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I.

story of Iamos, the violet crown of Athens has become a bed of violet flowers; but Iamos is himself the child of the sun-god Phoibos, and he receives his wisdom from the keen-sighted beings who draw the chariot of Medeia.<sup>1</sup> In the name Ionians we have, then, a word strictly denoting colour and nothing more; and the colour is the tint which overspreads the sky before the rising of the sun. The word is thus identical in meaning with the name Phoinikê (Phenicia), and Phenicia is accordingly the purple or blood-red land, where Eurôpê is born, and whence she is borne on the back of the snow-white bull westwards to Delphoi. The name is purely Greek, and exhibits its full meaning when taken along with that of Telephassa, the mother of the broad day, who dies in the far west weary with searching for her child. The same purple colour is embodied in Phoinix, the early teacher of Achilles, who recites to the wayward chief the story of the short-lived hero whose life is bound up with the torch of day. No distinction of race is therefore denoted by the names whether of Ionians or Phenicians.

Argives  
and Ar-  
kadians.

In historical Hellas the Argives were a people inhabiting about a fifth part of the Peloponnesos. If the *Iliad* is to be regarded as throwing any light on the conditions of an earlier time, the name Argos had a far more extensive application. It was a territory rather than a city or a state, and with the exception of the islands over which he ruled, it formed the whole of the dominion of Agamemnon. But the name itself was not confined to the Peloponnesos; and whatever be the explanation to be given of it, it must be applicable to every extra-Peloponnesian Argos, and to the ship which carried the Achaian chieftains on the quest of the Golden Fleece. The word reappears in the title of Aphroditê Argynnis, and in Argennos the supposed favourite of

names as Odysseus and Oidipous. A similar confusion between *îds* an arrow, and *îds* poison, fastened on Herakles and Philoktetes the practice of using poisoned arrows (Max Müller, *Lectures*, second series, 292). It is, therefore, quite likely that the worship of Iaso, as the daughter of Asklepios, may be the result of the same forgetfulness of the meaning

of words which turned Lykaon into a wolf or Kallistô into a bear. Another form of the name appears in Iasion, the beloved of Dêmêtêr.

<sup>1</sup> When the word Dragon, which is only another form of Dorkas, the clear-eyed gazelle, became the name for serpents, these mythical beings were necessarily transformed into snakes.





Agamemnon, and this epithet has been identified with the Sanskrit Arjunî, the brilliant, a name for the morning.<sup>1</sup> Here again, then, we have a name denoting brilliancy, and we see at once that Argos Panoptes, the guardian of Io, is with his thousand eyes only another image of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand maidens, or of Tara Bai in the folk-lore of southern India,<sup>2</sup> while the word itself carries us to the shining metal, the Greek argyros and the Latin argentum, silver. Whatever then the Argo may be, it is clearly the bright vessel in which the children of the sun go to seek the lost light of day, and in which they return possessed of the golden robe in the morning. It is in short, the Sanskrit archî, light, and arkâh, the sun himself;<sup>3</sup> and thus the process which has explained the name of the Argive people explains also that of the Arkadians, whose mythology runs riot in the equivocal uses of words all originally denoting brilliancy. The eponym Arkas, is like Argos, a son of Zeus, Kallistô being the mother of the former, Niobê of the latter. But in the story of Kallistô we have precisely that same confusion of thought which in India converted the seven shiners, or strewers of light, into seven sages, and in the West changed them into bears or waggons. The root, in short, furnished a name for stars, bears, and poets alike; and when its first meaning faded from the mind, the myth took the forms with which we are now familiar.<sup>4</sup> In the west, the old word arksha as a name for star became confused with the Greek arktos, the Latin Ursa, the name for the golden bear, (the names Argos and Ursula being thus etymologically the same), and the story went that Kallistô, the most brilliant of all the daughters of Zeus, was changed into a bear by Hêrê, as she changed Iô into a heifer. The version given by Hyginus brings before us another transformation; in it Arkas is the son of Lykaon, and Lykaon is

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *Lectures on Language*, second series, viii.

<sup>2</sup> See page 164.

<sup>3</sup> Max Müller, *Lect.* second series, 360. The same name, Professor Müller goes on to say, was bestowed independently on a hymn of praise, as gladdening the heart and brightening the countenances of the gods, and he adds, 'If the reason of the

independent bestowal of the same root on these two distinct ideas, sun and hymns, was forgotten, there was danger of mythology; and we actually find in India that a myth sprang up, and that hymns of praise were fabled to have proceeded from or to have originally been revealed by the sun.'

<sup>4</sup> Max Müller, *Lect.* second series, 363.



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changed into a wolf for his impiety in offering human flesh as food to Zeus. The story is simply another version of the myth of Tantalos and Pelops, and the solar character of the one must be extended to the other. The confusion between Leukos, brilliant, and Lukos, a wolf was as natural and inevitable as between arksha and arktos, and the readiness with which the one name would suggest the other is shown in the passage where Æschylos makes the Theban maidens pray that the Lykian or bright god might become a very Lykeian or wolf to their enemies.<sup>1</sup>

Delians  
and Ly-  
kians.

We come to a class of names, the original significance of which is even less disguised. Unless we are prepared to maintain that Phoibos received his name Delios because he was born in Delos, we are compelled to account for the name of the island from the myth of the god for whom it is said to have furnished a birth-place. But this myth is so indisputably solar that all further discussion on the character of the legend becomes superfluous. The word itself denotes the kindling of the heaven which goes before the sunrise; and although it is possible that the coincidence between the local name and the myth may in any one given case be accidental, such a supposition becomes desperate when we find the same coincidence running through many myths in many countries. If the lord of light is born in Delos, he is born also in the Lykian land. Phoibos is Lykêgenês, light-born, not less than Delian: and through that far off-eastern land flows the golden stream of Xanthos, watering the realm in which Sarpêdôn and Glaukos bare rule. But Sarpêdôn is a name which has been traced to the same root with the names of Hermes and Helen, of Saramâ, Saranyû and Erinys, and it expresses the flushing of the heaven after dawn, as the name of his friend Glaukos also denotes the brightening light of Athênê Glaukôpis.<sup>2</sup> Another chieftain of this morn-

<sup>1</sup> Æsch. *Sept. c. Thebas*, 145.

<sup>2</sup> It is scarcely necessary to trace the roots through the several Greek forms λάω, λευκός, λεύσσω, λάμπω, γλήνη, and others, and the Latin lux, luceo, lumen, lucina, lucna, luna. The silent journey in which Hypnos and Thanatos, Sleep and Death, bear the dead body of Sarpêdôn to his home, is but another incident

stamping the myth with a distinctively solar character. They move through the dark hours, like the Achaian chieftain in search of the Golden Fleece, or like Helios himself in his golden cup: they reach Lykia early in the morning, and there were versions which brought Sarpêdôn to life again when he reached the Lykian shore. The myth of Sarpêdôn





ing-land is Iobates, whose name, as we have seen, has the same meaning as that of Phoinix; and Phenicians and Lykians alike existed only in the terminology of the Greeks. If we are to follow Herodotos,<sup>1</sup> the people of the country to which he gave the name of Lykia, called themselves Termilai, and the name of the Athenian Lykos the son of Pandion was drawn in to explain the origin of the new title, as the name of the Arkadian Lykæon might have been used, had the Attic mythical genealogy failed to supply one. Thus Delians and Lykians are also, like the Athenians and the Lucanians of southern Italy, the people of the dawn land; but the versions of the myth are countless, and they all carry us back to mythical phrases of the like kind. According to one story, Artemis, like Phoibos, is born in Delos; according to another, in Asteria the starland; in others Asteria and Ortygia are other names for Delos itself. But the name Ortygia points in Greek to the word Ortyx, a quail, and there was no lack of myths to be localised, whether in the Egean island or in the islet off the eastern shore of Sicily near to Syracuse. In one Zeus changes Lêtô into a quail, from the same motive which led him to transform Iô into a heifer: in another he himself becomes a quail in order to approach the goddess, as for the same reason he assumes the form of a golden shower in the story of Danaë. In yet another, the children are born in Asteria, and Lêtô takes them thence into Lykia, where she vainly tries to bathe them in the fountain of Melité: but by the same confusion which produces the myth of Lykæon and possibly all the modern superstitions of Lykanthropy, wolves come to the aid of the goddess, and carry her to the stream of Xanthos.<sup>2</sup> In all these legends the only name which calls for any comment is that of Ortygia, and Ortygia itself is only the dawn-land. 'The quail in Sanskrit is called Vartikâ, i.e. the returning bird, one of the first birds that return with the return of spring.'<sup>3</sup> The name, it is obvious, might be applied to the dawn, as naturally as the setting sun might become

thus resolves itself into that of Memnôn, and Memnôn is the child of the dawn.

<sup>1</sup> I. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobi, *Mythologie*, s. v. Lêtô.

<sup>3</sup> Max Müller, *Lectures*, second series, 506.



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Ethio-  
pians.

in the Sanskrit Bhelî and the frog-princess of the German tale.<sup>1</sup>

The myth of the Lykian Sarpêdôn has a close affinity with that of the Ethiopian Memnôn; and in the Ethiopians who fight at Troy we have another people for whom it becomes impossible to find a local earthly habitation. The story explains itself. The tears which Eôs sheds on the death of her child are morning dew. The men who follow him are, according to the Herodotean story, exempt from the ills of humanity; and their tables are always loaded with banquets which no labour of theirs has provided. It may amuse historians to regard this mysterious people as the invaders and conquerors of the so-called Chaldaean empire; but no historical inference can be drawn from any mention of them in the Iliad or Odyssey. The name itself is as purely Greek as are the names of the Phenicians and the Lykians, and any explanation given of it must also explain the names Aithon, Aithylla, Aithra, Aithrios, Aithousa. But when we have done this, we shall find the Ethiopians dwelling, not as Mr. Rawlinson believes, on the south coast both of Asia and Africa, and as divided by the Arabian Gulf into Eastern and Western, Asiatic and African,<sup>2</sup> but in the bright Aithêr, the ethereal home of Zeus himself, far above the murky air of our lower world.

Danaans  
and Achai-  
ans.

There remain yet two names, which, according to Thucy-

<sup>1</sup> See page 165. The story of the Frog Prince is singularly significant. The dawn-maiden is here playing with a golden ball, which, like Endymion, plunges into the water. This ball can be brought to her again only by the Frog—the returning Sun. The Frog reappears as a Toad in Grimm's story of the Iron Stove. In the Nix of the Mill-pond the man and his wife are changed into a toad and a frog, as the sun and the twilight fade beneath the waters. In the Man of Iron the golden ball with which the king's son is playing rolls, not into the water but into the cage in which the wild man (the Winter) is confined; the king's son here being Phoibos of the golden locks. In the story of the Old Griffin the ball takes the form of golden apples, which instantaneously restore the king's daughter to health, as the nymphs

exult when they look on the new born Apollôn. This ball is the red-hot egg which the bird drops in the story of the Ball of Crystal. The Frog reappears in other stories. In the legend of Briar Rose it is he who promises the queen that she shall have a daughter. In that of the Three Feathers, Dummeling, whose exploits reveal him like Theseus as another Herakles, receives the beautiful carpet (of clouds—the web of Penelope) from the Frog who is now underground, in other words, after sundown. In the Faithful Beasts it is again the Frog who brings up from the water the wonderful stone (the orb of the Sun), the owner of which can wish himself in whatever place he desires to be.

<sup>2</sup> *Eastern Monarchies*, i. 60. In reply to Mr. Rawlinson it has been urged that the poet of the *Odyssey* could not





dides,<sup>1</sup> were applied in the time of the Homeric poets to the tribes afterwards known collectively as Hellenic. In Mr. Gladstone's judgment, the followers of Agamemnon were called Danaans in their military capacity, the name Argive being used as a geographical designation, while that of Achaians was confined to the ruling tribe.<sup>2</sup> How vague the name Argive is as a local term, we have already seen; and even if the other two names are used in these senses, we are obviously no nearer to their original meaning. The quantity of the first syllable is urged as a reason for not identifying the term Danaans with Ahanâ, Dahanâ, and Daphnê, names of the dawn. At the least, it must be admitted that the word must be taken along with the stories of Danaë the mother of Perseus, and of Danaos with his fifty daughters. Of these the former is throughout strictly solar.<sup>3</sup> If, however, Niebuhr be right, the one reason for not holding Danaë and Daphnê to be different forms of the same name loses its force, for in his judgment the word reappears in Italy under a form more closely allied to Daphnê than to Danaë, and the Latins who regarded themselves as if coming of the pure Trojan stock, bore precisely the same name with the enemies of Priam and of Hektor.<sup>4</sup> So unsubstantial, in all that relates to names, are the bases on which distinctions of race and political attractions and animosities have been made to depend, that we might well look with patience on the arguments by which Mr. Gladstone<sup>5</sup> seeks to connect the names of the Western Achaians and the Persian Achaimenidai, if the names were not adduced as the evidence of ethno-

possibly have meant what he is thus supposed to mean. 'Whether the explanations of comparative mythologists be right or wrong, it is certain that the poet cannot mean a people who were neither toward the rising nor the setting sun relatively to himself.'—*Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 117.

<sup>1</sup> I. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Homer and the Homeric Age*, vol. i. p. 346, &c.

<sup>3</sup> See page 227, &c.

<sup>4</sup> 'Danai and Daunii are unquestionably the same, and the Daunii are clearly allied to the Tyrrhenian race. Danaë is said to have founded the Pelasgico-

Tyrrhenian Ardea, and on the other hand the father of Tyrrhenus (= Turnus) was, according to some, called Daunus and his mother Danaë. Daunus and Launus again are the same, *d* and *l* in Latin and in the so-called Æolic dialect being always exchanged for one another, as in δάκρυον and *lacryma*, *Ducetius* and *Leucetius*. Laura, Lavinia, and Lavinium are the same as the different names of the Latins, *Lavini*, *Lakini*, *Lätini*, and all these names are identical with Danai.'—Niebuhr, *Lectures on Ancient History*, xxii.

<sup>5</sup> *Homer and the Homeric Age*, i. 559, &c.



