renounced and the prayers and the worship of mortals
Making herself as an engine of God without bowels or vision,—
Yet in that engine are only heart-beats, yet is her riddle
Only Love that is veiled and pity that suffers and slaughters,—
We three are free from ourselves, O Dis, and free from each other.
Do then, O King of the Night, observe then with Time for thy servant
Not my behest, but What she and thou and I are for ever.”

Mute the Darkness sat like a soul unmoved through the aeons,
Then came a voice from the silence of Dis, from the night there came wisdom.

“Yes, I have chosen and that which I chose I endure, O Cronion,—
Though to the courts of the gods I come as a threat and a shadow,
Even though none to their counsels call me, none to their pastime,
None companions me willingly; even thy daughter, my consort,
Trembling whom once from our sister Demeter I plucked like a blossom
Torn from Sicilian fields, while Fate reluctant, consenting,
Bowed her head, lives but by her gasps of the sun and the azure;
Stretched are her hands to the light and she seeks for the clasp of her mother.
I, I am Night and her reign and that of which Night is a symbol.
All to me comes, even thou shalt come to me, brilliant Cronion.
All here exists by me whom all walk fearing and shunning;
He who shuns not, He am I and thou and Ananke.
All things I take to my bosom that Life may be swift in her voyage;
And behind Night is light and not in the sun and his splendours.
Troy to the Night I will gather a wreath for my shadows, O grower.”

So in his arrogance dire the vast invincible Death-god
Triumphing passed out of heaven with Themis and silent Ananke.
Zeus alone in the spheres of his bliss, in his kingdoms of brilliance
Sat divine and alarmed; for even the gods in their heavens
Scarce shall live who have gazed on the unveiled face of Ananke,
Heard the accents dire of the Darkness that waits for the ages.
Awful and dull grew his eyes and mighty and still grew his members.
Back from his nature he drew to the passionless peaks of the spirit,
Throned where it dwells for ever uplifted and silent and changeless
Far beyond living and death, beyond Nature and ending of Nature.
There for a while he dwelt veiled, protected from Dis and his greatness;
Then to the works of the world he returned and the joy of his musings.
Life and the blaze of the mighty soul that he was of God’s making
Dawned again in the heavenly eyes and the majestied semblance.
Comforted heaven he beheld, to the green of the earth was attracted.

But through this Space unreal, but through these worlds that are shadows

Went the awful Three. None saw them pass, none felt them.
Only in the heavens was a tread as of death, in the air was a winter,
Earth oppressed moaned long like a woman striving with anguish.
Ida saw them not, but her grim lions cowered in their caverns,
Ceased for a while on her slopes the eternal laughter of fountains.
Over the ancient ramparts of Dardanus’ high-roofed city
Darkening her victor domes and her gardens of life and its sweetness
Silent they came. Unseen and unheard was the dreadful arrival.
Troy and her gods dreamed secure in the moment flattered by sunlight.
Dim to the citadel high they arrived and their silence invaded
Pallas’ marble shrine where stern and white in her beauty,
Armed on her pedestal, trampling the prostrate image of darkness
Mighty Athene’s statue guarded imperial Troya.
Dim and vast they entered in. Then through all the great city
Huge a rushing sound was heard from her gardens and places
And in their musings her seers as they strove with night and with error
And in the fane of Apollo Laocoon torn by his visions
Heard aghast the voice of Troy’s deities fleeing from Troya,
Saw the flaming lords of her households drive in a death-rout
Forth from her ancient halls and their noble familiar sessions.
Ghosts of her splendid centuries wailed on the wings of the doom-blast.
Moaning the Dryads fled and her Naiads passed from Scamander
Leaving the world to deities dumb of the clod and the earth-smoke,
And from their tombs and their shrines the shadowy Ancestors faded.
Filled was the air with their troops and the sound of a vast lamentation.
Wailing they went, lamenting mortality’s ages of greatness,
Ruthless Ananke’s deeds and the mortal conquests of Hades.
Then in the fane Palladian the shuddering priests of Athene
Entered the darkened shrine and saw on the suffering marble
Shattered Athene’s mighty statue prostrate as conquered,
But on its pedestal rose o’er the unhurt image of darkness
Awful shapes, a Trinity dim and dire unto mortals.
Dumb they fell down on the earth and the life-breath was slain in their
bosoms.

