

Aphrodite flew down and wrapped him in a fold of her white robe, Diomedes at once knew who she was. He daringly lunged with his spear, and wounded her palm just above the wrist. Gods and goddesses never bleed—but a colourless liquid, called 'ichor', oozed from the spear-jab. Aphrodite dropped Aeneas, screamed, fled to the War-god Ares, who sat watching the battle from a hill near by, and collapsed in his chariot. Iris, the messenger of the Gods, kindly drove her back, sobbing for pain, to Olympus.

Diomedes, meanwhile, would have finished off Aeneas—whose chariot was already on its way to the naval camp—if Apollo had not flourished a sword, shouting in terrible tones: 'Beware, rash mortal! You dared attack the Goddess Aphrodite, but this is the God Apollo!'

Hector, helped by Ares, who was siding with the Trojans, then led a bold counter-attack. Aeneas, whom Apollo had taken to his neighbouring temple and instantly healed, ran up to support him, and together they killed whole companies of Greeks.

## VII.

### The Trojans Win the Advantage

With Almighty Zeus's permission, Athene mounted her divine chariot and went in search of Diomedes. She found him pale-faced and quiet, still losing blood from the arrow wound. 'Come aboard and fight Ares!' she commanded, giving him renewed strength. Diomedes obeyed, and together they galloped off. Athene made herself invisible, and when Ares stabbed murderously at Diomedes, she drew the spear aside, while Diomedes lunged at his stomach. As the blade sank in, Ares bellowed louder than nine or ten thousand men, then fled to Olympus, where he showed Zeus the ichor welling in streams from his wound. 'How dare mortals treat gods so impiously?' he complained.

Zeus called him a stubborn, violent fool, even worse than his mother Hera; but let Apollo heal him. To be fair, he stopped Athene fighting, too.

Diomedes came face to face with a Lycian named Glaucus and, after challenging him, discovered that his own

grandfather Oeneus the Argonaut—who planted the first vineyard in Greece—had been a close friend of Glaucus's grandfather Bellerophon who killed the monstrous Chimæra. Because of this family tie, they decided not to fight it out, and Diomedes said: 'Let us exchange arms, in open acknowledgement of our friendship!' Glaucus, realizing that he stood no chance against so powerful a champion, agreed to the exchange; although he wore golden armour, and Diomedes only bronze.

Hector paid a hurried visit to Troy. Scores of women crowded around him, begging news of their sons or husbands; but he pushed them aside, and went to find his mother, Queen Hecuba. 'Unless you make these women offer public prayers and sacrifices,' he said, 'we're lost. It's Athene, above all, whom you must honour. She's been unusually hard on us today.' He then visited Paris's house, and found him burnishing his breastplate with a soft leather cloth. 'You cowardly rascal!' he cried. 'How dare you stay away from a battle in which so many brave Trojans are dying for your sake?'

Paris answered: 'You speak sensibly, brother; but the truth is that, feeling a little sad after fighting Menelaus, I came home for a good cry on this chair. Dear Helen has just suggested that I should go out again, and I'm getting my armour ready. One never knows who'll win the next round, does one?'

Helen begged Hector to forgive her. 'All the disasters I've brought on Troy aren't really my fault,' she sobbed. 'The gods arranged everything. I couldn't disobey Aphrodite. Please sit down and rest awhile. You look so tired.'

Hector would not wait. He hurried away and met his wife Andromache in the street, carrying Scamandrius, their three-year-old son. Andromache tried to hold him back. 'Stay here, in safety,' she pleaded. 'Don't make me a widow, don't orphan our darling boy!' He answered: 'Honour forbids me to avoid battle, even though I know that my family and friends are doomed. Worst of all, I confess, is the thought that you'll be led weeping into slavery by some cruel Greek prince—forced to drudge as a servant, and to be rudely stared at when people say: "Look, that's Andromache—she was once Hector the Trojan's wife!"' Scamandrius began to cry, scared by Andromache's tears and by his father's tall plume; so Hector took the helmet off and dandled him in his arms, begging Andromache to control herself and not make things more difficult still. 'War is a man's task: leave me to it! If I must die, I must die.'