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The Hel-  
lènes and  
Aioliens,

logical affinity. Certainly it is not much more surprising that Persian and Hellenic tribes should bear the same name, than that the Hindu of the Vedic age and the Persian of our own day should both speak of themselves as Aryans.<sup>1</sup> But the Achaian name is too manifestly linked with that of Achilles to allow any explanation to pass unchallenged which does not apply alike to both. It is enough to say that, so far as we may form a judgment, it must be placed in the class of tribal names which had originally the same meaning with those of Phenicians, Lykians, Delians, Arkadians, Athenians, and Ionians.<sup>2</sup>

We reach at last the great name which imparted something like a national character to the centrifugal tribes known to us as Greek: and at once it may be said that the name Hellènes was no more distinctive than that of Ionians or Dorians, Delians and Ortygians, Arkadians and Lykians. Under another form it expresses only the same idea of brightness, with a reservation which limits it to the brightness of the sun. Whether there be, as Mr. Gladstone supposes,<sup>3</sup> the same ethnical connection between the Hellenes of the West and the Eelliat of Persia, which, following the popular Argive tradition,<sup>4</sup> he assumes between the men of Argos as descended from Perseus and the people of the Eteo-Persian province of Fars, is a question with which we need not concern ourselves. Although the possibility of such a connection cannot be denied, the reality of it cannot be inferred from names which carry us into the regions of cloudland. But of the philological identity of the names Hellên, Hellas, Hellê, Helloi and Selloi,<sup>5</sup> Sellêis, and

<sup>1</sup> With the Persians the name is employed as constituting with the correlative An-iran, or non-Aryans, an exhaustive division of mankind: but in this division the Persians alone are Aryans. Max Müller, *Lectures on Language*, first series, lecture vi.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Max Müller is inclined to think that Achilles is the mortal solar hero Aharyu. According to Kumârila, Ahalyâ (in whose name the change from *r* to *l* begins) is the goddess of night; but 'India is called *ahalyâtai jârah*; it is most likely that she was meant for the dawn.'—*Lectures*, second series, 502.

<sup>3</sup> The Persians of the Persians bear, Mr. Gladstone remarks, 'the name Eelliat, which at least presents a striking resemblance to that of the Helli. The aspirate would pass into the doubled *s* like "Ἥλιος into ἡέλιος, or *ēdva* into *ēēdva*.'—*Homer and the Homeric Age*, i. 572

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* i. 557. Herod. vii. 61, 150.

<sup>5</sup> The reading of the text in *Il.* xvi. 234 is a matter of indifference. As the name Hellas points to the collective name Helloi, so the Sellêis, *Il.* ii. 659, &c., points to the Selloi; and the change of the aspirate into *s* is one of the commonest.





Hellôtis as a name of Athênê, or again of these names with Helios, Eëlios, and the Latin Sol, there can be no question. Here then we have another group of names, every one of which resolves itself into the idea of solar brightness. for the root *sur*, to glitter, furnished the special Sanskrit name for the Sun whether male or female.<sup>1</sup> Hence, as we might expect, the mythical genealogy of the Hellênes plays throughout on the ideas of light and darkness. For Hellên himself is in one form of the legend the son of Deukalion and Pyrrha, names which connect themselves with such words as Polydeukes, Phoinix, and Ion; in another, he is the child of Zeus, the gleaming heaven, and Dorippê. Of his children one is the dusky Xouthos, another the flashing Aiolos, a name which must be traced seemingly to the same root with the Aithêr of Zeus and the Aithiopians (Ethiopians) of the Odyssey. The two sons of the dark Xouthos are the eponyms of the Ionian and Achaian clans; but Iôn shares his name with other violet-coloured mythical creations, and Achaïos with Achilleus must, it would seem, be referred to the Vedic solar hero Aharyu. Thus, with the Delians, Lykians, and Ortygians, the Hellênes are, like the people of Khorassan, simply the children of the light and the sun, and the Hellespont marks their pathway.<sup>2</sup>

By this name all the tribes and clans who traced their descent from Hellên and Deukalion acknowledged the bonds of affinity which, as they supposed, connected them with each other. A strictly local or geographical name it never became. Wherever the Hellênes went, they carried Hellas with them. It might be scattered among the islands of the Egean; it might be fixed on the mainland between that sea and the Hadriatic; it might be transferred to the soil of Italy; but the dwelling-place of the children of the Sun retained everywhere the same name.<sup>3</sup> As Hellênes they

Greeks  
and Hesperians.

<sup>1</sup> Sûryâ is 'a female Sûrya, i.e. the Sun as a feminine, or, according to the commentator, the Dawn again under a different name. In the Rîg-Veda, too, the Dawn is called the wife of Sûrya, and the Asvins are sometimes called the husbands of Sûryâ.'—Max Müller, *Lectures*, second series, xi.

*ῥένθος* : *ῥάθος*.—Max Müller, *Comparative Mythology*, 47. The word is thus the precise equivalent of Lykabas, the path of Light trodden by the Sun-god.

<sup>3</sup> Ἑλλὰς σποραδική, Ἑλλὰς συνεχής. With the Latins it was long before Southern Italy ceased to be commonly spoken of as Magna Græcia.

<sup>2</sup> πόντος : πῶτος = πένθος : πῶθος =



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had a bond of union, which was the nearest Greek approach to the modern idea of nationality, and which in greater or less degree counteracted or softened the animosities of Dorians and Ionians, of Athenians and Spartans, of Argives and Achaïans. And yet the name which thus served to link them together with some sort of friendly or even national feeling was a word of precisely the same meaning with the tribal or local names which were supposed to denote some real distinctions of blood. But this was not the title by which they were known in Western Europe. It never came into common use among the Latins, who spoke of them as Graii, and Græci or Greeks. Of any such people to the east of the Hadriatic the earliest notice is in the statement of Aristotle, that the people dwelling round the Thesprotian Dodona were called Graikoi before they were called Hellènes.<sup>1</sup> Following the path in which the names thus far examined assuredly lead us, we should expect to find in Western Hellas some names denoting the gloaming or doubtful light of eventide. As Perseus journeyed westward, he came to the land of the Graiai, or gray beings, before he reached the gloomy dwelling of the Gorgons. To the inhabitants of Thessaly, Epeiros was the gray land of the setting sun, and here accordingly we find the Graioi. But this name, it would seem, must have been accepted as a local name for the country to the west of mount Pindos, before the Latin tribes had any knowledge of their Eastern neighbours. The name Hesperia, which the Hellènes applied to Italy, the Latins never acknowledged for themselves; and with Virgil the use of it is due merely to the poet's fancy. Graians and Hesperians are thus alike the people of the dusky land, the Epeiroi tribes acknowledging the name because it was applied to them by their immediate kinsfolk, the Italians ignoring it, or possibly not knowing it as a word belonging to another language.<sup>2</sup>

But if the Latin name has any connection with that of the Danaoi, it becomes at the least possible that other tribal

Italian  
and Teu-  
tonic  
tribal  
names.

<sup>1</sup> Grote, *History of Greece*, part ii. ch. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Niebuhr remarks that in old Latin two names of nations were in use in

every instance, one simple, as Graii, and one derivative, as Græci. *History of Rome*, i. 45.





names of the countries east of the Hadriatic may be found on the great Italian peninsula: and thus, following the law which modifies the Sanskrit *apa*, water, into the Greek Achelôos, Acheron, and Axios, and the Latin aqua, we should expect that the name of the Achaïans, if it reappeared at all, would undergo a similar change. Apulians and Æquians we do find; and it remains to be proved whether the coincidence be or be not accidental. That the same names should be used in common by tribes whose dialects are so closely akin as those of the Greeks and Latins, is assuredly not antecedently improbable: and thus some colour is furnished for the inferences of Niebuhr, who traces to these two forms a very large proportion of the tribal names of the Italian peninsula.<sup>1</sup> Such a name as that of the Rutulians forces on us a comparison with that of Argives, Arkadians, and Phenicians: and the mythology of Virgil points in the same direction.<sup>2</sup> Whether this identity be established or not, the instances already adduced suffice to show that, with scarcely an exception, the Greek tribal names are merely words denoting colour, and all pointing in the same direction of mythopœic or radical metaphor. That the same process should go on among all peoples speaking kindred dialects, is no more than we should expect; and the expectation will be fully justified. The English Baldringas are children of the Sun not less than the Hellenes, the Athenians, and the Lyki-ans, and they still have their home at Baldringham. Another Teutonic Sun-god, the Eddic Tyr, the English Tiw, had his dwelling and his children at Tewing and Tewesley. The sons of Thunder and grinding War gave their names to

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that the Italian dialects exhibited differences as great as those which separated them from the Greek, or the Greek dialects from each other; and thus the Latin equivalents of Greek words would show changes analogous to the Greek equivalents of Latin words. Thus, in Niebuhr's judgment, the Latin form of the name of the Apulian or Opican people would be Æqui. Other forms of these names would be Opseus, Oseus, Ausones, Aurunci, Sabini, Sarnis, Samnis, Iapygians. Niebuhr seems inclined to identify the names Æqui and Volsci through

the intermediate forms Opieus, Opseus, Oseus, Olsus. *History of Rome*, vol. i. 'Ancient Italy.'

<sup>2</sup> We know that the name Tyrrhenus was not an Etruscan word, and hence there is perhaps some reason for connecting Tyrrhenus, Turnus, Τύρρος, Τύρρος, turris, and for regarding the name as the equivalent of the Greek Larissaioi. Turnus is a son of Danaus, and of Venilia (Venus) a sister of Amata. In the Æneid Juturna is his faithful sister; but the resemblance of the two names is probably the result of accident.



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Thorington and Eormington. Nay, the very names of Yng and Isco, the two sons of Man the son of Tiw, are merely words denoting the ash tree, from which, according to both German and Hellenic notions, some of the human races had sprung.<sup>1</sup>

Ethno-  
logical  
inferences.

From all these names no further ethnological conclusion can be drawn than that all the nations and tribes speaking Aryan dialects are sprung from ancestors who once dwelt somewhere as a single people. As evidence for narrower distinctions they are worthless. Argives and Athenians, Ionians and Arkadians, may have regarded each other as aliens, but their names have all the same meaning; and all their legends of prehistoric migrations and conquests resolve themselves into the great journey and the mighty battle which is repeated every morning and evening through all the seasons of the rolling year. We can no longer look to movements of Aiolians, Argives, or Herakleids as throwing light on the distribution of the Hellenic tribes in historical times.<sup>2</sup> The facts of that distribution must be received as they are given to us by the most trustworthy contemporary historians: to reason back from history into the regions of myth is an occupation not more profitable than the attempt to fill a sieve with water.

<sup>1</sup> Yng is apparently the eponymos of Angeln and the English. Max Müller, *Lectures*, second series, x.

<sup>2</sup> On this point Professor Max Müller speaks with sufficient emphasis: 'It may be difficult to confess that with all the traditions of the early migrations of Cecrops and Danaus into Greece, with the Homeric poems of the Trojan war, and the genealogies of the ancient dynasties of Greece, we know nothing of Greek history before the Olympiads, and

very little even then. . . . Even the traditions of the migrations of the Chichimecs, Colhuas, and Nahuas, which form the staple of all American antiquarians, are no better than the Greek traditions about Pelasgians, Æolians, and Ionians, and it would be a mere waste of time to construct out of such elements a systematic history, only to be destroyed again sooner or later by some Niebuhr, Grote, or Lewis.'—*Chips*, i. 331.





## CHAPTER XI.

MYTHICAL PHRASES FURNISHING THE MATERIALS OF THE  
HOMERIC POEMS.

IF the history of Greek literature to the close of the Peloponnesian War shows that the poems to which we give the name of Homer did not constitute the Homer of the lyric, tragic, or comic poets, and that our Iliad and Odyssey were, in the precise form transmitted to us, either unknown to them, or (what is altogether improbable), unpopular if known, these conclusions, it must not be forgotten, are only negative. The most zealous Euemerists of the present day admit that 'the general scheme of the Iliad existed before the days of Homer;' the most advanced sceptics have never supposed that the later poets of the Iliad and the Odyssey invented the materials of which they have made use. It is even likely that large portions of our Iliad and Odyssey may have existed substantially in their present shape long before the days of Æschylos and Sophokles; and even if we say that these two poems were thrown into their final form not long before the time of Plato, we do but say that from the vast mass of Homeric literature the poets chose those portions which from their general tone of thought and feeling were most congenial to the sentiment of the age in which they lived, that from the stories so chosen they removed unpleasant roughnesses and archaisms, and kept as much in the background as they could the ruder and more savage features of the traditions followed by the great tragic poets.<sup>1</sup>

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XI.Extent of  
the old  
Homeric  
literature.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Paley, in his paper on the comparatively late date of our Homeric poems, asserts distinctly that 'the remodelling and reducing any important part of' the 'vast mass of "Homeric"

literature would necessarily leave the stamp of the old authorship upon it, and so it would remain "Homer" still.' Not only, therefore, are the objections groundless which urge 'that no historical



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Homeric  
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logy.

In short, as soon as we have dismissed all speculations on possible historical quarrels fought out on the shores of the Propontis, as soon as we allow that if the Homeric poems turn on any historical quarrel at all, that quarrel must be carried back to an age indefinitely preceding the first dispersion of the Aryan tribes, we are at once left free to account for the origin and the growth of Homeric materials; and the shutting up of all other pathways shows, that if the question is ever to be answered, it can be answered only by following the track of Comparative Mythology.

But the evidence which disproves the assertion of Bunsen, that our Iliad is 'the sacred ground-work of lyrical poetry no less than of the drama,'<sup>1</sup> invalidates at the same time all those arguments from the silence of our Homeric poems, on which some recent writers have been disposed to lay much stress. These arguments at best cannot reach very far. The epithet which speaks of Zeus as a son of Kronos implies a knowledge of dynasties among the gods; and the weight of proof lies therefore with those who maintain that the framer of the Iliad had never heard the story of Prometheus. Another epithet implies the knowledge that Achilles was to die young, even if we put aside the passage which speaks of his death in the Odyssey. The poet of our Iliad knew that Paris was called Alexandros; and it is impossible to show that he was unacquainted with the myths which professed to explain the origin of this name. He also knew that the whole expedition of the Achæians against Troy was but an incident in the epical history of Paris, for the very cause of the war is that Paris came and stole Helen from the house of Menelaos. He knew further, for he tells us plainly, that the inaction of Achilles had its counterpart in the inaction of Paris; and if he tells us how, after his long fit of sullen anger, Achilles came forth in all his old energy, he also knew that Paris was not to be always idle, and that from him Achilles himself was to receive his death-wound.<sup>2</sup> Nothing

evidence exists of any new Homer having superseded the old Homer, but it follows that the poets would 'retain the general archaic type of the heroic manners and dialogue.'

<sup>1</sup> *God in History*, book iv. ch. viii.