And in the noon there was night. And Apollo passed out of Troya.
Meanwhile moved by their unseen spirits, led by the immortal
Phalanxes, who of our hopes and our fears are the reins and the drivers, —
Minds they use as if steam and our bodies like power-driven engines,
Leading our lives towards the goal that the gods have prepared for our
striving, —

Men upon earth fulfilled their harsh ephemeral labour.
But in the Troad the armies clashed on the plain of the Xanthus.
Swift from their ships the Argives marched, — more swiftly through Xanthus
Driving their chariots the Trojans came and Penethesilea
Led and Anchises’ son and Deiphobus the Priamid hero.
Now ere the armies met, ere their spears were nearer, Apollo
Sent a thought for his bale to the heart of Zethus the Hellene.
He to Achilles’ car drew close and cried to the hero:
“Didst thou not promise a boon to me, son of Peleus and Thetis,
Then when I guarded thy life-breath in Memnon’s battle from Hades?
Therefore I claim the proudest of boons, one worthy a Hellene.
Here in the front I will fight against dangerous Penethesilea.
Thou on our left make war with the beauty and cunning of Paris.”
But from his heart dismayed Achilles made answer to Zethus:
“What hast thou said, O Zethus, betrayed by some Power that is hostile?
Art thou then hired by the gods for the bale and the slaughter of Hellas?”
Zethus answered him, “Alone art thou mighty, Achilles, in Phthia?
Tyrant art thou of this fight and keepst for thee all of its glory —
We are but wheels of thy chariot, reins of thy courser, Achilles.
What though dire be thy lust, yet here thou canst gather not glory,
Only thy shame and the Greeks’, if a girl must be matched with Achilles!”
“Zethus, evil thy word and from death are the wings of its folly.
Even a god might hesitate fronting the formidable virgin.
Many the shafts that, borne in her chariot, thirst for the blood-draught.
Pages ride in her car behind and hand to her swiftly
Death in the rapid spears and she hurls them and drives and she stays not.
Forty wind-footed men of the mountains race with her chariot
Shielded and armed and bring back the spears from their hearts whom she
slaughters.
So like the lightning she moves incessantly flashing and slaying,
Ilion – Book IX

Not like men’s warring her fight who battle for glory and plunder.
Never she pauses to pluck back her point nor to strip off the armour.
Only to slay she cares and only the legions to shatter.
Come thou not near to her wheels; preserve thy life for thy father.
Pity Arithoa’s heart who shall wait in vain for her children.”
Wroth at Pelides’ scorn made answer Zethus the Hellene,
“Give me my boon I have chosen and thou fight far from my battle
Lest it be said that Achilles was near and therefore she perished.
Cycnus and I [...........................]1 will strike down the terror of Argos.”
Moved the mighty Achilles answered him, “Zethus and Cycnus,
Granted your will; I am bound by my truth, as are you now by Hades.”
So he spoke and cried to his steeds, who the wings of the southwind
Racing outvied to the left where from Xanthus galloping swiftly
Came in a mass the Ilian chariots loud towards the Hellenes.
Phoces was with him and Echemus drove and Drus and Thretaon,
They were like rays of the sun, but nighest him, close to his shadow
Ascanus, Phrinix’ son, who fought ever near to his war-car.
And from the Trojan battle gleaming in arms like the sungod
Paris beheld that dangerous spear and he cried to the heroes:
“See now where death on the Trojans comes in the speed of that war-car.
Warriors, fight not [..................................................] Achilles
But where you see him guiding his spear or turning his coursers,
Menace his days and shield the Trojan life that he threatens.
Fighting together hide with your spear-rain his head from the heavens.
Zeus perhaps shall, blinded, forget to cover the hero.”
So as he spoke, the armies neared and they clashed in the mellay.
Who first shed the blood [........] that fell in that combat
Thick with the fall of the mighty, last of the battles of Troya?
Helenus first, King Priam’s son, smote down in that battle
Phoces, Amarus’ son, who fought in the front of Pelides.
He by the point twixt his brows surprised left the spear he had lifted;
Down he clanged from his car with his armour sounding upon him.
Echemus wroth let drive at Helenus, grieved for his comrade.
Him he missed but Ahites slew who was Helenus’ henchman.
Helenus wroth in his turn at Echemus aimed and his spear-point

