



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE ILIAD FOR
BOYS AND GIRLS

Rev. Alfred J. Church

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED



DIOMEDE CASTING HIS SPEAR AGAINST ARES.

The Iliad

for Boys and Girls

ALFRED J. CHURCH



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OF HOW THE WAR WITH TROY BEGAN

*O*nce upon a time there was a certain King of Sparta who had a most beautiful daughter, Helen by name. There was not a prince in Greece but wished to marry her. The King said to them: “Now you must all swear that you will be good friends with the man whom my daughter shall choose for her husband, and that if any one is wicked enough to steal her away from him, you will help him get her back.” And this they did. Then the Fair Helen chose a prince whose name was Menelaüs, brother of Agamemnon, who reigned in Mycenæ, and was the chief of all the Kings of Greece. After a while Helen’s father died, and her husband became King of Sparta. The two lived happily together till there came to Sparta a young prince, Paris by name, who was son of Priam, King of Troy. This Paris carried off the Fair Helen, and with her much gold and many precious stones.

Menelaüs and his brother Agamemnon sent to the princes of Greece and said, “Now you must keep your oath, and help us to get back the Fair Helen.” So they all came to a place called Aulis, with many ships and men. Others also who had not taken the oath came with them. The greatest of these chiefs were these:—

Diomed, son of Tydeus; Ajax the Greater and Ajax the Less, and Teucer the Archer, who was brother of Ajax the Greater.

Nestor, who was the oldest man in the world.

The wise Ulysses.

Achilles, who was the bravest and strongest of all the Greeks, and with him his dear friend Patroclus.

For nine years the Greeks besieged the city of Troy, but they could not break through the walls; and as they had been away from their homes for all this time, they came to be in great want of food

and clothes and other things. So they left part of the army to watch the city, and with part they went about and spoiled other cities. Thus came about the great quarrel of which I am now going to tell.

THE QUARREL

*T*he Greeks took the city of Chrysé and divided the spoils among the chiefs; to Agamemnon they gave a girl named Chryseïs, who was the daughter of the priest of Apollo, the god who was worshipped in the city. Then the priest came bringing much gold, with which he wished to buy back his daughter.

First of all he went to Agamemnon and his brother, then to the other chiefs, and begged them to take the gold and give him back the girl. "So," he said, "may the gods help you take the city of Troy, and bring you back safe to your homes."

All the other chiefs were willing, but Agamemnon cried, "Away with you, old man. Do not linger here now, and do not come again, or it will be the worse for you, though you are a priest. As for your daughter, I will carry her back with me when I have taken Troy."

So the old man went out in great fear and trouble, and he prayed to Apollo to help him. And Apollo heard him. Very angry was the god that his priest should suffer such things, and he came down from his palace on the top of the mountain Olympus. He came as night comes across the sky, and his arrows rattled terribly as he went. Then he began to shoot and his arrows carried death, first to the dogs and the mules, and then to the men. For nine days the people died, and on the tenth day Achilles called an assembly.

When the Greeks were gathered together he stood up in the middle and said: "Surely it would be better to go home than to stay here and die. Many are slain in battle, and still more are slain by the plague. Let us ask the prophets why it is that Apollo is angry with us."

Then Calchas the prophet stood up: "You wish to know why Apollo is angry. I will tell you, but first you must promise to stand

by me, for King Agamemnon will be angry when he hears what I shall say."

"Say on," cried Achilles: "no man shall harm you while I live, no, not Agamemnon himself."

Then Calchas said: "Apollo is angry because when his priest came to buy back his daughter, Agamemnon would not listen to him. Now you must send back the girl, taking no money for her, and with her a hundred beasts as a sacrifice."

Then King Agamemnon stood up in a rage and cried:

"You always prophesy evil, ill prophet that you are. The girl I will send back, for I would not have the people die, but I will not go without my share of the spoil."

"You think too much of gain, King Agamemnon," said Achilles. "Surely you would not take from any man that which has been given him. Wait till Troy has been conquered, and then we will make up to you what has been lost three times over."

"Do not try to cheat me in this way," answered Agamemnon. "My share I will have at once. If the Greeks will give it to me, well and good; but if not, then I will take it from one of the chiefs, from you, Achilles, or from Ajax, or from Ulysses. But now let us see about the sending back of the girl."