<sup>2</sup> ἤματι τῷ ὅτε κέν σε Πάρις καὶ Φοῖβος  
Ἀπόλλων  
ἔσθλ' ἔδοντ' ὀλέσσωσιν ἐνὶ Σκαίῃσι  
πόλυσιν. II. xxii. 359.





less than the clearest proof that our Homer was the Homer of Pindar, Æschylos, and Sophokles, can weaken the conclusion that our poems are compilations, made for a purpose, from the vast existing mass of Homeric literature. If this purpose was to supply, 'in a convenient and symmetrical form, the most celebrated and most engrossing incidents of the war,'<sup>1</sup> it is unreasonable to look to the *Iliad* for notices of myths which lay beyond the region of the poet's immediate subject, and it clearly did not concern him to go through the genealogies of the Hesiodic theogony even if he knew them. His task was to exhibit a few incidents in the special career of Paris on the one side and of Achilleus on the other; and if he knew that these incidents were linked with others of which he does not speak, it only remains to point out resemblances which probably escaped his notice, and to account for their occurrence. It is of the very essence of mythology that the original signification of the names which serve as the groundwork of its narratives should be only in part remembered. The author of the hymn to Hermes had at best only an intermittent consciousness that he was simply relating the rivalry of the wind and the sun; but he knew enough of the attributes of Hermeias to write a poem, almost every line of which points to the mythical speech of which the tale is a petrification. The author of the *Iliad* may not have felt that Achilleus was but a reflection of Tantalos and Ixion, Sisyphos and Lykaôn: but his language throughout the poem harmonises strangely with the mythical phrases which speak of the lord of day when he hides away his face behind the clouds. He could not know that the Northman, even then wandering in regions which for the Achaian had no existence, was framing the tale which grew up into the epic of the Volsungs and the Nibelungs, and that in that tale Achilleus and his mother Thetis were represented by Sigurd and his mother Hjordis. With the cause of the expedition to Troy he had no immediate concern. He tells us, in passing, the cause of the war; but his theme is the wrath of the great chieftain from Phthia, and he has kept to that theme with wonderful fidelity, if not to the

<sup>1</sup> Paley, *On the late Date of our Iliad and Odyssey*, 8.



Greek nature, yet to the old mythical speech. For after the admission of critics opposed to the hypothesis of Wolf, that the fragments in which the Homeric text was handed down from remote antiquity 'were cast and recast, stitched together, unstitched again, handled by uncritical and unscrupulous compilers in every possible way,'<sup>1</sup> it is impossible to dispute the conclusion that those portions of the poem which relate exclusively to the independent exploits of the other chiefs were at some later time embodied into a poem which may conveniently be termed an Achillêis.<sup>2</sup> Nor, if it be necessary to account for this insertion, have we far to go for a reason. The theme chosen by the author of the Achillêis confined him to a period of comparative inaction. The valour of the Achaians could only be asserted by an independent poem which showed that they were not helpless<sup>3</sup> even without the aid of the great son of Peleus. It is not surprising that the two poems should, with others which fitted in with the general plan, have been gradually blended together.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1858, p. 503.

<sup>2</sup> The downfall of the Eumeristic or conservative hypotheses make it really unnecessary to examine the mode in which the several portions of the *Iliad* have been pieced together. It is enough to say that, when the whole narrative of the *Iliad* has been proved to be unhistorical, and when the narratives of later alleged events have also been shown to possess no historical value, the burden of proof rests with those who affirm, not with those who deny, the original unity of a poem which, it is admitted on all sides, was in existence before the use of writing became general or adequate to the production of long manuscripts. It may be added, however, that the arguments of Colonel Mure (*History of Greek Literature*, book ii. ch. xvi.) and Mr. Gladstone (*Homer and the Homeric Age*, 'Aoidos'), fail altogether to meet the objections urged by Mr. Grote against the original continuity of the poem in its present form. Mr. Grote's remarks (*History of Greece*, part i. ch. xxi.) on the embassy to Achilles dispose conclusively of every attempt to maintain the unitarian

theory on the ground of a supposed moral consistency in the character of Achilles, while it also shows that the writer of the Achillêis knew nothing of the first effort for reconciliation. See Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, part iv. ch. ii. sect. 3, where the like reasons are urged for regarding certain passages in the Mahābhārata as interpolations.

<sup>3</sup> Colonel Mure, strangely enough, sees in *Il.* ii.-vii. nothing but a catalogue of disasters, bringing misery and disgrace on the Argive hosts. *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 256. Mr. Grote, far more truly, says that the great chiefs are 'in full force at the beginning of the eleventh book.'—*History of Greece*, part i. ch. xxi.

<sup>4</sup> It would seem that the chief error of Wolf and his followers was the attempt to fix the date of this combination, which they attributed to Peisistratos. The acknowledged antiquity of the materials led them naturally to throw back, as far as possible, their work of bringing them into their present shape. The question loses much of the factitious importance given to it by anti-Wolfian critics, when the unhistorical character of the whole narrative of the *Iliad* has





Thus was produced an epic as magnificent as it is complicated; but through all its intricacy may be traced the thread of the original myth: and the fact that it may be so traced becomes the more remarkable as we realise the extent to which the process of disintegration has been carried on. If the poem does not exhibit the systematised theogony of Hesiod, still Phoibos is in it a person distinct from Helios, Artemis, or Athênê. Hekabê is no longer identified with Selênê or Lêtô: Zeus is no longer one with Ouranos. Only a few signs remain of that interchangeable character which is so prominent in the gods of the earlier Vedic poems. And further, the *Iliad*, by the admission alike of those who uphold and of those who reject the Wolfian theory, necessarily exhibits the later elements which must spring up with the growth of a definite religion, and the developement of something like civil government. Still, on the Trojan shore, facing the island of Tenedos, the old tale is repeated, which assumes a gloomier form in the mythology of the North. The mighty Achilleus, over whose childhood had watched Phoinix (the purple cloud), is there to fight, but, like Bellerophon, as he insists emphatically, in no quarrel of his own.<sup>1</sup> A hard toil is before him, but, as with Herakles, the honour which he wins is not to be his own.<sup>2</sup> Like Herakles, again, and Perseus and Theseus, his limbs are strong, and his heart knows no fear. In place of the sword of Apollôn, the Chrysâôr, or the Teutonic Sigurd, he has the unerring spear which no mortal can wield but himself.<sup>3</sup> Still, like Herakles and Apollôn and Perseus and Bellerophôn, he is practically the servant of one on whom he looks down with a deserved contempt.<sup>4</sup> On him falls all the labour of war, but the spoil which he wins with his bow and spear must pass into the

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been clearly shown on grounds quite unconnected with the time of their composition. The real facts of Greek literary history lead Mr. Paley to the conclusion 'that there is not one shadow or tittle of proof that the Homer which we have was the Homer that Peisistratos is said, whether truly or not, to have collected and introduced into Athens.' *The late Date of our Iliad and Odyssey*, 7.

<sup>1</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ Τρώων ἔνεκ' ἤλυθον  
αἰχμητῶν  
δεῦρο μαχησόμενος· ἐπεὶ οὔτι μοι  
αἵτιοί εἰσιν. *Iliad*. i. 153.

<sup>2</sup> τιμὴν ἀρνύμενοι Μενελάω, σοὶ τε,  
κυνώπα. *Ib.* i. 159.

<sup>3</sup> τὸ μὲν οὐ δύνατ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν  
πάλλειν, ἀλλὰ μιν οἷος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι  
'Αχιλλεύς. *Ib.* xvi. 142.

<sup>4</sup> This contempt is fully expressed—  
*Il.* i. 225-231.



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hands of Agamemnon,<sup>1</sup> as those of Herakles fall to the lot of Eurystheus. Still he has his consolation. He is cheered by the love of Hippodameia<sup>2</sup> (the tamer of the horses of the Sun). But even Briséis he must now give up, as Herakles was compelled to part from Iolê. At the very thought of losing her, his passion overleaps all barriers; but his rage is subdued by the touch of Athênê, the daughter of Zeus, the sky.<sup>3</sup> He must yield, but with Briséis vanishes the light of his life, and he vows a solemn vow that henceforth in the war the Achaians shall look in vain for his aid.<sup>4</sup> He hangs up his sword and spear in his tent, takes off his glittering armour, and the Argive warriors see the face of the bright hero no more. Yet even the fierceness of his wrath cannot avail to keep entirely in the background another feature in which he resembles Herakles, Sigurd, Theseus, and Iasôn. Briséis is gone, but Diomêdê, the daughter of Phorbas, supplies her place, as Oinônê gives way to Helen, and the wise Medeia to the daughter of the Argive Kreôn. But the mind of Achilleus remains unchanged. His wrath is terrible as the wrath of the angry sun, and he bids Thetis, his mother, go to the throne of Zeus, who dwells in the bright ether, and pray him to send such a storm as may well make the Achaians rate their king at his true value.<sup>5</sup> The darkness thickens, but at first the Achaians care not. Zeus alone knows and proclaims that the fortunes of the Argives themselves must remain under the cloud until Achilleus again goes forth to battle.<sup>6</sup> His words are soon accomplished. The knowledge that the great champion of the Argives no longer takes part in the war inspires the Trojans with fresh strength. The storm-clouds rise with greater volume when

<sup>1</sup> τὸ μὲν πλεῖον πολυαῖκος πολέμοιο  
χεῖρες ἐμαὶ διέπουν· ἀτὰρ ἦν ποτε  
δασυὺς ἱκηται,

σοὶ τὸ γέρας πολὺ μείζον. *Il.* i. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Briséis was to the Greek a mere patronymic. The father of Briséis is the Vedic Brisaya. 'Destroy, Saraswati, the revilers of the gods, the offspring of the universal deluder, Brisaya.'—H. H. Wilson, *R. N. S.* iii. 515.

<sup>3</sup> It is at the least worthy of note that, while Briséis comes from Lyrnessos,

Diomêdê, who takes her place, belongs to the south-western Lesbos. *Il.* ix. 658. So Oinônê lives on Ida, but Helen in the far west. Iolê is the daughter of Eurytos (another name of the class Euryganeia, &c.), in the eastern island of Eubœia; Déianeira lives in the western Kalydon.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* i. 240.

<sup>5</sup> *Il.* i. 407–412.

<sup>6</sup> *Il.* viii. 477.





the light of the sun is blotted out of the sky. Still the great chiefs of the Argives stand forth in unabated confidence;<sup>1</sup> but Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomêdes are soon wounded in the fight, and the Achaians begin to realise their grievous loss. Their misery excites the compassion of Patroklos, in whom the character of Achilleus is reflected, as is that of Helios in Phaëthôn, or that of Odysseus in Telemachos.<sup>2</sup> Melted by the tears of his friend, Achilleus gives him his own armour, and bids him go forth to aid the Argives. But with this charge he joins a caution. Phaëthôn must not touch with his whip the horses of Helios.<sup>3</sup> Patroklos must not drive the chariot of Achilleus on any other path than that which has been pointed out to him.<sup>4</sup> But although Patroklos can wear the armour of Achilleus, he cannot wield his spear.<sup>5</sup> The sword and lance of Apollôn and Perseus, of Theseus and Artemis, may be touched by no other hands than their own. Patroklos is ready for the fight, and yoked to the car of Achilleus stand the immortal horses Xanthos and Balios (golden and speckled as a summer sky), which Podargê, the glistening-footed, bare to Zephyros, the strong west wind, near the shore of the Ocean stream.<sup>6</sup> The sun is breaking out for a moment through the mist. Like hungry wolves, the Myrmidons (the streaming rays) stand forth to arm themselves at the bidding of their chieftain.<sup>7</sup> For a time the strength of Achilleus nerves the arm of Patroklos, so that

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* ix. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Grote has remarked this. 'Patroklos has no substantive position; he is the attached friend and second of Achilleus, but nothing else.'—*History of Greece*, ii. 238. Colonel Mure, however, discerns in the contrast between the two strong evidence of Homer's 'knowledge of human nature.'—*Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* i. 285.

<sup>3</sup> These heavenly steeds of Achilleus and Indra are not less prominent in the myths of Northern Europe; and some of them are endowed with that gift of speech which Xanthos possesses as the golden or gleaming horse of the sun itself, while it is denied to Balios, the mottled or speckled steed which represents the sunlit clouds. Thus the horse of Skirnir speaks to its master in the Edda, and Gudrun, after the death of Sigurd, talks with Gran, the noble steed,

which may well mourn for the hero who took him from king Hialprek's stall and rode on him through the flames when he went to recover the stolen treasures. This horse, Grimm remarks, appears in the Swedish and Danish folk-lore under the name Black, a word which, it can scarcely be necessary to say, may signify whiteness and light not less than gloom and darkness. The same power of speech belongs in the Servian legend to Scharatz, who speaks to Marko shortly before his death, as Xanthos warns Achilleus of his impending doom. For other instances see Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, 365.

<sup>4</sup> μή σύ γ' ἀνευθεν ἐμείο λαλαῖσθαι πολεμίζειν. *Il.* xvi. 89.

<sup>5</sup> ἔγχος δ' οὐχ ἔλετ' οἶον ἀνύμονος Αἰακίδαο, κ.τ.λ. *Ib.* xvi. 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* xvi. 151.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* xvi. 156.



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he can smite Sarpêdôn, the great chief of the Lykians, in whose veins runs the blood of Bellerophôn, and for whom the bitter tears of Zeus fall in big drops of rain from the sky.<sup>1</sup> But the transient splendour is soon dimmed. It was but the semblance of the sun looking out from the dark cloud; and Patroklos, therefore, meets his doom. But the poet recurs unconsciously to the old myth, and it is Apollôn who disarms Patroklos,<sup>2</sup> although it is Hektor who slays him. The immortal horses weep for his death and the fall of their charioteer Automedon, while Zeus mourns that ever he bestowed them as a gift on so mean and wretched a thing as man.<sup>3</sup> In the fearful struggle which follows for the body of Patroklos, the clouds are seen fighting a fierce battle over the sun, whose splendour they have for a time extinguished. The ragged and streaming vapours which rush across the sky have their counterpart in the throng of Trojans who fling themselves like hounds on the wounded boar.<sup>4</sup> But a fiercer storm is raging behind the dark veil. Beneath the 'black cloud of his sorrow' the anguish of Achilles is preparing an awful vengeance.<sup>5</sup> The beauty of his countenance is marred, but the nymphs rise from the sea to comfort him,<sup>6</sup> as folk still say, 'the sun drinks,' when the long rays stream slantwise from the clouds to the waters beneath. One desire alone fills his heart, the burning thirst for vengeance; but when Thetis warns him that the death of Hektor must soon be followed by his own,<sup>7</sup> his answer is that the destruction of his great enemy will be ample recompense for his own early doom. Even Herakles, the dearest of the sons of Zeus,

<sup>1</sup> αἱματόεσσας δὲ ψιάδας κατέχευεν ἔραζε. *Il.* xvi. 459.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* xvi. 790, κ.τ.λ. This was a strict mythical necessity; yet Colonel Mure lays great stress on it as showing the cowardice and brutality of Hektor. *Crit. Hist.* vol. i. p. 281. The result of his method is, that he finds himself compelled on every occasion to vilify the Trojans for the exaltation of their enemies. In a less degree, Mr. Gladstone's criticism lies open to the same remark.