1 Here and below some words have been lost as a result of damage to the manuscript.
—Ed.
Bit through the shield and quivering paused, — by Ananke arrested.
Back avoiding death the Hellene shrank from the forefront.
Nor had Achilles mingled yet his strength with the fighters.
But like a falconer on a hillock lone in his war-car
Shouting his dreadful cry in the pause ere the shock he had lingered
Wheeling slowly his gaze for the choice of a prey or a victim
For with his host was his heart [.................................] behind Zethus
Herding in shepherded [......................................................]
Ill at ease was his heart [.................................] or lying
Slain on the Trojan [.................................] Ares.
Forward [.................................] towards the Trojans
[.................................] helmet.
Helenus [.................................] his shield from the death-blow.
But o’er his [.................................] Apollo extended.
And from the left and the right the heroes of Ilion gathered.
Dyus and Polites came and Eumachus threatened Achilles.
Paris’ fatal shafts sang joyously now from the bowstring.
Fast from the Hellene [.................................]
Ares’ iron [.................................]
Neighing [.................................] of the war-cries.
Nor could the Trojan fighters break through the wall of their foemen,
Nor could the mighty Pelides slay in his war-rage the Trojans.
Ever he fought surrounded or drew back compelled to his legions;
For to each spear of his strength full twenty hissed round his helmet,
Rang on his shield, attempted his cuirass or leaped at his coursers
Or at Automedon ran like living things in their blood-thirst.
Galled the deathless steeds high-neighing pawed in their anger;
Wrathful Achilles wheeled and threatened seeking a victim.
So might a fire on the high-piled altar of sacrifice blazing
Seek for its tongues an offering fit for the gods, but ‘tis answered
Only by spitting rain that a dense cloud sends out of heaven.
Sibilant hiss the drops on the glowing wood and the altar.
Chill a darkness o’erhangs and its brief and envious spirits
Rail at the glorious flame desiring an end of its brilliance.
Meanwhile behind by the ranks of the fighters sheltered from Hades
Paris loosed his lethal shafts at the head of the Hellene.
Then upon Helenus wrath from the gods who are noble descended,
Seized on the tongue of the prophet and framed their thoughts in his accents,  
Thoughts by men rejected who follow the beast in their reason,  
Only advantage seek, and honour and pride are forgotten:  
“Paris, not thus shalt thou slay Achilles but only thy glory.  
Hast thou no heed that the women should mock in the streets of our city  
Thee and thy bow and thy numbers, hearing this shame of the Trojans?  
Dost thou not fear the gods and their harms? Not so do they combat  
Who have the awe of their deeds and follow the way of the mighty.”  
Paris the Priamid answered his brother: “Helenus, wherefore  
Care should I have for fame, or the gods and their punishments, heeding  
Breath of men when they praise or condemn me? Victory I ask for,  
Joy for my living heart, not a dream and a breath for my ashes.  
Work I desire and the wish of my heart and the fruit of my labour.  
Nay, let my fame be crushed into mire for the ages to spit at,  
But let my country live and her foes be slain on her beaches.”  
So he spoke and fitted another shaft to the bowstring.  