Then Achilles was altogether carried away with rage and said: "Never was there a king so shameless and so greedy of gain. The Trojans never did harm to me or mine. I have been fighting against them for your sake and your brother's. And you sit in your tent at ease, but when the spoil is divided, then you have the lion's share. And now you will take the little that was given me. I will not stay here to be shamed and robbed. I will go home."

"Go," said Agamemnon, "and take your people with you. I have other chiefs as good as you, and ready to honour me, as you are not. But mark this: the girl Briseïs, who was given to you as your share of the spoil, I will take, if I have to come and fetch her myself. For you must learn that I am master here."

Achilles was mad with anger to hear this, and said to himself, "Now I will slay this villain where he sits," and he half drew his



ATHENE REPRESSING THE FURY OF ACHILLES.

sword from its scabbard. But at that instant the goddess Athené stood behind him and seized him by his long yellow hair. And when he turned to see who had done this, he perceived the goddess—but no one else in the assembly could see her—and said: “Are you come to see this villain die?” “Nay,” she answered, “I am come to stay your rage. Queen Hera and I love you both. Draw not your sword, but say what you will. Some day he will pay you back three times and four times for all the wrong he shall do.”

Achilles answered: “I will do as you bid; for he who hears the gods is heard by them.” So he thrust back his sword into the scabbard, and Athené went back to Olympus. Then he turned to Agamemnon and cried: “Drunkard with the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer, hear what I tell you now. See this sceptre that I have in my hand. Once it was the branch of a tree; now a king carries it in his hand. As surely as it will never more shoot forth in leaves, so surely will the Greeks one day miss Achilles. And you, when you see your people falling by the swords of the Trojans, will be sorry that you have done this wrong to the bravest man in your army.” And he dashed the sceptre on the ground and sat down.

Then the old man Nestor stood up and would have made peace between the two. “Listen to me,” he said. “Great chiefs of old, with whom no one now alive would dare to fight, were used to listen to me. You, King Agamemnon, do not take away from the brave Achilles the gift that the Greeks gave him; and you Achilles, pay due respect to him who is the King of Kings in Greece.”

So spoke Nestor, but he spoke in vain, for Agamemnon answered: “Peace is good; but this fellow would lord it over all. The gods have made him a great warrior, but they have not given him leave to set himself up above law and order. He must learn that there is one here better than he.”

And Achilles cried: “You better than me! I were a slave and a coward if I owned it. What the Greeks gave me, let them take away if they will. But mark this: if you lay your hands on anything that is my own, that hour you will die.”

Then the assembly was broken up. After a while Agamemnon

said to the heralds: "Go now to the tent of Achilles, and fetch thence the girl Briseïs. And if he will not let her go, say that I will come with others to fetch her, and that it will be worse for him."

So the heralds went, but it was much against their will that they did this errand. And when they came to that part of the camp where Achilles and his people were, they found him sitting between his tent and his ship. And they stood in great fear and shame. But when he saw them he spoke kind words to them, for all that his heart was full of rage. "Draw near, heralds. 'Tis no fault of yours that you are come on such an errand."

Then he turned to Patroclus and said: "Fetch Briseïs from her tent and give her to the heralds. Let them be witnesses of this evil deed, that they may remember it in the day when he shall need my help and shall not have it."

So Patroclus brought out the girl and gave her to the heralds. And she went with them, much against her will, and often looking back. And when she was gone, Achilles left his companions and sat upon the sea-shore, weeping aloud and stretching out his hands to his mother Thetis, the daughter of the sea. She heard his voice where she sat in the depths by the side of her father, and rose from the sea, as a cloud rises, and came to him where he sat weeping, shaking him with her hand, and calling him by his name.

"Why do you weep, my son?" she said.

And he told her what had been done. And when he had finished the story, he said: "Now go to Olympus, to the palace of Zeus. You helped him once in the old time, when the other gods would have put him in chains, fetching the great giant with the hundred hands to sit by his side, so that no one dared to touch him. Remind him of these things, and ask him to help the Trojans, and to make the Greeks flee before them, so that Agamemnon may learn how foolish he has been."

His mother said: "Surely, my son, your lot is hard. Your life must be short, and it should be happy; but, as it seems to me, it is both short and sad. Truly I will go to Zeus, but not now; for he is gone with the other gods to a twelve days' feast. But when he

comes back, then I will go to him and persuade him. Meanwhile do you sit still, and do not go forth to battle.”