<sup>3</sup> *Il.* xvii. 444.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* xvii. 725.

<sup>5</sup> ὡς φάτο· τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα. *Il.* xviii. 22.

<sup>6</sup> *Il.* xviii. 36. These nymphs are only half anthropomorphised. Their names still express their own meaning.

<sup>7</sup> *Il.* xviii. 96. The real nature of this myth becomes still more apparent when looked at through the bald statements of Apollodoros, iii. 13. 8. Troy, he says, cannot be taken without Achilles: the sun alone can subdue the dark clouds. But Thetis knows that, after Troy is taken, Achilles must die. The sun must set after his victory over the mists. So she disguises Achilles in woman's garb, as the light clouds half veil the early risen sun.





had submitted to the same hard lot.<sup>1</sup> His mind is made up. He retains still the unerring spear. It remains only that he should wait for the glistening armour wrought on the anvil of the fire-god Hephaistos. But, although the hour of his vengeance is not yet come, his countenance still has its terrors, and the very sight of his form<sup>2</sup> fills the Trojans with dismay, as they hear his well-known war-cry. His work is in part done. The body of Patroklos is recovered as the sun goes down unwillingly into the stream of ocean.<sup>3</sup> Then follows the awful vow of Achilleus. There shall be a goodly mourning for Patroklos. The life-blood of twelve Trojans shall gush in twelve streams on the altar of sacrifice,<sup>4</sup> like the torn and crimsoned clouds which stream up into the purple heaven when the angry sun has sunk beneath the sea. But the old phrases, which spoke of Helios or Herakles as subject to death, still spoke of both as coming forth conquerors of the power which had seemed to subdue them; and, true to the ancient speech, the poet makes Thetis assure her son that no hurtful thing shall touch the body of Patroklos, and that, though it should lie untended the whole year round, his face should wear at its close a more glorious and touching beauty.<sup>5</sup> The end draws nigh. The very helmsmen leave the ships as they hear the cry of Achilleus calling them once again to battle.<sup>6</sup> His wrongs

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xviii. 117.<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* xviii. 205. Here the sun is not unclouded. So Achilleus has about his head a golden cloud (*χρόσεον νέφος*), and the glory streams from him like smoke going up to heaven. The rays of the sun are bursting from the cloud.<sup>3</sup> *Il.* xviii. 240.<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* xviii. 336.<sup>5</sup> ἥνπερ γὰρ κῆταί γε τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν, αἰεὶ τῷδ' ἔσται χρὸς ἔμπεδος, ἥ καὶ ἀρείων. *Il.* xix. 33.

This incorruptibility of the bodies of solar heroes is strikingly brought out in modern Hindu legends, which are, as we might expect, even more transparent than those of the Teutonic nations. Thus, when the destined husband of Panch Phul Rance dies on the seventh hedge of spears, her father asks, 'How is it that he thus dazzles our eyes?' and the glory shines

round him even in the hours of darkness. It is the same with Chundun Rajah, whose tomb the people came from far and near to visit, 'and see the great miracle how the body of him who had been dead so many months remained perfect and undecayed.' So, too, the body of Sodeva Bai, the Hindu Cinderella or Rhodôpis, cannot decay, nor can the colour of her face change. 'A month afterwards, when her husband returned home, she looked as fair and lovely as on the night on which she died.'—Frere, *Old Deccan Days*. Both these beings die, or seem to die, because they are deprived of that in which their strength lies, as in the golden locks of Nisos, who becomes powerless as Samson when they are taken from his head; but over these bright beings death can have no real dominion, and they all rise to more than their former splendour.<sup>6</sup> *Il.* xix. 44.



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shall be redressed. Agamemnon, the king, will yield to him the maiden whom he had taken away, and with her shall come other maidens not less fair, and gifts of priceless beauty.<sup>1</sup> But, with a persistency which, except by a reference to the sources of the myth, is at best a dark riddle, Agamemnon asserts his own innocence. 'I am not guilty,' he said. 'The blame rests with Zeus and Moira (who fixes the lot of man), and Erinys, who wanders in the air.' So the old wrong is atoned. The gifts are placed before him. The fair maidens come forth from the tent, but, with a singular fidelity to the old legend, Briseïs comes last of all,<sup>2</sup> beautiful and pure as in the hour when he parted from her,<sup>3</sup> even as Oinônê in her unsullied loveliness appears by the side of the dying Paris, or Iolê by the pyre of Herakles. Then it is that Achilles forgives the wrong done to him, but repeats the riddle which lurked in the words of Agamemnon. It was not anything in the son of Atreus that could really call forth his wrath. 'He could never, in his utter helplessness, have taken the maiden from me against my will; but so Zeus would have it, that the doom of many Achaians might be accomplished.'<sup>4</sup> So he bids them go and eat, and make ready for the fight; but when Agamemnon would have Achilles himself feast with them, the answer is that the time for the banquet is not yet come. His friend lies unavenged, and of neither meat nor drink will he taste till his last fight is fought and won.<sup>5</sup> The same truthfulness to the old idea runs through the magnificent passage which tells of the arming of Achilles. The helmets of the humbler warriors are like the cold snow-flakes which gather in the north.<sup>6</sup> But when Achilles dons his armour, a glorious light flashes up to heaven, and the earth laughs at its dazzling radiance.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xix. 140. This is the first submission made by Agamemnon in the *Achillêis*. It may be noted that here he not only acquits himself of guilt (86), but, in order to fix the blame on Zeus, recites a tale which is essentially a separate poem, and may have existed long before, or apart from, the *Ilias* or the *Achillêis*, as may have been the case with such lays as those of Phoinix, *Il.* ix. 529, and Demodokos, *Od.* viii. 266.

<sup>2</sup> ἔπτ', ἀτὰρ ὀγδοάτην Βρισηίδα καλλιπάρην. *Il.* xix. 245.

<sup>3</sup> *Il.* xix. 261.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* xix. 274.

<sup>5</sup> *Il.* xix. 210.

<sup>6</sup> ὥς δ' ὅτε ταρφείαι νιφάδες Διὸς ἐκποτέονται  
ψυχραί, ἐπὶ ῥιπῆς αἰθρηγενέας βορέας. *Il.* xix. 358.

<sup>7</sup> αἴγλη δ' οὐρανὸν ἴκε, γέλασσε δὲ πᾶσα περὶ χθονὶ  
χαλκοῦ ἐπὶ στεροπῆς. *Il.* xix. 363.





His shield gleams like the blood-red moon, as it rises from the sea.<sup>1</sup> His helmet glitters like a star, and each hair in the plume glistens like burnished gold. When he tries the armour to see whether it fits his limbs, it bears him like a bird upon the wing.<sup>2</sup> Last of all, he takes down his spear, which none but himself can handle, while Alkimos and Automedon (the strong and the mighty) harness his immortal horses. As he mounts the chariot, he bids them bear him safe through the battle, and not leave him to die as they had left Patroklos. Then the horse Xanthos bows his head, and warns him of the coming doom. Their force is not abated. They can still run swifter than the swiftest wind, and their will is only to save the lord whom they serve and love. But the will of Zeus is stronger still, and Achilles too must die.<sup>3</sup> It is a kindly warning, and the hero takes it in good part. 'I know,' he says, 'that I shall see my father and my mother again no more; but the work of vengeance must be accomplished.' Then, before the great strife begins, Zeus bids all the gods (the powers of heaven) take each his side. He alone will look down serenely on the struggle as it rages beneath him.<sup>4</sup> Many a Trojan warrior falls by the spear of Achilles, and the battle waxes fiercer, until all the powers of heaven and earth seem mingled in one wild turmoil. The river Skamandros is indignant that the dead body of Lykâôn, the (bright) son of Priam, should be cast into its waters, and complains to Achilles that his course to the sea is clogged by the blood which is poured into it.<sup>5</sup> But Achilles leaps fearlessly into the stream, and Skamandros calls for aid to Simoeis. The two rivers swell, and Achilles is almost overborne.<sup>6</sup> It is a war of elements. The sun is almost conquered by the raging rain. But another power comes upon the scene, and the flood yields to Hephaistos, the might of the fiery lightning.<sup>7</sup> Fiercer yet grows the

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xix. 374.<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* xix. 386.<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* xix. 387-417.<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* xx. 22. The sky itself, regarded as the pure ether in which Zeus dwells, far above the murky air breathed by mortal men (*κελευσφές, αἰθέρι ναίων*),

cannot be conceived as taking part in the contest, although the clouds and lightnings, the winds and vapours, beneath it may.

<sup>5</sup> *Il.* xxi. 219.<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* xxi. 325.<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* xxi. 345.



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I.

strife. The gods themselves struggle wildly in the fray, while Zeus laughs at the sight.<sup>1</sup> Artemis falls, smitten by Hêrê, and her arrows (the sun's rays) are gathered up by Lêtô and carried to the throne of Zeus.<sup>2</sup> But through all the wild confusion of the strife Achilles hastens surely to his victory. Before him stands his enemy; but the spell which guarded the life of Hektor is broken, for Phoibos has forsaken him.<sup>3</sup> In vain he hurls his spear at Achilles, in vain he draws his sword. Still Achilles cannot reach him through the armour of Patroklos,<sup>4</sup> and the death wound is given where an opening in the plates left his neck bare. The prayer of Hektor for mercy is dismissed with contempt, and, in his boundless rage, Achilles tramples on the body,<sup>5</sup> as the blazing sun seems to trample on the darkness into which it is sinking.

The close  
of the  
Achillêis.

At this point, in the belief of Mr. Grote, the original Achillêis ended. 'The death of Hektor satisfies the exigencies of a coherent scheme, and we are not entitled to extend the oldest poem beyond the limit which such necessity prescribes.'<sup>6</sup> The force of the objection depends on the idea by which the poet, either consciously or unconsciously, was guided in his design. The sudden plunge of the sun into the darkness which he has for a moment dispelled would be well represented by an abrupt ending with the death of Hektor. The 'more merciful temper' which Achilles displays in the last book would not only be necessary 'to create proper sympathy with his triumph,' but it would be strictly in accordance with the idea of the sun setting in a broad blaze of generous splendour after his victory over the black mists, even though these are again to close in fierce strife

<sup>1</sup> ἐγέλασσε δὲ οἱ φίλον ἦτορ  
γηθοσύνην, ὃθ' ὄρωτο θεοὺς ἐριδι ξυνι-  
όντας. *Il.* xxi. 390.  
The ether looks down in grim serenity  
on the wild battle in the air beneath.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* xxi. 490-505.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* xxii. 213: λίπεν δὲ εἰ φοῖβος  
Ἀπόλλων. Too much stress can scarcely  
be laid on these words. In the first  
place, they make the slaying of Hektor  
quite as much an act of butchery as  
Colonel Mure represents the death of

Patroklos to be on the part of Hektor.  
In the second place, they remove both  
incidents out of the reach of all ethical  
criticism.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* xxii. 322.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* xxii. 395, κ.τ.λ. This is a trait  
of brutality scarcely to be explained by  
a reference to the manners of the heroic  
age. The mystery is solved when we  
compare it with the mythical language  
of the earlier Vedic hymns.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 266.





when he is dead.<sup>1</sup> It is this transient gleam of more serene splendour which is signified by the games over which Achilles presides genially after the slaughter of the Trojan captives, whose blood reddens the ground, just as the torn streamers rush in crimsoned bands across the sky after a storm. Yet it is not easy to suppose with Mr. Grote that the *Achillêis* ended with the twenty-second book as it now stands, for that book closes with the mourning of Andromachê for Hektor, which, even in the eyes of a Greek, would hardly heighten the glory of the conqueror; and the author of it certainly knew of the visit of Priam which is related in the last book, for he makes the old man exhort his son-in-law of going to Achilles when he first learns once his son is dead.<sup>2</sup> But the feeling of the old solar myth, which was brought out prominently in the case of Hektor. With the aid of Apollôn he had been the great champion of his country. The desertion of the sun-god left him at the mercy of his enemy. But his body, like the body of Patroklos, must be preserved from all corruption. The ravenous dogs and birds are chased away by Aphroditê,<sup>3</sup> and Apollôn himself wraps it in mist and covers it with a golden shield.<sup>4</sup> From the *Odyssey* we learn that the idea underlying the story of the death of Achilles was that of an expiring blaze of splendour, followed by the darkness of the storm. Over his body the Achæians and Trojans struggle in mortal conflict, like the clouds fighting over the dead sun; and only the might of Zeus puts an end to the strife, for the winds alone can drive away the clouds. Then the sea-nymphs rise, fair as the skies of tranquil night, and wrap the form of the dead hero in a spotless shroud.

Thus the whole *Achillêis* is a magnificent solar epic, telling us of a sun rising in radiant majesty, soon hidden by the clouds, yet abiding his time of vengeance, when from the dark veil he breaks forth at last in more than his early strength, scattering the mists and kindling the ragged clouds which form his funeral pyre, nor caring whether his brief splendour shall be succeeded by a darker battle as the vapours

The whole  
*Achillêis* is  
a magnifi-  
cent solar  
epic.

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, xxiv. 41, 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Iliad*, xxii. 415.

<sup>3</sup> *Iliad*, xxiii. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* xxiv. 20.



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close again over his dying glory. The feeling of the old tale is scarcely weakened when the poet tells us of the great cairn which the mariner shall see from afar on the shore of the broad Hellespontos.<sup>1</sup>

The Trojan war is simply one scene of a long drama.

If this then be the common groundwork of the Achilléis and the epics of Northern Europe, the arguments of Mr. Grote against the original continuity of the *Iliad* in its present form are indefinitely strengthened. The Trojan war itself becomes simply a scene in a long drama,<sup>2</sup> of the other acts of which the poet incidentally betrays his knowledge. The life of Achilles runs in the same groove with that of Odysseus and Bellerophon; the personality of Patroklos dimly reflects that of Achilles, while the tale of Meleagros is simply an echo of the legend which, in its more expanded form and with heightened colours, relates the exploits of the son of Peleus.

The *Ilias* as contrasted with the Achilléis.