Always they fought and were locked in a fierce unyielding combat.  
But on the Hellene right stood the brothers stark in their courage  
Waiting the Eoan horsehooves that checked at the difficult crossing  
Late arrived through field and through pasture. Zethus exultant  
Watched their advent stern and encouraged the legions behind him.  
“Now is the hour of your highest fame, O ye sons of the Hellenes.  
These are the iron squadrons, these are the world-famed fighters.  
Here is a swifter than Memnon, here is a greater than Hector.  
Who would fight with the war-wearied Trojans, the Lycian remnants,  
When there are men in the world like these? O Phthians, we conquer  
Asia’s best today. And you, O my brothers, with courage  
Reap all the good I have won for our lives this morn from Achilles.  
Glad let our fame go before us to our mother Arithoa waiting  
Lonely in Phthia, desiring death or the eyes of her children.  
Soon will our sails pursue their herald Fame, with our glory  
Bellying out and the winds. They shall bear o’er the murmurs of Ocean  
Heaped up Ilion’s wealth and the golden bricks of King Priam  
And for the halls of our fathers a famous and noble adornment  
Severed the beautiful head of the virgin Penthesilea.”  
So he cried and the Hellenes shouted, a savage rumour,  
Proud of their victories past and incredulous grown of disaster.
Now from the Xanthus dripping-wheeled came the Eoan war-cars
Rolling thunder-voiced with the tramp of the runners behind them,
Dust like a flag and dire with the battle-cry, full on the Hellenes.
They to the mid-plain arrived where the might of the Hellene brothers
Waited their coming. Zethus first with his cry of the cascade
Hurrying-footed, headlong that leaps far down to the valley:
“Curb, but curb thy advance, O Amazon Penthesilea!
These are not Gnossus’ ranks and these are not levies from Sparta.
Hellas’ spears await thee here and the Myrmidon fighters.”
But like the northwind high and clear answered Penthesilea,
High like the northwind racing and whistling over the icefields,
Death at its side and snow for its breath in the pitiless winter:
“Who art thou biddest to pause the horsehooves of Penthesilea?
Hellene, thou in thy strength who standest forth from thy shielders,
Turn yet, save thy life; for I deem that thou art not Achilles.”
“Zethus the Hellene I am and Cycnus and Pindus, my brothers,
Stand at my either side, and thou passest no farther, Bellona.
Lioness, turn thou back, for thou canst not here be a hunter.”
“Zethus and Cycnus and Pindus, little you loved then your mother
Who in this field that is wide must needs all three perish together
Piled on one altar of death by the spear-shafts of Penthesilea.
Empty for ever your halls shall be, childless the age of your father.”
High she rose to the spear-cast, poised like a thunderbolt lifted,
Forward swung to the blow and loosed it hissing and ruthless
Straight at the Hellene shield, and it tore through the bronze and groaning
Butted and pushed through the cuirass and split the breast of the hero.
Round in his car he spun, then putting his hands out before him,
Even as a diver who leaps from the shed of the bath to the current,
Launched out so headlong, struggled, sideward collapsed, then was quiet,
Dead on Trojan earth. But dismay and grief on his brothers
Yet alive now seized, then rage came blinding the eyeballs.
Blindly they hurled, yet attained, for Athene guided the spear-shafts;
Death like a forest beast yet played with the might of the virgin.
One on her shield and one on her cuirass rang, but rejected
Fell back like reeds that are thrown at a boulder by boys on the seashore.
She unmoved replied; her shafts in their angry succession
Hardly endured delay between. Like trees the brothers,
Felled, to each side sank prone. So lifeless these strong ones of Hellas
Lay on their couch of the hostile soil reunited in slumber
As in their childhood they lay in Hellas watched by their mother,
Three of them side by side and she dreamed for her darlings their future.
But on the ranks of the Hellenes fear and amazement descended,—
Messengers they from Zeus to discourage the pride and the blood-lust.
Back many yards their foremost recoiled in a god-given terror,
As from a snake a traveller scorned for a bough by the wayside,
But it arises puffing its hood and hisses its hatred.
Forward the henchmen ran and plucked back the spears from the corpses;
Onward the Eoan thousands rolled o’er the ground that was conquered
Trampling the fallen men into earth with the wheels of their war-cars.