Meanwhile Ulysses was taking back the priest's daughter to her father. Very glad was he to see her again, and he prayed to his god that the plague among the Greeks might cease, and so it happened. But Achilles sat in his tent and fretted, for there was nothing that he liked so much as the cry of the battle.

WHAT THETIS DID FOR HER SON

When the twelve days of feasting were over, Thetis rose out of the sea and went her way to Olympus. There she found Zeus sitting alone on the highest peak of the mountain. She knelt down before him, and her left hand she laid upon his knees, and with her right hand she caught hold of his beard. Then she made this prayer to him:—

“O father Zeus, if I have ever helped thee at all, now give me what I ask, namely, that my son Achilles may have honour done to him. Agamemnon has shamed him, taking away the gift that the Greeks gave him. Do thou, therefore, make the Trojans prevail for a while in battle, so that the Greeks may find that they cannot do without him. So shall my son have honour.”

For a long time Zeus sat saying nothing, for he knew that great trouble would come out of this thing. But Thetis still held him fast by the knees and by the beard; and she spoke again, saying: “Promise me this thing, and make your promise sure by nodding your head; or, else, say outright that you will not do it. Then I shall know that you despise me.”

Zeus answered: “This is a hard thing that you ask. You will make a dreadful quarrel between me and the Lady Hera, my wife, and she will say many bitter words to me. Even now she tells me I favour the Trojans too much. Go, then, as quickly as you can, that she may not know that you have been here, and I will think how I may best do what you ask. And see, I will make my promise sure with a nod, for when I nod my head, then the thing may not be repented of or undone.”

So he nodded his head, and all Olympus was shaken.

Then Thetis went away, and dived down into the sea. And Zeus

went to his palace, and when he came in at the door, all the gods rose up in their places, and stood till he sat down on his throne. But Hera knew that Thetis had been with him, and she was very angry, and spoke bitter words: "Who has been with you, O lover of plots? When I am not here, then you take pleasure in hiding what you do, and in keeping things from me."

Zeus answered: "O Hera, do not think to know all of my thoughts; that is too hard for you, even though you are my wife. That which it is right for you to know, I will tell you before I tell it to any other god; but there are matters which I keep to myself. Do not seek to know these."

But Hera was even more angry than before. "What say you?" she cried. "I do not pry into your affairs. Settle them as you will. But this I know, that Thetis with the silver feet has been with you, and I greatly fear that she has had her way. At dawn of day I saw her kneeling before you; yes, and you nodded your head. I am sure that you have promised her that Achilles should have honour. Ah me! Many of the Greeks will die for this."

Then Zeus answered: "Truly there is nothing that you do not find out, witch that you are. But, if it be as you say, then know that such is my will. Do you sit still and obey. All the gods in Olympus cannot save you, if once I lay my hands upon you."

Hera sat still and said nothing, for she was very much afraid. Then her son, the god who made arms and armour and cups and other things out of silver and gold and copper, said to her: "It would be a great pity if you and the Father of the gods should quarrel on account of a man. Make peace with him, and do not make him angry again. It would be a great grief to me if I were to see you beaten before my eyes; for, indeed, I could not help you. Once before when I tried to come between him and you, he took me by the foot and threw me out the door of heaven. All day I fell and at evening I lighted in the island of Lemnos."

Then he thought how he might turn the thoughts of the company to something else. There was a very beautiful boy who used to carry the wine round. The god, who was a cripple, took his place, and

mixed the cup, and hobbled round with it, puffing for breath as he went, and all the gods fell into great fits of laughter when they saw him. So the feast went on, and Apollo and the Muses sang, and no one thought any more about the quarrel.

But while all the other gods were sleeping, Zeus remained awake, thinking how he might do what Thetis had asked of him for her son. The best thing seemed to be to deceive Agamemnon, and make him think that he could take the city of Troy without the help of Achilles. So he called a Dream, and said to it: "Go, Dream, to the tent of Agamemnon, and tell him that if he will lead his army to battle, he will take the city of Troy."

So the Dream went, and it took the shape of Nestor, whom the King thought to be the wisest of the Greeks, and stood by his bedside and said: "Why do you waste your time in sleep? Arm the Greeks, and lead them out to battle, for you will take the city of Troy."

And the King believed that this false dream was true.