With this groundwork, the original Achilléis may have ended with the twenty-second book of our *Iliad*, or have been extended to the twenty-fourth. Apart from considerations of style, there is nothing in the story to militate against either supposition. If it ended with the earlier book, the poet closed his narrative with the triumphant outburst of the sun from the clouds which had hidden his glory. The poet who added the last two books was inspired by the old phrases which spoke of a time of serene though short-lived splendour after the sun's great victory. But with this tale of the Achilléis, whatever may be its close, the books which relate the independent exploits of Agamemnon and his attendant chiefs cannot possibly be made to fit. They are the expression of an almost unconscious feeling that a son of Peleus and Thetis was a being not sufficiently akin to Achaians to satisfy the instincts of national pride and patriotism.<sup>3</sup> It is of

<sup>1</sup> *Od.* xxiv. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Much blame, perhaps not altogether undeserved, has been bestowed on the critics who formed the so-called epic cycle and sought to find the sequence of the several legends on which the poems included in that cycle were founded. So far as they sought an historical sequence, they were wrong. Yet their feeling that there was a sequence in these tales was not without foundation. But the

sequence is one of phenomena, not of facts in human history.

<sup>3</sup> Both Colonel Mure and Mr. Gladstone search vigorously for every vestige of patriotism in the character of Achilles. It is very hard to find any, and harder still to see any in the passages which they adduce. It does exist in Hector, and the reason why it should exist in him is manifest.





course possible—in the opinion of Mr. Grote, it may be even probable—that the same poet who sang the wrath of Achilles afterwards recounted the exploits of Odysseus, Aias, and Diomêdes. The question is, after all, not material. If Mr. Grote is right in thinking that the last two books are an addition,<sup>1</sup> then the closing scene, which exhibits Achilles in his more genial aspect, existed as a distinct poem, and the final complement of this lay is found far apart in the closing book of the Odyssey. The perfect harmony of that picture of the hero's death with the spirit and language of the Achilléis may possibly be adduced as an argument for ascribing both Iliad and Odyssey to the same author; but it furnishes a much stronger warrant for asserting that more than one poet derived his inspiration from the mythical speech, which, even in the Greek heroic age, still retained more than half its life. Nay, in the Ilias itself, the legend of Meleagros, recited (it must be remembered) by the same Phoinix who guarded Achilles in his earlier years, exhibits still more forcibly the method in which phrases but partially understood, and incidents which had each received a local colouring and name, were wrought into the tales, whether of the Kalydonian chieftain, or Perseus, or Achilles. In times which even then were old, such phrases formed the common speech of the people, such incidents expressed the phenomena of their daily life; and this language was strictly the language of poetry, literally revelling in its boundless powers of creation and development. In almost every word lay the germ of an epic poem or a romance.<sup>2</sup> It is the less wonderful, therefore, if each incident was embodied in a separate legend, or even reproduced in the independent tales of separate tribes. A

<sup>1</sup> *History of Greece*, ii. 266.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot refrain from quoting the words of Mr. Price, in his Introduction to Warton's *History of English Poetry*: 'To take one example out of many, the life of Perseus might be made to pass for the outline of an old romance, or the story of some genuine chevalier preux. Let the reader only remember the illegitimate but royal descent of the hero, his exposure to almost certain death in infancy, his providential escape, the hospitality of Dictys, the criminal artifices

of Polydectes, the gallant vow by which the unsuspecting stranger hopes to lessen his obligation to the royal house of Seriphus, the consequences of that vow, the aid he receives from a god and goddess, the stratagem by which he gains a power over the monstrous daughter of Phorcys, &c. &c. &c.—let the reader only recall these circumstances to his memory, and he will instantly recognise the common details of early European romance.'—(P. 120.)



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I.

Ground-  
work of the  
Odyssey.

hundred Homers may well have lit their torch from this living fire.

Nor can we well shut our eyes to the fact that in the main story of the *Odyssey* the poet has set the same solar strain in another key. When Odysseus goes to Troy, he is simply a chieftain in the great host which went to recover the treasure taken from the West, like the Argonauts in their search for the Golden Fleece. But all these eastward expeditions are successful. The robber or seducer is despoiled of his prey, and the victors must journey back to their distant home. Thus, round the chieftain of each tribe would gather again all the ideas suggested by the ancient myths; and the light reflected from the glory of the great Phthiotic hero might well rest on the head of Odysseus as he turns to go from Ilion. Thus would begin a new career, not unlike that of Herakles or Perseus in all its essential features. Throughout the whole poem the one absorbing desire which fills the heart of Odysseus is to reach his home once more and see the wife whom, like most other mythical heroes, he had been obliged to leave in the spring-time of his career. There are grievous toils and many hindrances on his way, but nothing can turn him from his course. He has to fight, like Herakles and Perseus, Theseus and Bellerophôn, with more than mortal beings and more than earthly powers, but he has the strength which they had to overcome or to evade them. It is true that he conquers chiefly by strength of will and sagacity of mind; but this again is the phase which the idea of Helios, the great eye of day, as surveying and scanning everything, assumes in Medeia, Prometheus, Asklêpios, Oidipous, Iamos, and Melampous. The other phase, however, is not wanting. He, too, has a bow which none but he can wield,<sup>1</sup> and he wields it to terrible purpose, when, like Achilles, after his time of disguise, he bursts on the astonished suitors, as the

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, xxi. 405, κ. τ. λ. The phraseology of the poet here assumes, perhaps without his being fully aware of it, the same tone with the narrative which tells of the arming of Achilles. Others have tried with all their might to bend the bow. Odysseus stretches it without the least effort (ἀτερ σπουδῆς).

and the sound of the string is like the whizzing of a swallow in its flight. In an instant every heart is filled with dread, and every cheek turns pale (πᾶσι χρῶς ἐπράετο), and, to complete the imagery, they hear at the same moment the crash of the thunder in the sky.





sun breaks from the stormcloud before he sinks to rest. So, again, in his westward wanderings (for this is the common path of the children of Zeus or Helios), he must encounter fearful dangers. It is no unclouded sky which looks down on him as he journeys towards rocky Ithaka. He has to fight with Kyklôpes and Laistrygonians; he has to shun the snares of the Seirens and the jaws of Skylla and Charybdis, as Perseus had to overcome the Gorgons, and Theseus to do battle with the Minotauros. Yet there are times of rest for him, as for Herâkles and Bellerophôn. He yearns for the love of Penelopê, but his grief can be soothed for awhile by the affection of Kirkê and Kalypso, as Achilleus found solace in that of Diomêdê, and Herakles awhile in that of Dêianeira. Nay, wherever he goes, mortal kings and chiefs and undying goddesses seek to make him tarry by their side, as Menelaos sought to retain Paris in his home by the side of the Spartan Helen, and as Gunnar strove to win Sigurd to be the husband of his sister. So is it with Alkinoös; but, in spite of the loveliness and purity of Nausikaâ, Odysseus may not tarry in the happy land of the Phaiakians, even as he might not tarry in the palace of the wise Kirkê or the sparkling cave of the gentle Kalypso. At last he approaches his home; but he returns to it unknown and friendless. The sky is as dark as when Achilleus lay nursing his great wrath behind the veil of his sorrow. Still he too, like Achilleus, knows how to take vengeance on his enemies; and in stillness and silence he makes ready for the mortal conflict in which he knows that in the end he must be victorious. His foes are many and strong; and, like Patroklos against Hektor, Telemachos<sup>1</sup> can do but little against the suitors, in whom are reflected the Trojan enemies of the Achaians. But for him also, as for Achilleus, there is aid from the gods. Athênê, the daughter of the sky, cheers him on, and restores him to the glorious beauty of his youth, as Thetis clothed her child in the armour of Hephaistos, and Apollôn directed his spear against Hektor. Still in his ragged beggar's dress, like the sun behind the rent and tattered clouds, he appears in his own hall on the day of doom. The old bow is taken down

<sup>1</sup> Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 238.





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from the wall, and none but he can be found to stretch it. His enemies begin to fear that the chief has indeed returned to his home, and they crouch in terror before the stranger, as the Trojans quailed at the mere sight and war-cry of Achilleus. But their cry for mercy falls as vain as that of Lykâôn or of Hektor, who must die to avenge the dead Patroklos; for the doom of the suitors is come for the wrongs which they had done to Penelopê. The fatal bow is stretched. The arrows fly deadly and unerring as the spear of Artemis, and the hall is bathed in blood. There is nothing to stay his arm till all are dead. The sun-god is taking vengeance on the clouds, and trampling them down in his fury. The work is done; and Penelopê sees in Odysseus the husband who had left her long ago to face his toils, like Herakles and Perseus. But she will try him still. If indeed he be the same, he will know his bridal chamber and the cunningly carved couch which his own hands had wrought. Iolê will try whether Herakles remembers the beautiful network of violet clouds which he spread as her couch in the morning. The sun is setting in peace. Penelopê, fair as Oinônê and as pure (for no touch of defilement must pass on her, or on Iolê or Daphnê or Briséis), is once again by his side. The darkness is utterly scattered; the corpses of the suitors and of the handmaidens who ministered to them cumber the hall no more. A few flying vapours rush at random across the sky, as the men of Ithaka raise a feeble clamour in behalf of the slain chieftains. Soon these, too, are gone. Penelopê and Odysseus are within their bridal chamber. Oinônê has gone to rest with Paris by her side; but there is no gloom in the house of Odysseus, and the hero lives still, strong and beautiful as in the early days. The battle is over. The one yearning of his heart has been fulfilled. The sun has laid him down to rest

In one unclouded blaze of living light.

How much  
of the Iliad

But unless the marvellous resemblance (may it not be said, the identity?) of the Greek, the Trojan<sup>1</sup> and the Teutonic

<sup>1</sup> The stories of Paris, Hektor, Sarpédôn, Memnôn are all subjects which might be expanded into separate epics. The extent to which solar imagery is introduced into these tales is very remarkable. Paris as the seducer



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XI.

or the  
Odyssey  
belongs to  
the in-  
vention of  
the poet.

epics can be explained away, it follows that in Achilleus and in Paris, in Meleagros and Sigurd, in Ragnar Lodbrog and Theseus, in Telephos, Perseus, Kephalos, Herakles, Bellerophon and Odysseus, we have pictures drawn from the same ideal as regarded under its several aspects. It mattered not which of these aspects the poet might choose for his theme. In each case he had much more than the framework of his story made ready to his hand. The departure of Achilleus from his own land to fight in a quarrel which was not his own—the transfer of the spoils won by him to a chief of meaner spirit than his own—his unerring spear and immortal horses—the robbery of Briséis or Hippodameia—the fierce wrath of Achilleus which yet could leave room for the love of another in her place—the sullen inaction from which he refuses to be roused—the dismay of the Achaians and the exultation of the Trojans at his absence from the fight—the partial glory spread over the scene by the appearance of Patroklos, only to close in the deeper gloom which followed his overthrow—the fury of Achilleus behind the dark cloud of his sorrow—the sudden outburst of the hero, armed with his irresistible spear and clad in armour more dazzling than that which he had lost—the invincible might which deals death to Hektor and his comrades—the blood which streams from the human victims on his altar of sacrifice—his forgiveness of Agamemnon for that which Agamemnon of himself would have been powerless to do—

of Helen is indubitably the dark robber who steals away the treasure of light from the sky; but it is difficult to deny that Paris, as fighting for his country, or in the beneficence of his early career, has all the features of Perseus, Oidipous and Teléphos. The same blending of two different ideas runs through all the Aryan mythology, and is a necessary result when the myths of two or more different countries are brought together in the same narrative. In the great struggle between the Achaians and Trojans, Agamemnon and Achilleus are ranged on the side of Helen, or Saramá, the dawn; and all the Trojan champions, from this point of view, are in league with the dark powers of night. But among these champions are Sarpédôn, the great chief

of the Lykians, and Glaukos, his friend, who also comes from the golden stream of Xanthos, and Memnôn the son of Eôs, who leads the glittering band of the Aithiopians (Ethiopians). The names of these heroes are as transparent as the stories which have gathered round them. Sarpédôn more particularly is a counterpart of Achilleus, destined to exhibit the same magnificent qualities, and doomed to the same early death, but more equable and beneficent and therefore also happier. It is the same with the Argives. As fighting against Paris, Agamemnon is the adversary of the dark powers: but to Achilleus he stands precisely in the relation of Eurystheus to Herakles, or of Laios to Oidipous, or of Akrisios to Perseus.



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the warning of his own early death which he receives from the horse Xanthos—the battle of the gods, as they take part in the storm which rages in the heavens and on the earth—the swelling of the waters, their brief mastery over the hero, their conquest by fire—the generous splendour which follows the accomplishment of his vengeance—the sudden close of his brilliant but brief career—the fierce battle fought over his dead body—the beauty which cannot be marred or dimmed by death—are incidents which the poet might introduce or omit at will, but the spirit of which he was not free to alter. The character of Achilles was no more his own creation than were the shifting scenes in the great drama of his life. The idea of his picture no more originated in himself than the idea of Sigurd in the mind of the more rugged poet of the north. The materials were not of his own making; and the words of Mr. Gladstone acquire a stronger meaning, though not the meaning which he designed to convey, when, insisting that there must be a foundation for the Homeric theology and for the chief incidents in the war of Troy, he said that poets may embellish, but cannot invent.<sup>1</sup> Their course was marked out for them, but the swiftness with

<sup>1</sup> Of the *Aeneid* of Virgil it is unnecessary to say much. Epic poetry, composed in a time of highly artificial civilisation, stands on a wholly different ground from the true epic of a simpler age, the growth of generations from the myth-making talk of the people. The tradition which brought Æneas to Italy was not of Virgil's making, and in taking him for his hero he bound himself to give the sequel of a career which belonged in its earlier stages to Greek mythology. Hence we have naturally in the story of Æneas nothing more than one more version of the old mythical history. Æneas, like Odysseus, moves from east to west, seeking a home, as Phoebos on a like errand journeyed to Pytho. His visit to the shades may have been directly suggested by the Greek poems which Virgil had before him as his model; and these were assuredly not confined to our *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But it must have been a genuine tradition which led Virgil to tell how he left Creusa, as Theseus deserted Ariadnê and Apollôn forsook

Korônîs. So, again, the war with Turnus for the possession of Lavinia reflects the war at Troy for Helen and the contest in the *Odyssey* with the enemies who strive to win the rightful bride of Odysseus. In this war Æneas, like other solar heroes, is successful, and, like them, after his victory, which is followed by a time of tranquil happiness, he plunges into the Numician stream and is seen no more, as Kephalos and Bellerophôn sink to sleep in the western waters of the Leukadian gulf.