But in her speed like the sea or the stormwind Penthesilea
Drove towards the ranks of the foe and her spear-shafts hastened before her,
Messengers whistling shrilly to Death; he came like a wolfhound
Called by his master’s voice and silently fell on the quarry.
Hyrtamus fell, Admetus was wounded, Charmidas slaughtered;
Cirrhes died, though he faced not the blow while he hastened to shelter.
Itylus, bright and beautiful, went down to night and to Hades.
Back, ever back the Hellenes recoiled from the shock of the Virgin,
Slain by her prowess fierce, alarmed by the might of her helpers.
For at her right Surabdas threatened and iron Surenas,
And at her left hill-shouldered Pharatus slaughtered the Hellenes.
Then in the ranks of the Greeks a shouting arose and the leaders
Cried to their hosts and recalled their unstained fame and their valour
Never so lightly conquered before in the onsets of Ares
And of Achilles they spoke and King Peleus waiting in Phthia,
Listening for Troy o’erthrown not his hosts overcome by a woman.
And from the right and the left came heroes mighty to succour.
Chiefs of the Dolopes Ar and Aglauron came mid the foremost,
Hillus fair as a drifting moon but fierce as the winter;
Pryas came the Thessalian and Sebes whom Pharsalus honoured,
Victors in countless fights who had stood against Memnon and Hector.
But though their hands were mighty, though fierce their obdurate natures,
Mightier strengths they met and a sterner brood of the war-god.
Light from the hand of the Virgin the spear ran laughing at Sebes,
Crashed through his helmet and left him supine on the pastures of Troya;
Ar to Surabdas fell and the blood-spirit head of Aglauron
Dropped like a fruit from a branch by its weight to the discus of Sambus;
Iron Surenas' mace-head shattered the beauty of Hillus;
Pryas by Pharatus slain lay still and had rest from the war-cry.
Back, ever back reeled the Hellene host with the Virgin pursuing.
Storm-shod the Amazon fought and she slew like a god unresisted.
None now dared to confront her burning eyes; the boldest
Shuddered back from her spear and the cry of her tore at their heart-strings.
Fear, the daughter of Zeus, had gripped at the hearts of the Hellenes.
So as their heroes yielded before her, Penthesilea
Lifted with victory cried to her henchman, Aurus of Ellae,
Who had the foot of the wind and its breath that scants not for running,
"Hasten, hasten, Aurus; race to the right where unwarring
Valarus leads his host; bid him close with the strength of the Hellenes.
Soon will they scatter like chaff on the threshing-floor blown to the beaches.
But when he sees their flight by Sumalus shepherded seaward,
Swift let him turn like the wind in its paths and follow me, pouring
All in a victor flood on the Myrmidon left and Achilles.
Then shall no Hellene again dare embark in ships for the Troad.
Cursed shall its beaches be to their sons and their sons and for ever."
So she spoke and Aurus ran by the chariots protected.
Then had all Hellas perished indeed on the beaches of Troas,
But from the Argives' right where she battled Pallas Athene
Saw and was wroth and she missioned her thought to Automedon speeding.
Splendid it came and found him out mid the hiss of the spear-shafts
Guiding, endangered, Achilles' steeds in the thick of the battle.
Shaped like a woman clad in armour and fleeing from battle,
Helmed with the Hellene crest it knocked at the gates of his spirit
Shaking the hero's heart with the vision that came to his eyeballs;
Silent he stared aghast and turned his ear to the war-din.
"Dost thou not hear to our right, Achilles, these voices of Ares?
High is the sound of Eoan battle, a woman's war-cry
Rings in my ears, but faint and sparse come the shouts of our nation.
Far behind is their call and nearer the ships and the beaches."
Great Pelides heard and groaned in the caves of his spirit:
"It is the doom that I feared and the fatal madness of Zethus;
Slain are the men of my nation or routed by Penthesilea."
Drive, Automedon, drive, lest shame and defeat upon Hellas
Fasten their seal and her heroes flee from the strength of a woman.”
And to the steeds divine Automedon called and they hearkened,
Rose as if seeking their old accustomed paths in the heavens,
Then through the ranks that parted they galloped as gallops the dust-cloud
When the cyclone is abroad and the high trees snap by the wayside,
And from the press of the Hellenes into the plain of the Xanthus
Thundering, neighing came with the war-car borne like a dead leaf
Chased by the blast. Then Athene opened the eyes of Achilles,
Eyes that in all of us sleep, yet can see the near and the distant,
Eyes that the gods in their pity have sealed from the giant confusion,
Sealed from the bale and the grief. He saw like one high on a summit
Near him the Eoans holding the plain and out in the distance
Breaking the Hellene strengths. Like a dream in the night he regarded
High-crested Sumalus fight, Somaranes swift in the onset,
Bull-shouldered Tauron’s blows and the hero Artavoruxes.
But in the centre fiercest the cry and the death and the fleeing.
There were his chieftains ever reforming vainly resistance,—
Even in defeat these were Hellenes and fit to be hosts of Achilles,—
But like a doom on them thundered the war-car of Penthesilea,
Pharatus smote and Surabdas and Sambus and iron Surenas.
Down the leaders fell and the armies reeled towards the Ocean.
Wroth he cried to his coursers and fiercely they heard and they hastened;
Swift like a wind o’er the grasses galloped the car of Achilles.
Echemus followed, Ascanus drove and Drus and Thretaon:
Phoces alone in the dust of the Troad lay there and moved not.
Yet brought not all of them help to their brothers oppressed in the combat:
For from the forefront forth on the knot of the swift-speeding war-cars
High an Eoan chariot came drawn fast by its coursers
Bearing a mighty chieftain, Valarus son of Supaures.
Fire-footed thundered past him the hooves of the heavenly coursers,
Nor to his challenging shout nor his spear the warlike Pelides
Answered at all, but made haste like a flood to the throng and the mellay.
But twixt the chariots behind and their leader the mighty Eoan
Drove his dark-maned steeds and stood like a cliff to their onset.
“Great is your haste, O ye Kings of the Greeks! Abide yet and converse.
Scatheless your leader has fled from me borne by the hooves of his coursers;
Ye, abide! For we meet from far lands on this soil of the Trojans.
All of us meet from afar, but not all shall return to their hearth-sides.
Valarus stays you, O Greeks, and this is the point of his greeting."
So as he spoke he launched out his spear as a cloud hurls its storm-flash;
Nor from that fatal hand parted vainly the pitiless envoy,
But of its blood-thirst had right. Riven through and through with the
derth-stroke

