



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE AENEID
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Rev. Alfred J. Church

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

The Aeneid for Boys and Girls

REV ALFRED C. CHURCH

TOLD FROM VIRGIL IN
SIMPLE LANGUAGE



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THE HORSE OF WOOD

The Greeks besieged the city of Troy for nearly ten years. They could not take it because the walls were so high and strong—some said that they had been built by the hands of gods—but they kept the Trojans inside. This had not always been so. There had been a time when the Trojans had gone out and fought with their enemies on the plain, sometimes they had beaten them in battle, and once they had very nearly burnt their ships. But this was all changed. They had lost some of the bravest of their chiefs, such as Hector, the best of the sons of Priam, and Paris the great archer, and many great princes, who had come from the countries round about to help them.

We can easily believe then that Priam, King of Troy, and his people were very glad to hear that one day the Greeks had gone home. Two Trojans, who had left the city two weeks or so before on a message from King Priam to one of his allies, came back saying that they had gone to the camp of the Greeks and had found it empty, and that there were no ships to be seen. Every one who was not ill or too old to move about made all the haste they could to get out of the city. The gates were opened wide for the first time during ten years, and men, women, and children hurried out to see the plain where so many battles had been fought, and the camp in which the enemy had lived, and the place where the ships had been dragged up on the shore. As you may suppose, those who had fought in the battles had a great deal to say about what they had done and what they had seen. There were many things to see, but the strangest one of all was a great Horse of Wood, which was standing not far from the walls of the city. No one was quite sure what it was, or what it meant. One man said: "It is a very curious

thing. Let us drag it into the city that it may be a monument of all that we have suffered for the last ten years." Others said: "Not so; we had better burn it, or drag it down to the sea that the water may cover it, or cut it open to see whether there is anything inside." Of these no one was more vehement than Laocoön, priest of Neptune. "Take heed what you do, men of Troy," he cried. "Who knows whether the Greeks have really gone away? It may be that there are armed men inside this Horse; it may be that it has been made so big to overtop the walls of the city. Anyhow I am afraid of these Greeks, even when they give us gifts." And as he spoke, he threw the spear which he had in his hand at the Horse of Wood, and struck it on the side. A great rattling sound was heard, and the Trojans, if they had not been very blind and foolish, might have known that there was something wrong.

While the dispute was going on, some shepherds came up, bringing with them a man whose hands were bound behind his back. He had come out from a hiding-place, they said, of his own accord, when they were in the field. The young Trojans crowded round him, and began to mock at him, but he cried out in a very piteous voice: "What shall I do? where shall I go? the Greeks will not let me live, and the Trojans cry out for vengeance upon me." Then they began to pity him, and they bade him say who he was and what he had to tell.

Then the man turned to King Priam, and said: "I will speak the truth, whatever may happen to me. My name is Sinon, and I will not deny that I am a Greek. Perhaps you have heard of one Palamedes. The Greeks put him to death, saying that he was a traitor; but his only fault was that he wanted to have peace. Yes, they put him to death, and now that he is dead, they are sorry. I was a cousin of his, and my father sent me with him to Troy. So long as he prospered, I prospered also; but when he was done to death by the false witness of Ulysses, I fell into great grief and trouble, nor could I be silent; I swore that if ever I got back to Argos, I would have revenge on those who had brought him to his death. So Ulysses was always on the look-out to do me some harm; and at the last by

the help of Calchas the prophet—but why do I tell you of these things? Doubtless you hold one Greek as bad as another. Kill me, if you will; only remember that this is the very thing which the two sons of Atreus wish, the very thing which Ulysses himself would give much money to secure.”

Then the Trojans said: “Tell us more.” And he went on. “Many times would the Greeks have gone home, for they were very tired of the war, but the sea was so stormy that they dared not go. Then they made this great Horse of Wood which you see, but the storms grew worse and worse. Then they sent to ask Apollo what they should do. And Apollo said: ‘Men of Greece, when you came here you had to appease the winds with blood, and you must appease them with blood again when you go away.’ Every one trembled when they heard this, for every one feared that it might be his blood that would be wanted. After a while Ulysses brought the prophet into the assembly of the people, and said: ‘Tell us now who is it that the gods will have for a victim?’ Then many thought that it was I against whom Ulysses was plotting. For nine days the prophet said nothing: ‘He would not give any Greek,’ he said, ‘to death.’ These were his words, but in truth he and Ulysses had plotted the whole thing between them. On the tenth day he spoke, and said: ‘Sinon is the man.’ To this all agreed, every man thinking, ‘Well, it is not I that shall die.’ So they fixed a day on which I was to be sacrificed, and made everything ready. But before it came, I broke my chains and escaped, hiding myself in the reeds of a pond, till they should set sail. And now I shall never see my own country again; no, nor my wife and children, and, doubtless, these cruel men will take vengeance on them because I escaped. And now I beseech you, O King, to have pity on me, for I have suffered much, though, indeed, I have not done harm to any man.”