The same type reappears in Romulus, whose story Niebuhr supposed that Livy obtained from a great epic now lost (Cornwall Lewis, *Credibility of Early Roman History*, vol. i. ch. vi. sect. 5); and the key is found to this legendary narrative as well as to that of Cyrus, of Chandragupta, and of the progenitor of the Turks. All these tales repeat the exposure of the infant Oidipous, or Telephos, or Iamos, or Alexandros. The same myth is seen under another aspect in the legend of Servius Tullius.





which each ran his race depended on his own power. The genius of the Homeric poets was shown, not in the creation of their materials, but in the truthful and magnificent colouring which they threw over a legend which in weaker hands might exhibit but a tinsel glitter.

CHAP.  
XI.

But if there is this affinity between the character of the Achaian and the Teutonic heroes, it follows that the character is neither strictly Achaian nor strictly Teutonic. It cannot be regarded as expressing the real morality either of the one or of the other. Any attempt to criticise these as genuine pictures of national character<sup>1</sup> must be followed by

The portraits of the greater chieftains and heroes are not true to national character.

<sup>1</sup> The wish to base his criticism on this foundation has led Mr. Gladstone to assume without evidence, that the cause of Achilles was substantially that of right and justice, and that the apology made by Agamemnon in *Il.* xix. 67, is essentially different from the apology made in ix. 120. But, in the first place, it is difficult to see that 'justice is' more 'outraged in the person of Achilles' (*Homer, &c.* vol. iii. p. 370), than it is in the person of Agamemnon. If the former is compelled to part with Briseïs, the latter has also been obliged to give up the daughter of Chryses, for whom, with a plainness of speech not used either by Achilles or even by Paris in deserting Oinônê, he avows his preference over his wedded wife Klytëmnëstra (*Il.* i. 110). Moreover, the taking away of Briseïs is the sole act of Agamemnon, in which his counsellors and the people take no part. Yet Mr. Gladstone holds it to be a 'deadly wrong,' justifying Achilles in visiting his wrath on an army which had nothing whatever to do with it. The truth is, that by an analysis of this kind we may prove that Achilles was mad, but we can never show that his character was either common, or even known among the Achaians. We have no right to say that the sufferings of Agamemnon were not at the least equal to those of Achilles, and we are surely treating him most unfairly if we say that his apology 'comes first in his faltering speech' given in *Il.* xix. 67. If there he says—

ἄψ' ἐθέλω ἀρέσαι δόμεναί' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα,  
he had said precisely the same thing in *Il.* ix. 120, &c. and there also confesses that he had been infatuated. In

fact, Mr. Gladstone is furnishing conclusive evidence in proof of the assertion that the writer of the nineteenth book knew nothing of the ninth. But it is hard to yield a self-chosen position; and Mr. Gladstone therefore holds that the apology of the nineteenth book is a valid atonement, although it is, word for word, the same as that which is contained in the ninth. The very fact that Achilles is so ready, and even eager, to visit on the whole army the sin of the individual Agamemnon, shows how utterly destitute his character is of real patriotism. If anything more were needed to exhibit the falsity of such critical methods, it would be furnished by Colonel Mure's remarks that the aim of Homer is not to show, with Mr. Gladstone, the justice of the cause of Achilles, but to prove that both he and Agamemnon were utterly in the wrong (*Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 277). Both sides in his judgment are equally deserving of blame: the one must be punished, the other convinced of his folly. This is the result of taking Homer to be a moral philosopher or teacher who, to adopt Mr. Gladstone's favourite Horatian motto, tells us all about human life and duty much better than Chrysippos and Krantor. Indeed, there seems to be no limit to violent interpretations of the text of Homer, if any such hypothesis is to be entertained. It is Mr. Gladstone's belief that the last book of the *Iliad* was added to show that Achilles 'must surrender the darling object of his desire, the wreaking of his vengeance on an inanimate corpse' (*Homer, &c.* iii. 395). His ambition might, perhaps, have been more dignified; but such as it was, it had surely been gratified



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that feeling of repulsion which Mr. Dasent openly avows for the Greek mythology, and which he also feels in part for the Teutonic.<sup>1</sup> In either case, this moral indignation is thrown away. There was doubtless quite enough evil in the character of the Northman and the Greek; but it never would have assumed that aspect which is common to the heroes of their epic poetry. We look in vain in the pages of acknowledged contemporary writers for an instance of the same unbounded wrath arising from a cause which the Achaian would be rather disposed to treat too lightly, of an inaction which cares not though all around him die, of a bloody vengeance on meaner enemies when his great foe has been vanquished, of the awful sacrifice of human victims,—a sacrifice completely alien to the general character of the Achaians, so far as they are known to us historically. But every one of these characteristics is at once exhaustively explained, when they are compared with those of all the other great legendary heroes. The grave attempt to judge them by a reference to the ordinary standard of Greek, or rather of Christian and modern morality, has imparted to the criticism of Colonel Mure an air almost of burlesque. In his analysis of the *Iliad*, the motives which sway Achilles are taken to pieces as seriously as if he were examining the conduct of Themistokles or Archidamos. It might be well to speak of the ‘defective principles of heroic morality,’<sup>2</sup> of the sarcasms of Achilles against Agamemnon in the first book as ‘unwarranted at this stage of the discussion,’<sup>3</sup> of the ‘respectful deference to the sovereign will of Agamemnon’ as a duty ‘inculcated by the poet’ and ‘scrupulously fulfilled by the other chiefs,’<sup>4</sup> if the poet were telling us of a

already. If he was not contented with tying the body to his chariot wheels and dragging it about till every feature was disfigured, what more did he want? The whole of this moral criticism of epical characters is altogether out of place; and such criticism can be applied least of all as a means of determining national character to the hero who (in order to beat Hektor, in every respect, as Mr. Gladstone asserts, his inferior) is made invulnerable like Balhur and Rustem in all parts but the heel, and, clad in armour wrought by He-

phaistos, wields a spear (guaranteed never to miss its mark) against an enemy who, acknowledging his inferiority, yet faces him from the high motive of patriotism and duty, and whom he is unable to overcome except by the aid of Athénè and after he has been deserted by Apollôn. Such a condition of things lies altogether beyond the range of Ethics.

<sup>1</sup> See page 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* p. 275.





struggle not with gods and heroes, Amazons and Aithiopians, but carried on after the sober and prosy fashion of the Trojan war of Thucydides. Colonel Mure lays great stress on the 'ethic unity' with which the incidental references to the early death of Achilleus invest the whole poem, and he finds a deep 'knowledge of human nature' 'in the adaptation to each other of the characters of the hero and his friend,' where Mr. Grote sees little more than a reflection.<sup>1</sup> But his anxiety to exalt the character of Achilleus has led him, in one instance of no slight moment, to vilify unduly that of his antagonist. 'The proudest exploit of Hektor, his slaughter and spoliation of Patroklos, is so described as to be conspicuous only for its ferocity. The Greek hero, after being disabled by Apollôn, is mortally wounded by another Trojan, when Hektor steps in with the finishing blow, as his butcher rather than conqueror.'<sup>2</sup> The remark is simply disingenuous. The incidents of the slaughter of Patroklos by Hektor are essentially identical with incidents attending the death of Hektor by the hands of Achilleus, and where there is any difference, it lies in the additional ferocity and brutality of the latter. If it be to the disparagement of Hektor that he should have the aid of a god, the poet is not less careful in saying that Achilleus could not slay Hektor until Phoibos Apollôn had deserted him. But if Colonel Mure anxiously seeks out apologies for the wrath,<sup>3</sup> the inaction, and the furious revenge of the hero, his criticism utterly fails to explain the very incidents which seem most deeply to have impressed him. It does not explain why he should choose inaction as the particular mode of avenging himself against Agamemnon.<sup>4</sup> It does not show why during his absence 'the gods had, at his own request, decreed victory to Hektor, rout and slaughter to the Greeks,'<sup>5</sup> why in him 'no affection

<sup>1</sup> *History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 284.

<sup>4</sup> When Helios complains to Zeus (*Od.* xii. 383) of the slaughter of his sacred cattle by Eurylochos and his comrades, his threat is that if justice is not done to him, he will leave his place in heaven and go and shine among the dead. But Helios was to the poet the

actual dweller in the visible sun. He could not well apply such a phrase even to Phoibos, and with Achilleus, Odysseus, Perseus, Meleagros, and other heroes, the memory of the old phrases has been still further weakened; but the voluntary and sullen inaction of such heroes answers precisely to the hiding of Helios in the dark land of Hades.

<sup>5</sup> *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 288.





amiable or the reverse' should 'exist but in overpowering excess,<sup>1</sup>—why he should be 'soothed by the fulfilment of his duties as mourner,' why the games should 'usher in an agreeable change,' or why 'we should part with Achilles at the moment best calculated to exalt and purify our impression of his character.'<sup>2</sup> Still less does it explain why, before the final struggle, the gods should be let loose to take whichever side they might prefer. Colonel Mure seems to imply that they were all sent to take the part of the Trojans.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Grote, with a far keener discernment of the character of this part of the poem, insists that 'that which chiefly distinguishes these books is the direct, incessant, and manual intervention of the gods and goddesses, formally permitted by Zeus, and the repetition of vast and fantastic conceptions to which each superhuman agency gives occasion, not omitting the battle of Achilles against Skamander and Simois, and the burning up of these rivers by Hephaestus.' In his judgment this interference mars the poem and 'somewhat vulgarises' the gods.<sup>4</sup> But while he thinks that the poet has failed in a task where success was impossible, he has not explained why the poet should feel himself compelled to undertake it.

The character of  
Odysseus.

But if Mr. Gladstone strains every nerve to save the character of Achilles, Colonel Mure is not less zealous in behalf of the chieftain of Ithaka. If Achilles 'represents the grandeur of the heroic character as reflected in the very excess of its noblest attributes,' Odysseus, in his belief, represents its virtue, possessing as he does, in greater number and in higher degree than any other chief, the qualities which in that age constituted the accomplished king and citizen.<sup>5</sup> The matter is brought to a plain issue. The *Odyssey* is 'a rich picture-gallery of human life as it existed in that age and country,'<sup>6</sup> and we are to see in Odysseus a favourable specimen of the manners and habits of his people. It is quite possible, by Colonel Mure's method, so to represent him. But if we speak of him as one whose 'habitual

<sup>1</sup> *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. i. p. 391.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* p. 389.





prudence was modified, or even at times overcome, by his thirst for glory, and by an eager pursuit of the marvellous,<sup>1</sup>—if we say that he never uttered an untruth or practised a manœuvre for a base object,<sup>2</sup>—if we speak of him as inculcating in his adventures ‘the duty incumbent on the most vigorous minds not only to resist but to avoid temptation,’<sup>3</sup> are we really speaking of the Odysseus of the Homeric poet? If such a method may account for some features in his character, will it in the least explain his character as bound up with the whole structure of the poem? Will it not leave the groundwork of the tale and its issue a greater mystery than ever? Will it explain why Odysseus, like Herakles and Philoktetès, should use poisoned arrows<sup>4</sup>—why, without scruple, he should tell lies while he desires to remain unrecognised, why he should never depart from the truth when speaking in his own character—why he hesitates not to lurk in ambush for an unarmed man<sup>5</sup> and stab him behind his back and speak of the deed without shame—why he should wish to pry into everything in heaven or on earth, or in the dark land beneath the earth—why nothing less than the slaughter of all his enemies will satiate a wrath not much more reasonable than that of Achilles? Still more will it explain why Penelope weaves and unweaves her web,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.*, vol. i. p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 395.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 403.

<sup>4</sup> *Odyssey*, i. 263. Dr. Thirlwall (*History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 182) refers to this passage as showing the ‘manifest disapprobation’ of the poet. It is, at the least, very faintly expressed. Zeus, possibly as being above law, gives the poison, and Athênê sees no harm in his so doing.

<sup>5</sup> *Odyssey*, xiii. 260.

<sup>6</sup> The Dawn as weaving or spinning is the subject of many Teutonic legends. In the story of Rumpelstiltskin, the poor miller has a daughter who can spin straw into gold, and the sequel of the tale makes her, of course, the king’s bride. The idea once suggested was naturally applied also to the sun, who, as weaving his robe of clouds, becomes the Valiant Tailor who, in the story of the Glass Coffin, finds the beautiful maiden sleeping like the dead in her

glassy case (of ice), and whose touch at once calls her back to life, as the prince’s kiss awakens Dornroschen. This glass coffin answers to the hammer of Thor, like which, when placed on the magic stone, it rises through the floors to the upper air; and the case, when opened, expands into a magnificent castle. In the story of the Spindle, the Shuttle, and the Needle, these instruments of the craft of Penelopè bring a wooer home for the orphan maiden, who, like Cinderella, becomes the wife of the king. It is almost unnecessary to say that in a vast number of stories in which the princesses are confessedly Dawn-maidens, they are known especially as the weavers, and weavers, like Penelopè, of sarks for their fathers or their brothers. Thus Snow White and Rosy Red, in the story of the Twelve Wild Ducks (Dasent), is always sewing at the shirts for her twelve brothers (the months), who have been thus trans-



BOOK  
I.

--why, when Odysseus returns, she is restored by Athênê (the daughter of the Sky, the Dawn who makes the world young), to all her early loveliness,<sup>1</sup> while on him rests once more all the splendour of his ancient majesty,—why the nurse who recognises him should be Eurykleia,<sup>2</sup> and the maiden who reviles him should be Melantho,<sup>3</sup>—why his dog Argos, although forsaken and untended, still retains something of his noble qualities and at once recognises his old master<sup>4</sup>—why, when Penelopê wishes to speak with him on his return, she is charged to wait until the evening<sup>5</sup>—why, in his wanderings he should fight not so much with human enemies as with mighty beings and monsters of the earth and sea—why his long voyage and the time of gloomy disguise should be followed by a triumph so full of blood, ending with a picture of such serene repose?

How far was the character of Odysseus a creation of the Homeric poet.