Drus fell prone and tore with dying fingers the grasses.
Sobbing his soul fled out to the night and the chill and the silence.
They like leaves that are suddenly stayed by the fall of a wind-gust
Ceased from their headlong speed. And Echemus poising his spear-shaft:
"Sharp are thy greetings, chieftain Eoan. Message for message
Echemus son of Aëtes, one of the mighty in Hellas,
Thus returns. Let Ares judge twixt the Greek and the Eastern."
Fast sped the spear but Valarus held forth his shield and rebutted
Shouting the deadly point that could pierce not his iron refusal.
"Echemus, surely thy vaunt has reached me, but unfelt is thy spear-point.
Weak are men's arms, it seems, in Hellas; a boy there Ares
Aims with reeds not spears at pastoral cheeses not iron.
Judge now my strength." Two spears from him ran at the hearts of his

Crouching Thretaon heard the keen death over him whistle;
Ascanus hurt in the shoulder cried out and paused from his war-lust.
Echemus hurled now again and hurled with him stalwart Thretaon.
Strong Thretaon missed, but Echemus' point at the helmet
Bit and fastened as fastens a hound on the ear of the wild-boar
Wroth with the cry and the hunt that gores the pack and his hunters.
Valarus frowning rugged at the heavy steel; yet his right hand
Smote at Echemus. Him he missed but valiant Thretaon
Sat back dead in his seat and the chariot wild with its coursers
Snorting and galloping bore his corpse o'er the plains to the Hellenes.
But while yet Valarus strove with the shaft, obscured and encumbered,
Ascanus sprang down swift from his car and armed with his sword-point
Clove the Eoan's neck as the lightning springs at an oak-trunk
Seized in the stride of the storm and severs that might with its sharpness.
Slain the hero fell; his mighty limbs the spirit
Mightier released to the gods and it rose to the heavens of the noble.
Ascanus gathered the spear-shafts; loud was his shout as exulting
Back he leaped to the car triumphant o’er death and its menace.
“Lie there, Valarus, king of the East, with imperial Troya.
Six rich feet of her soil she gives thee for couch of the nuptials.
Rest then! talk not again on the way with the heroes of Hellas.”
So delivered they hastened glad to the ranks of their brothers.
After them rolled the Eoan war-cars, Arithon leading,
Loud with the clamour of hooves and the far-rolling gust of the war-cry;
Wroth at their chieftain’s fall they moved to the help of their nation
Now by the unearthly horses neared and the might of Achilles.
Then from the Hellenes who heard the noise and the cry of their coming,
Lifted eyes dismayed, but saw the familiar war-car,
Saw the heaven-born steeds and the helm unconquered in battle,
Cry was of other hopefulness. Loud as the outbursting thunder
Rises o’er lower sounds of the storm, o’er the din of the battle
Rose the Hellene shout and rose the name of Achilles.