Then King Priam had pity on him and bade them unbind his hands, saying: “Forget your own people; from to-day you are one of us. But tell us now, why did the Greeks make this great Horse of Wood that we see?”

Then Sinon lifted up his hands to the sky and said: “O sun

and moon and stars, I call you to witness that I have a good right to tell the secrets of my countrymen. Listen, O King. From the beginning, when the Greeks first came to this place, their hope has been in the help of Minerva. But she was angry with them for this cause. Ulysses and Diomed made their way into your city, and climbed into the citadel, and killed the guards. And then with hands all bloody from the slaughter, they laid hold of her image and carried it away. It was this that made the goddess angry, that they should dare to touch her with hands stained with blood. I saw with my own eyes how the eyes of the image, when these two brought it into the camp, flashed with anger, and how the drops of sweat stood upon it; yes, and how it leapt three times from the ground, shaking shield and spear. Then the prophet said: 'You must go back to Greece, and come again, and begin the war again, if you wish to take the city of Troy'—and this they are doing now; they have gone back to Greece, and they will soon return. Furthermore, he said: 'You must make a Horse of Wood to be a peace-offering to Minerva. Make it, I advise you, very great, so that the Trojans may not take it within their walls. For, if they do so take it, then you will never conquer their city. Nay, they will come to our own land, and lay siege to our cities, and our children will suffer the things which we have sought to bring on them. But if they hurt the thing, then they themselves shall perish.' "

This was the tale that Sinon told, and the Trojans believed it. Nor is this to be wondered at, because the gods themselves took part in deceiving them. For while Laocoön, the priest of Neptune, the same that had thrown his spear at the Horse, was sacrificing a bull on the altar of his god, two great serpents came across the sea from a certain island that was near. All the Trojans saw them come, with their heads raised high above the water, as is the way of snakes to swim. And when they reached the land they came on straight to the city. Their eyes were red as blood, and blazed like fire, and they made a dreadful hissing with their tongues. The Trojans grew pale with fear, and fled. But the serpents did not turn this way or that, but came straight to the altar at which Laocoön stood, with

his two sons by him. And one serpent laid hold on one of the boys, and the other on the other, and they began to devour them. Then the father picked up a sword, and tried to help them, but they caught hold of him, and wound their folds round him. Twice did they wind themselves round his body and his neck, and their heads stood high above his head. And he still tried as hard as he could to tear them away with his hands, and the garlands which he bore, being a priest, dripped with blood. And all the time he cried aloud as a bull roars when the servant of the temple strikes him unskillfully, and he flies from the altar. And when the serpents had done their work, and both the priest and his sons were dead, then they glided to the hill on which stood the Temple of Minerva, and hid themselves under the feet of the image. And when the Trojans saw this, they said to themselves: "Now Laocoön has suffered the due reward of his deeds, for he threw his spear at the holy thing which belongs to the goddess, and now he is dead and his sons with him."

Then they all cried out together that the Horse of Wood should be drawn into the citadel. So they opened the great gate of the city, pulling down part of the wall that there might be more room, and they put rollers under the feet of the Horse, and they fastened ropes to it. Then they drew it into the city, boys and girls laying hold of the ropes, and singing songs with great joy. And every one thought it a great thing if he could put his hand to a rope. But there were not wanting signs of evil to come. Four times did the Horse halt as they dragged it, before it passed through the gate, and each time there might have been heard a great clashing of arms within. Also Cassandra opened her mouth, and prophesied the fate of the city; but no one took any heed of her words, for it was her doom that she should speak the truth and not be believed. So the Trojans drew the Horse of Wood into the city. That night they kept a feast to the gods with great joy, not knowing that the end of their city was now close at hand.

THE SACK OF TROY

Now the Greeks had only made a show of going away. They had taken their ships, indeed, from the place where they had been drawn up on the coast of Troy, but they had not taken them farther than a little island which was close by. There they hid themselves, ready to come back when the signal was given. When it was quite dark the signal was given; a burning torch was raised from the ship of King Agamemnon, which was in the middle of the fleet. When the Greeks saw this they got on board their ships, and rowed across from the island. The moon gave them light, and there was a great calm on the sea. At the same time Sinon opened the door in the Horse of Wood, and let out the chiefs who were hidden in it. And all the time the Trojans were fast asleep, not thinking of any danger.