In truth, the character of Odysseus was not, in any greater degree than that of Achilles, an original creation of the Homeric poet. In all its main features it came down ready to his hand. His wisdom is the wisdom of Athênê, and Prometheus, and Medeia, of Iamos and Asklêpios and Melampous: his craft is the craft of Hermes, his keen sagacity is the piercing eye of Helios or of Odin, and from Hermes comes the strange inquisitiveness which must pry into everything that he comes across in his path.<sup>6</sup> If he uses poisoned arrows, it is not because Achaian chieftains were in the habit of using them, but because the weapons

formed. The princess rescued by Short-shanks also sits and sews. In the story of the Best Wish, the instruments for performing her work are supplied by Boots, whose scissors, plied in the air, bring to light all kinds of beautiful shapes, as the clouds and the earth are lit up by the rising sun. Nor is the Doll in the Grass (Dasent) less expert, though the sark which she weaves and sews is 'so tiny tiny little.' Most or all of these stories have their counterpart in the German and Celtic folklore. The exploits of the Valiant Tailor of the German stories are repeated in the Gaelic story of Mac-a-Rusgaich (Campbell, ii. 307) which reproduces the Norse tale of Boots who ate a match with the Troll. (Dasent.)

<sup>1</sup> *Od.* xviii. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* xvii. 31. In the name of her father Autolykos we have again the same word which gave rise to the story of Lykâôn, and to the meaning which Æschylos attached to the name of Phoibos Lykeios, or Lykêgenês, the child of light.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* xviii. 321. We see the process by which the force of the old mythical language was weakened and lost, when the poet speaks of Melantho as καλλιπαρρος.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* xvii. 300.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* xvii. 582.

<sup>6</sup> This inquisitiveness is specially seen in the episodes of the Kyklops and the Sirens.





of Herakles were steeped in venom and the robe of Medeia scorched the body of Glaukê: if he submits to be the lover of Kirkê and Kalypso, it is because Achilles solaced himself with Diomêdê for the loss of Brisêis, and Herakles awhile forgot his sorrows in the house of Dêianeira. If he can be a secret stabber, it is not because the heroic ideal could stoop to such baseness, but because Phoibos can smite secretly as well as slay openly, and because it matters not whether the victim be but one man or the fifty who fall by the spear of Bellerophôn. If at the end he smites all his enemies, it is not because they have committed an offence which, according to the standard of the age, would deserve such punishment, but because the wrath of Achilles could be appeased only by the blood of his enemies, as the blazing sun tramples on the dark clouds beneath his feet. We may be well assured that such as these were not the habits of the men who dwelt at Tiryns or in Ithaka—that such as these were not the characteristics of the chieftains who dwelt in Mykênai. But if the character of Odysseus is not strictly Achaian, so, like that of Achilles, it is not, in strictness of speech, human. Mr. Grote has truly said that the aim of the poet is not ethical or didactic either in the *Iliad* or in the *Odyssey*;<sup>1</sup> and an examination of the latter poem scatters to the winds all fancies which see in Odysseus an image of the Christian warrior fighting the good fight of faith, yet yearning for his rest in heaven.<sup>2</sup> The ideal is indeed magnificent, and it has never been more magnificently realised, but it is not the ideal either of Christianity or even of humanity; it is the life of the sun. At the outset of his return from the east, Odysseus has to encounter superhuman foes; and the discomfiture of the Kyklops rouses the wrath of the sea-god Poseidôn, as the clouds rise from the waters and curl round the rising sun. Still Zeus is on his side, and

<sup>1</sup> *History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 278. Horace draws but a feeble moral when he says of the *Iliad*—

Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur  
Achivi. *Ep.* i. 2, 14.

But that this should be the case is perfectly explained by the growth of my-

thology. The wrath of beings like Achilles and Odysseus must be wide-spreading and indiscriminate. The clouds and winds take no heed of man.

<sup>2</sup> For a minute working out of this view see Isaac Williams, *Christian Scholar*, p. 115.



BOOK  
I.

Poseidôn himself shall not be able to cut short his course,<sup>1</sup> though all his comrades should fall by the way, as the morning clouds may be scattered before the noonday. But while he moves steadily towards his home, that home is dark and gloomy. From it the sun is still far distant, and only from time to time a faint reflected light is shed upon it as Telemachos strives to maintain the honour of his father's house.<sup>2</sup> So Penelopê remains quiet in her home. Forbidding forms crowd around her, but her purity remains unsullied. The web begun is never ended; the fairy tracery of cirri clouds is blotted out from the sky every night, and must be wrought again during the coming day. There are others too who have not forgotten the hero, and Eurykleia strives to retain Telemachos, when he would go forth to seek his father.<sup>3</sup> But he cannot stay. The slant rays vanish from the sky, and the house of Laertes is shadowed with deeper gloom. Meanwhile Odysseus is hastening on. For awhile he tarries with Kirkê and Kalypsô, and makes a longer sojourn in the house of Alkinoös, even as Sigurd abode long time in the house of Gunnar. The Phaiakian chieftain would have him stay for ever. His land is as fair

<sup>1</sup> The influence of Polyphêmos on the fortunes of Odysseus strangely perplexes Colonel Mure, who sees in it the chief defect of the *Odyssey*, as interfering with the 'retributive equity' which he fancies that he finds in the *Iliad*. 'No reader of taste or judgment,' he thinks, 'can fail to experience in its perusal a certain feeling of impatience, not only that the destinies of a blameless hero and an innocent woman, but that any important trains of events, should hinge on so offensive a mechanism as the blind affection of a mighty deity for so odious a monster as Polyphemus.'—*Crit. Hist. Gr. Lit.* vol. ii. p. 151. The real question to be answered was how the mighty deity came to be the father of the odious monster. As, according to the myth, he was his father, there was nothing unnatural in attributing to Poseidôn the affection of a parent for his offspring. But, in truth, nothing could show more clearly than these words Colonel Mure's inability to enter fairly into the spirit of Greek mythology. It was simply impossible that the poet could make use of any other mechanism. The train of

events which he recounts is not the sequence of any human life, but the career of Phoibos and Daphnê, Persens and Andromeda. In short, the Kyklops is the son of Poseidôn, originally a god of the air—in other words, the exhalations which form themselves into the hideous storm-clouds, through which the sun sometimes glares down like a huge eye in the midst of the black forehead of the giant. Mr. Kelly, therefore, mistakes the eye which really belongs to the sun for the Kyklops himself, when he says, 'The Greek mythology shows us a whole people of suns in the Cyclops, giants with one eye round as a wheel in their foreheads.' He is right in adding that 'they were akin to the heavenly giants, and dwelt with the Phæacians, the navigators of the cloud sea in the broad Hyperia, the upper land, i.e. heaven, until the legend transplanted them both to the Western horizon.'—*Indo-European Folk-lore*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> The merely secondary character of Telemachos has been already noticed, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> *Od.* ii. 365.





as summer: but the sun may not tarry, and Odysseus cannot abide there, even with Nausikaâ. So he hastens home, sometimes showing his might, as the sun breaks for a moment through a rift in the clouds; but the darkness is greatest when he lands on his own shores. He is surrounded by enemies and spies, and he takes refuge in craft and falsehood.<sup>1</sup> The darkness itself must aid him to win the victory, and Athênê takes all beauty from his face, and all brightness from his golden hair.<sup>2</sup> These ideas, with all the others which had come down to him as a fruitful heritage from the language of his remote forefathers, the Homeric poet might recombine or develope; but if he brought him to Ithaka under a cloud, he could not but say that Athênê took away his glory, while yet his dog Argos, the same hound who couches at the feet of Artemis or drives the herds of the sun to their pastures, knows his old master in all his squalid raiment, and dies for joy at seeing him.<sup>3</sup> When on his return Telemachos asks whether the bridal couch of Odysseus is covered with spiders' webs, he could not but say in reply that Penelopê still remained faithful to her early love;<sup>4</sup> and when Telemachos is once more to see his father, he could not but make Athênê restore him to more than his ancient beauty.<sup>5</sup> So the man of many toils and wanderings returns to his home,<sup>6</sup> only to find that his son is unable to rule his house,<sup>7</sup> as Phaëthôn and Patroklos were alike unable to guide the horses of Helios. Still Penelopê is fair as Artemis or Aphroditê,<sup>8</sup> although Melantho and Melanthios,<sup>9</sup> the black children of the crafty (Dolios) Night, strive to dash her life with gloom, and Odysseus stands a squalid beggar in his own hall.<sup>10</sup> Thenceforth the poet's path was still more distinctly marked. He must make the arm of Odysseus irresistible,<sup>11</sup> he must make Athênê aid him in storing up weapons for the conflict,<sup>12</sup> as

<sup>1</sup> *Odys.* xiii. 255, κ.τ.λ.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xii. 431. The language adheres even more closely to the myth. His locks are actually destroyed,

ξανθὰς ἐκ κεφαλῆς ὄλεσε τρίχας.

Those which she gave him when she restored his beauty would be strictly the new rays bursting from behind the

clouds.

<sup>3</sup> *Odys.* xvii. 327. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xvi. 35.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* xvi. 175.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* i. 2; xvi. 205.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* xvi. 256. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* xvii. 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* xvii. 212; xviii. 320.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* xvii. 363. <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* xviii. 95.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 33.





## BOOK

## I.

Thetis brought the armour of Hephaistos to Achilles, and Hjordis that of Regin to Sigurd. He must make Penelopê tell how often she had woven and undone her web while he tarried so long away.<sup>1</sup> When Penelopê asks tidings of Odysseus, the poet could not but give an answer in which the flash of gold and blaze of purple carries us directly to the arming of Achilles.<sup>2</sup> As Eurykleia, the old nurse, tends him at the bath, he must make her recognise the wound made by the wild boar,<sup>3</sup> who wrought the death of the fair Adonis, and tell how her foster-child came to be called Odysseus.<sup>4</sup> Then, as the day of doom is ushered in, he must relate how as the lightning flashed from the sky<sup>5</sup> the rumour went abroad that the chieftain was come again to his home. So Penelopê takes down the bow which Iphitos, the mighty, had given to Odysseus,<sup>6</sup> and bids the suitors stretch it; but they cannot, and there is no need that Telemachos should waste his strength now that his father has come home.<sup>7</sup> Then follows the awful tragedy. Zeus must thunder as the beggar seizes the bow.<sup>8</sup> The suitors begin to fall beneath the unerring arrows; but the victory is not to be won without a struggle. Telemachos has left the chamber door ajar and the enemy arm themselves with the weapons which they find there.<sup>9</sup> It is but another version of the battle which Achilles fought with Skamandros and Simoeis in the war of elements; and as then the heart of Achilles almost failed him, so wavers now the courage of Odysseus.<sup>10</sup> For a moment the dark clouds seem to be gaining mastery over

<sup>1</sup> *Od.* xix. 140. Penelopê is the weaver of the web (*νήνη*) of cirri clouds. Mr. Kelly, summing up the general characteristics of Aryan mythology, says 'Light clouds were webs spun and woven by celestial women, who also drew water from the fountains on high and poured it down as rain. The yellow light gleaming through the clouds was their golden hair. A fast-scudding cloud was a horse flying from its pursuers. . . In all this and much more of the same kind, there was not yet an atom of that symbolism which has commonly been assumed as the starting-point of all mythology. The mythic animals, for example, were, for those who first gave them their names, no

mere images or figments of the mind. They were downright realities, for they were seen by men who were quick to see, and who had not yet learned to suspect any collusion between their eyes and their fancy.'—*Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition and Folk-lore*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Od.* xix. 225.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 393.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 201. The origin of this name, as of so many others, is wrongly accounted for. The same confusion was at work here, which changed Lykâon into a wolf, and Kallisto into a bear.

<sup>5</sup> *Od.* xx. 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* xxi. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* xxi. 130.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* xxi. 413.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 141.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 147.





the sun. But Athênê comes to his aid,<sup>1</sup> as before she had come to help Achilleus, and the arrows of the suitors are in vain aimed at the hero,<sup>2</sup> although Telemachos is wounded,<sup>3</sup> though not to the death, like Patroklos. Yet more, Athênê must show her Aigis,<sup>4</sup> dazzling as the face of the unclouded sun; and when the victory is won, the corpses of the slain must be thrust away,<sup>5</sup> like the black vapours driven from the sky. Only for Melanthios he reserves the full measure of indignity which Achilleus wreaked on the body of the dead Hektor.<sup>6</sup> Then follows the recognition in which, under another form, Prokris again meets Kephalos, and Iolê once more rejoices the heart of Herakles. For a little while the brightness rests on Laertes, and the old man's limbs again grow strong; but the strength comes from Athênê.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever light the progress of Comparative Mythology may hereafter throw on the growth of Aryan epic poetry, one conclusion, at the least, is forced upon us by this analysis, and Odysseus is found to be as much and as little an Achaian chieftain as Achilleus or Meleagros. The poems may remain a mine of wealth for all who seek to find in them pictures and manners of the social life of a pre-historic age; but all the great chiefs are removed beyond a criticism, which starts with attributing to them the motives which influence mankind under any circumstances whatsoever.

The character of Odysseus not Achaian.

<sup>1</sup> *Odyss.* xxii. 205.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 257.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 277.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 297.  
<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 460.    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 475.    <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* xxiv. 367.



## CHAPTER XII.

MYTHICAL PHRASES AS FURNISHING MATERIALS FOR THE TEUTONIC EPIC POEMS, AND THE LEGENDS OF ARTHUR AND ROLAND.

BOOK  
I.

Points of  
likeness  
between  
the Greek  
and Teu-  
tonic epics.

THE results obtained from an examination of Greek epic poetry, so far as it has come down to us, have a direct and important bearing on the mythology of northern Europe, and on the estimate which we must take of it. Of the general character of the Hellenic tribes we can form a notion more or less exact from the evidence of contemporary documents, as soon as we reach the historical age; but, whatever may be its defects or its vices, we are fully justified in saying that it is not the character of the great Achaian chieftains as exhibited either in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. We have absolutely no warrant for the belief that the ancestors of Perikles or Themistokles, within ten or even more generations, were men who would approve the stabbing of enemies behind their backs, the use of poisoned arrows, and the butchery of captives deliberately set apart to grace the funeral sacrifices of a slain chief. Nay, more, we shall look in vain in any historical record for any portrait which will justify the belief that the picture of Achilles in the *Iliad* is the likeness of an actual Achaian chieftain, while on any psychological analysis we seem to be driven to the conclusion that the character is one removed altogether from the bounds of humanity. If the analysis already made of the character of Odysseus and Achilles shows that almost every feature is traditional, and that the portraits, as a whole, are not of the poet's making, that the wisdom and the falsehood, the truthfulness and the sullenness, whether of the one hero or the other, were impressed upon each by a necessity which no





poet could resist, and that these conclusions are proved by the evidence, overwhelming in its amount, which shows that Achilles and Odysseus are reflections of Perseus, Theseus, Herakles, and these, again, of Phoibos and Helios, or of other deities who share their attributes—if the whole story which has gathered round the names of these great national heroes resolves itself into the cloudland of heaven with its never ceasing changes, we are at once justified in thinking that the history of the Teutonic heroes may be of much the same kind; and if on examining it we not only find this suspicion borne out, but discern in it some of the most important incidents and sequences which mark the Greek legends, the conclusion is forced upon us that the Teutonic epics, like the Hellenic, are the fruit of one and the same tree which has spread its branches over all the Aryan lands, and that the heroes of these epics no more exhibit the actual character of Northmen and Germans than the portraits of the heroes in the Iliad and Odyssey are pictures of actual Achaian chieftains. When we find further that the action in each case turns on the possession of a beautiful woman and the treasures which make up her dowry, that this woman is in each case seduced or betrayed, while the hero with his invincible weapons is doomed to an early death after the same stormy and vehement career, we see that we are dealing with materials which under different forms are essentially the same; and our task becomes at each stage shorter and simpler.