Now Æneas, who was the chief hope and stay of the Trojans, had a dream. He dreamt that he saw Hector, the brave chief who had been killed by Achilles. He saw him not as he was in the old time, when he came back from the battle, bringing back the arms of Achilles, which he had taken from Patroclus; not as he was when he was setting fire to the ships, and the Greeks could not stand against him, but as he was when he lay dead. He was covered with dust and blood, and his feet were pierced through with thongs, for Achilles had dragged him at the wheels of his chariot three times round the walls of Troy.

When Æneas saw him he forgot all that had happened, and said: "Why have you been so long in coming? We have missed you much, and suffered much because you were not here to help us. But why do you look so miserable? Who has given you these wounds?"

To these questions the spirit made no answer. All that he said was this: "Fly, Æneas, fly, and save yourself from these flames. The

enemy is inside our walls, and Troy is lost. The gods would have it so. If any one could have saved the city, I should have done it. But it was not to be. You are now Troy's only hope. Take, then, the gods of your country, and flee across the sea; there some day you shall build another Troy."

And Æneas woke from his sleep, and while he lay thinking about the dream he heard a great sound, and it seemed to him like to the sound of arms. So he rose from his bed, and climbed on the roof, and looked at the city. Just so a shepherd stands upon a hill and sees, it may be, a great fire blown by a strong wind from the south, and sweeping over the corn-fields, or a flood rushing down from the mountains. As he looked he saw the fire burst out first from one great palace and then from another, till the very sea shone with the light of the burning city. Then he knew that what Hector had told him in the dream was true, that the Greeks had made their way into the city. So he put on his armour, though he did not know what he could do. Still, he thought to himself: "I may be able to help Troy in some way; anyhow, I can avenge myself on the enemy; at the least I can die with honour." Just as he was going out of his house the priest of Apollo met him. He was leading his little grandson by the hand, and on his other arm he was carrying an image of the god. When he saw Æneas he cried out: "O Æneas, the glory is gone from Troy; the Greeks have the mastery in the city. Armed men have come out of the Horse of Wood, and thousands have got in by the gates, which that traitor Sinon has opened." While he was speaking, others came up, one of them being young Corœbus, who had come to Troy, hoping to get the prophetess Cassandra for his wife. Æneas said to them: "Brothers, if you are willing to follow me to the death, come on. You see what has happened. The gods who used to guard our city have gone from it; nowhere is any help to be found. Still, we may die as brave men die in battle. Ay, and it may be that he who is willing to lose his life may save it." Then they all followed him, and they went through the city as fierce as hungry wolves when they come down from the mountains.

The first thing that happened was this. A certain Greek chieftain,

who had many men with him, met them, and mistook them for his own countrymen. "Make haste, my friends!" he cried; "why are you so late? We are spoiling the city, and you have only just come from the ships." But when they made no answer, he looked again, and saw that he had fallen among enemies. So a man comes upon the snake among the rocks, and when it rises, with great swelling neck, he tries to fly. So the chieftain turned to fly, but the place was strange to him, and he and many of his company were killed. Then Corœbus said: "We have good luck, my friends. Let us now change our shields and put on the armour of the Greeks. Who can blame us for deceiving these Greeks?" Then he took the shield and helmet of the Greek chieftain, who had been slain, and his sword also. The others did the same, and so disguising himself he killed many of the Greeks. Others fled to the ships, and some climbed up again into the Horse of Wood.

As they went through the city they met a number of men who were dragging the prophetess Cassandra from the temple of Minerva, in which she had taken refuge. When Corœbus, who, as has been said, hoped to marry Cassandra, saw this, and how she lifted up her eyes to heaven—her hands she could not lift because they were bound with iron—he was mad with rage, and rushed at the men, seeking to set the girl free, and all the other Trojans followed him. Then there happened a very dreadful thing. There were many Trojans standing on the roofs of temples and houses close by; these men, when they saw Corœbus and the others with the Greek armour on them, which they had taken, took them for Greeks, and threw spears at them and killed many. And the Greeks also began to fight more fiercely than before, and those who had fled to the ships came back again. Altogether they gathered a great company together, and the Trojans, of whom there were but very few, could not stand up against them. Corœbus was killed first of all, and then almost all the others, good and bad, for it was the day of doom for the Trojans. At last Æneas was left with only two companions, one of them an old man, and the other hardly able to move for a wound which Ulysses had given him.

As he stood thinking what he should do, he heard a great shouting, and it seemed to come from the palace of King Priam. So he said to his companions: "Let us go and see whether we can help." And when they got there they found a fiercer battle than any that they had seen before in the city. Some of the Greeks were trying to climb up the walls. They had put ladders against them, and they stood on the steps high up, grasping the edge of the roof in one hand, and holding their shields with the other. And the Trojans, knowing that there was no hope of escaping, tore down the battlements and threw the big stones at the heads of the Greeks. Now Æneas knew of a secret way into the palace. By this Hector's wife Andromaché had been used to come from Hector's palace, bringing her little boy with her to see his grandfather King Priam. So he was able to climb up on to the roof, without being seen by the Greeks, and to join his countrymen who were defending the palace. There was a high tower on the roof, so high that all the city of Troy could be seen from it, and the camp of the Greeks, and the ships. The Trojans broke away the foundations of this tower with bars of iron, and toppled it over, so that it fell upon the Greeks, and killed many of them. But the others pressed on just as fiercely as before, throwing javelins and stones and anything that came to their hands at the Trojans on the roof.

While some were trying to climb up on to the roof, others were breaking down the gates of the palace. The leader of them was the son of Achilles, Pyrrhus by name. He wore shining armour of bronze, and was as bright as a great snake which has slept in his hole all the winter, and when the spring begins, comes out with a new shining skin into the sunshine and lifts his head high and hisses with his forked tongue. He had a great battle-axe, which he held in both his hands, and with this he hewed through the doors; the very door-posts he broke down with it, making what one might call a great window, through which could be seen the great palace within, the hall of King Priam and of the kings who had reigned in Troy before him. And those who were inside also could see the armed men who were breaking in, and they made a great cry; and

the women wailed and clung to the doors and pillars, and kissed them, because they thought that they should never see them any more. There were men who had been put to guard the gates, but they could not stop the son of Achilles, for he was as fierce and as strong as his father had been. He and his people were like to a river that is swollen with much rain and bursts its banks, and overflows all the plain. Just so did the Greeks rush into the palace.

When old King Priam saw the enemy in his hall he put on his armour. He had not worn it for many years, so old he was, but now he felt that he must fight for his home. And he took a spear in his hand, and would have gone against the Greeks. But his wife, Queen Hecuba, called to him from the place where she sat. She and her daughter and the wives of her sons had fled to the great altar of the gods of the household, and were clinging to it. They were like to a flock of doves which have been driven by a storm into a wood. The altar stood in an open court which was in the middle of the palace, and a great bay tree stood by, and covered it with its branches. When she saw how her husband had put on his armour, as if he were a young man, she cried to him, saying: "What has bewitched you that you have put on your armour? It is not the sword that can help us to-day; no, not if my own dear Hector, who was the bravest of the brave, were here. It is in the gods and their altars that we must trust. Come and sit with us; here you will be safe, or, at least, we shall all die together."

So she made the old man sit down in the midst of them. But lo! there came flying through the hall of the palace one of the sons of the king, Polites by name. Pyrrhus had wounded him, but the lad had fled, and Pyrrhus was close behind with his spear. And just as he came within sight of his father and his mother he fell dead upon the ground. When King Priam saw this he could not contain himself, but cried aloud, saying: "Now may the gods punish you for this wickedness, you who have killed a son before the eyes of his father and his mother. You say that you are a son of the great Achilles, but when you say it you lie. It was not thus that Achilles treated me. For when he had slain my son Hector, and I went to

him to beg the body for burial, he gave it to me for due ransom, and sent me back to my own city without harm.”

So did King Priam speak; then he took up a spear and cast it at Pyrrhus, but there was no strength in his blow. It did but shake the shield, not piercing it at all, and falling idly on the ground. Then said the son of Achilles: “Go, tell my father of his unworthy son, and of the wicked deeds which he doeth. And that you may tell him, die!” And as he spoke he caught the old man’s white hair with his left hand and dragged him, slipping as he went in the blood of his son, to the altar, and with his right hand he lifted up his sword and drove it, up to the very hilt, into the old man’s body. So died King Priam. Once he had ruled over many cities and peoples in the land of Asia, and now, after he had seen his city taken and his palace spoiled, he was slain and his carcass was cast out upon the earth, headless and without a name.