Hence as we begin the story of Volsung (who is Diogenes or the son of Odin, his father Rerir and his grandfather Sigi being the only intermediate links), we suspect at once that we are carried away from the world of mortal men, when we find that he is one of those mysterious children whose birth from a mother destined never to see them<sup>1</sup> portends their future greatness and their early end; and as we read further of the sword which is left for the strongest in

The Volsung Tale.

<sup>1</sup> So in the Hindu popular story, Vikramaditya (the child of Aditi, Kronos, or the Dawn-land of the East), is the son of Gandharba-sena. When his sire died, his grandfather, the deity Indra, resolved that 'the babe should

not be born, upon which his mother stabbed herself. But the tragic event duly happening during the ninth month, Vikramaditya came into the world by himself.'—Burton, *Tales of Indian Devilry*, preface, p. xv.



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I.

the rooftree of Volsung's hall, no room is left for doubt that we have before us the story of Theseus in another dress. The one-eyed guest with the great striped cloak and broad flapping hat, who buries the sword up to its hilt in the huge oak stem,<sup>1</sup> is Odin, the lord of the air, who in Teutonic mythology is like the Kyklops, one-eyed, as Indra Savitar is one-handed. But Aigeus in the Argive story is but one of the many names of Zeus Poseidôn, and as the husband of Aithra, the ether, he also is lord of the air. In vain, when Odin has departed, do Siggeir, the husband of Volsung's daughter Signy, and the other guests at her marriage-feast, strive to draw the sword. It remains motionless in the trunk until it is touched by Sigmund,<sup>2</sup> the youngest and bravest of Volsung's sons—a reproduction in part of Volsung himself, as Odysseus is of Autolykos. To Sigmund's hand, as to Arthur, the sword yields itself at once, without an effort. Theseus lifts the huge stone beneath which Aigeus had placed his magic sword and sandals. The weapon of the Greek story is the sword of Chrysâôr; that of the Teutonic legend is the famous Gram, the Excalibur of Arthur and the Durandal of Roland, and Sigmund thus becomes, like Achilles, the possessor of an irresistible arm. In truth, the whole myth of Volsung and his children is but a repetition, in all its phases, of that great drama of Greek mythology which begins with the loss of the golden fleece and ends with the return of the Herakleidai. This drama represents the course or history of the sun in all its different aspects, as ever young or growing old, as dying or immortal, as shooting with poisoned weapons or as hating a lie like death, as conquering the powers of darkness or as smitten by their deadly weapons; and thus in the defeat of Sigmund we have an incident belonging as strictly

<sup>1</sup> This tree grows through the roof of the hall and spreads its branches far and wide in the upper air. It is manifestly the counterpart of Yggdrasil.

<sup>2</sup> The Sigmund of Beowulf and the Volsung Tale bears a name which is an epithet of Odin, the giver of victory. He is drawn by Regin from the trunk of a poplar tree, he is loved by the Valkyrie Brynhild, and instructed by the wise Gripir, as Achilles and other

heroes are taught by Cheiron. He wears the invisible helmet, and like many or most mythical champions, can be wounded only in one part of his body. If again Fafnir, when dying by his hand, tells him of the things which shall happen hereafter, we must remember that the Pythian dragon guarded the oracle of Delphi.—Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 343.





to the solar myth as the victory of Achilleus over Hektor, or the slaughter of the Sphinx by Oidipous. It could not be otherwise. Ódin and Phoibos live while Baldur and Asklepios die, but these rise again themselves or live in their children. So, too, there must be a struggle between Siggeir and Sigmund for the possession of Gram, for Siggeir stands to Sigmund in the relation of Polydektês to Perseus, or of Paris to Menelaos. But he is the dark being regarded for the present as the conqueror, and Sigmund and his ten brothers, the hours of the sunlit day, are taken and bound. The ten brothers are slain; Sigmund himself is saved by his sister Signy, and with his son Sinfliótl, now runs as a werewolf through the forest, the Lykeian or wolf-god wandering through the dark forest of the night—a dreary picture which the mythology of sunnier lands represented under the softer image of the sleeping Helios sailing in his golden cup from the western to the eastern ocean. But the beautiful Signy is no other than Penelopê, and Siggeir's followers are the suitors who eat up the substance of Sigmund, as they had deprived him of his armour. There remains therefore to be wrought again a vengeance like that of Odysseus: and when Sinfliótl is, like Telemachos, strong enough to help his father, the two, like the Ithakan chieftains, burn up Siggeir and all his followers, the mode in which they are slain pointing to the scorching heat of the sun not less clearly than the deadly arrows which stream from the bow of Odysseus. Sigmund now regains his heritage, and for him, as for Odysseus, there follows a time of serene repose. Like Nestor, who is exaggerated in Tithonos, he reaches a good old age: but as Odysseus must yet go through the valley of death, so Sigmund has to fight the old battle over again, and is slain in a war with the sons of King Hunding, in whom are reflected the followers of Siggeir. But Achilleus is slain only when Apollôn guides the spear of Paris; and so when Sigmund's hour is come, the one-eyed man with the flapping hat and the blue garment (of ether) is seen again. As he stretches out this spear, Sigmund strikes against it his good sword Gram, and the blade is shivered in twain. The hero at once knows that Ódin stands before him, and prepares to



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die on the battle-field. But Iolê stood by the funeral pile of Herakles, and Sigmund dies in the arms of his young wife Hjordis, youthful as Daphnê or Arethousa, 'refusing all leechcraft and bowing his head to Odin's will,' as in the Trojan myth Paris cannot be healed even though Oimônê would gladly save him.

So ends the first act of the great drama; but the wheel has only to make another turn, and bring back the same series of events with slight differences of names and colouring. Sigmund leaves Hjordis the mother of an unborn babe, the Phoibos who is the child of Lêtô, and of the Sun who sank yestereve beneath the western waters. This child, who receives the name of Sigurd, is born in the house of Hialprek, who is localised as King of Denmark, but who represents Laios or Akrisios in the Theban and Argive legends; and these, we need not say, are simply reflections of Vritra, the being who wraps all things in the veil of darkness. Sigurd himself is the favourite hero of northern tradition. Like Achilles, he is the destined knight who succeeds where all others have failed before him. Troy cannot fall if the son of Peleus be absent; Fafnir cannot be slain, nor Brynhild rescued, except by the son of Sigmund. Physically, there is no difference between them. Both have the keen blue eyes, and golden locks, and invincible weapons of Phoibos and Athênê; on both alike rests the glory of a perfect beauty; and to both their weapons and their armour come from the god of fire. But in the Norse story there is a connection between Regin, the mysterious smith of King Hialprek, and the dragon Fafnir, which cannot be traced between Hephaistos and the Delphian Python, but which is fully explained by the differences of a northern and a mediterranean climate. In the Norse story, there is enmity between Fafnir and Regin, between the serpent who has coiled round the treasure of Brynhild (as the Paris hide the cows of Indra), and the faculties of life and growth represented by the dwarfs to whose race Regin belongs.<sup>1</sup> Regin,

<sup>1</sup> 'The dwarfs of Teutonic mythology are distinguished from its giants, because they do not, like the latter, represent the wild and lawless energies of nature,

but the contrivance and wonderful properties present in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms, and shown in form and shape, in colour and growth, in





in short, is one of that class of beings who supply warmth and vigour to all living things; Fafnir is the simple darkness or cold, which is the mere negation of life and light. Hence from Regin comes the bidding which charges Sigurd to slay Fafnir; but the mode in which this enmity is said to have been excited is singularly significant. In their wanderings, Odin, Loki, and Hahnir, the gods of the glistening heavens, come to a river where, nigh to a ford, an otter is eating a salmon with its eyes shut. Loki, slaying the beast with a stone, boasts that at one throw he has got both fish and flesh. This is the first blow dealt by the lords of light to the powers of cold and darkness: but the way is as yet by no means open before them. Many a day has yet to pass, and many a hero yet to fall, before the beautiful summer can be brought out from the prison-house hedged in by its outwork of spears or ice. The slain otter is a brother of Fafnir and Regin, and a son of Reidmar, in whose house the three gods ask shelter, showing at the same time their spoil. At Reidmar's bidding his two surviving sons bind Loki, Odin, and Hahnir, who are not set free until they promise to fill the otter's skin with gold, and so to cover it that not a white hair shall be seen—in other words, the powers of the bright heaven are pledged to loosen the ice-fetters of the earth, and destroy every sign of its long bondage. But the gold is the glistening treasure which has been taken away when Persephonê was stolen from her mother Dêmêtêr and Brynhild left to sleep within the walls of flame. Hence Loki must discharge the office of Hermes when he goes to reclaim the maiden from the rugged lord of Hades; and thus Odin sends Loki to the dwelling of the dark elves, where he compels the dwarf Andvari to give up the golden treasures which he had hoarded in the stony caves, whose ice-like walls answer to the dismal den of the Vedic Panis. One ring alone Andvari seeks to keep. It is the source of all his wealth, and ring after ring drops from it. He wishes, in other words, to keep

various hurtful or useful qualities.' Bunsen (*God in History*, ii. 484), rightly adds, 'The word must be a simple Teutonic one, and we most likely come on the traces of its primary signi-

ficance in our word *Zwerch*, as equivalent to *quer*, wicked or cross, the intellectual application of which has survived in the English *queer*.'



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his hold of the summer itself as represented by the symbol of the reproductive power in nature. The ring is the magic necklace of Harmonia and Eriphyle, the *kestos* of Aphrodité, the ship of Isis and Athênê, the Yoni of Vishnu, the Argo which bears within itself all the chieftains of the Achaian lands. Andvari prays in vain, but before he surrenders the ring, he lays on it a curse, which is to make it the bane of every man who owns it. It is, in short, to be the cause of more than one Trojan war,<sup>1</sup> the Helen who is to bring ruin to the hosts who seek to rescue her from thralldom. The beauty of the ring tempts Odin to keep it, but the gold he yields to Reidmar. It is, however, not enough to hide all the white hairs of the otter's skin. One yet remains visible, and this can be hidden only by the ring which Odin is thus compelled to lay upon it, as the ice cannot be wholly melted till the full warmth of summer has come back to the earth. Thus the three Æsir go free, but Loki lays again on the ring the curse of the dwarf Andvari. The working of this curse is seen first in the death of Reidmar, who is slain by Regin and Fafnir, because he refuses to share with them the gold which he had received from the Æsir. The same cause makes Regin and Fafnir enemies. Fafnir will not yield up the treasure, and taking a dragon's form he folds his coils around the golden heaps upon the glistening heath, as the Python imprisons the fertilising streams at Delphoi. Thus foiled, Regin beseeches Sigurd to smite the dragon; but even Sigurd cannot do this without a sword of sufficient temper. Regin forges two, but the blades of both are shivered at the first stroke. Sigurd exclaims bitterly that the weapons are untrue, like Regin and all his race,—a phrase which points with singular clearness to the difference between the subterranean fires and the life-giving rays of the sun, which alone can scatter the shades of night or conquer the winter's cold. It is clear that the victory cannot be won without the sword which Odin drove into the oak trunk, and which had been broken in the hands of Sigmund. But the

<sup>1</sup> This ring reappears with precisely the same qualities and consequences in many of the sagas of Northern Europe; and it is absurd to suppose that such a series of incidents was constantly recurring in actual history.





pieces remain in the keeping of Hjordis, the mother of Sigurd, and thus the wife of Sigmund plays here precisely the part of Thetis. In each case the weapons with which the hero is to win his victory come through the mother, and in each case they are forged or welded by the swarthy fire-god; but the Norse tale is even more true than the Homeric legend, for the sword which smites the darkness to-day is the same blade which the enemies of the sun yestereve snapped in twain. With the sword thus forged from the shattered pieces of Gram Regin bids Sigurd smite the Dragon: but the hero must first avenge his father's death, and King Hunding, his sons, and all his host are slain, like the suitors by the arrows of Odysseus, before Sigurd goes forth on his good steed Gran, which Odin had brought to him as Athênê brought Pegasos to Bellerophôn, to encounter the guardian of the earth's treasures. But no sooner is the Dragon slain than Regin in his turn feels the desire of vengeance for the very deed which he had urged Sigurd to do, and he insists that the hero shall bring him his brother's heart roasted. Then filling himself with Fafnir's blood, Regin lies down to sleep, and Sigurd, as he roasts the heart, wonders whether it be soft, and putting a portion to his lips, finds that he understands the voices of the birds, who, singing over his head, bid him eat it all and become the wisest of men, and then, cutting off Regin's head, take possession of all his gold. This is manifestly the legend of Iamos and Melampous, while the wisdom obtained by eating the heart of Fafnir has a further connection with the Python as the guardian of the Delphic oracle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grimm regards the words Python and Fafnir as standing to each other in the relation of  $\theta\eta\rho$  and  $\phi\acute{\eta}\rho$ . 'Die Erlegung des Drachen Fáfnir gemahnt an Πύθων, den Apollo besiegte, und wie Python das delfische Orakel hütete, weissagt der sterbende Fáfnir.'—*Deutsche Mythologie*, 345. In the lay of Beowulf this serpent or dragon appears under the name Grendel; and, in fact, the whole story of Sigurd is in that poem related substantially, although not with the same fulness of detail, of Sigmund the father of Beowulf, the Waelsing, who, having slain the worm, becomes the

possessor of the ring hoard which he may enjoy at pleasure. Like the Norse Sigurd, Sigmund is 'of wanderers by far the greatest throughout the human race:' he is, in short, the Odysseus who wanders very far over many lands, after the fall of Ilion, which again answers to the slaying of the dragon. The Fitela of Beowulf is clearly the Sinfjötli of the Volsung tale. For some remarks on the comparative antiquity of these two legends see Ludlow, *Popular Epics of the Middle Ages*, i. 41. The substantial identity of the two myths renders the question of date of com-