They parted. Paris then ran up, fully armed, apologizing for being late, and the brothers went into battle side by side.

Hector loudly challenged any Greek prince to meet him in a duel. Nobody dared accept, until King Menelaus stepped forward. He was groaning quietly to himself, well aware what little hope he had of defeating Hector; so the other Councillors restrained him, and nine of them even offered to take his place. Among these were Agamemnon, Diomedes, Great Ajax, Little Ajax, Idomeneus of Crete, and Odysseus. They marked nine pebbles and put them into a helmet, which Old Nestor shook. Great Ajax's pebble jumped out, to his joy, and a terrific fight between him and Hector now took place. Ajax carried a huge tall shield—nine layers of bull's hide sheathed in bronze; Hector preferred a small round targe. When each had made a spear-cast and failed to score a hit, they began hurling enormous boulders. Though Ajax knocked Hector down with one as big as a mill-stone, he rose again and drew his sword. Ajax drew his. But before they could hack at each other, heralds ran up from the Greek side as well as the Trojan, and used their sacred wands to part the two champions. 'Stop fighting!' they cried. 'Respect the Goddess of Night, who is about to drop her curtain on your encounter.' Both politely agreed, and Hector proposed that after so noble a duel they ought to exchange gifts of friendly admiration.

'Nothing would please me better,' answered Ajax. He gave Hector an embroidered purple belt, and in return got a silver-studded sword. (With this belt Hector was later dragged to death; and with this sword Ajax later killed himself.) The armies thereupon marched back to their suppers.

Antenor spoke at King Priam's Council meeting. He pointed out that Paris, having violated the laws of hospitality by stealing Helen, had made things even worse by running away from Menelaus in the duel. 'We swore an oath to Zeus that the winner should have Helen; she must therefore be sent home with all her treasure.'

Paris rose. 'I refuse to surrender Helen,' he cried, 'because I didn't steal her. She came here of her own free will. However, the booty I captured at Sidon has enriched

me, and I'm ready to pay Menelaus full compensation.'

Priam thanked Paris for so noble a statement. Meanwhile he suggested a twenty-four-hour truce, during which both sides might bury their dead. The Greeks, though rejecting Paris's offer, welcomed the truce and, working like ants all the next day, raised a barrow of earth over their dead. They set it as a rampart alongside the camp, and fortified it with a turreted stone wall. The removal of so much earth formed a deep ditch, or fosse, in front.

Their one mistake was not to offer the huge sacrifice that Almighty Zeus expected on such occasions; and when dawn ended the truce, he showed his annoyance by granting the Trojans a favourable sign—thunder on their right hand, from Mount Ida—which at the same time scared the Greeks. Odysseus deserted King Nestor who, although too old to fight, had been busily riding about the battlefield in his chariot, encouraging the troops. Diomedes saved him from capture; but when a thunderbolt thrown by Zeus struck the ground close to his horses' hooves, even he retreated.

Hector's Trojans rushed forward, spearing the frightened Greeks as they ran, and had soon driven the survivors behind their rampart. Another few minutes, and they would have burned the fleet; however, Agamemnon made a pitiful prayer to Zeus, who relented and inspired Diomedes to lead a chariot sortie.

The most successful Greek fighter that morning was Great Ajax's half-brother Teucer the Archer, Hesione's son. Using Ajax's tall shield as cover, he would peep around the rim, take quick aim at a Trojan, shoot, and hide again. He had killed nine men before Hector broke his collarbone with a well-flung rock. Once more the Greeks turned tail and fled, pursued by the triumphant Hector, who slaughtered them until nightfall.

In Heaven, Hera raged like a Fury. 'Show a little patience,' Athene said. 'Wait a little longer for my Father to fulfil the promise he gave Thetis. He has sworn to make Agamemnon beg Achilles's pardon and offer him vast treasures, if only he stops sulking in his hut and fights again.' Nevertheless, Hera forced Athene to step into her golden chariot. 'Together, my girl, we'll turn the tide of battle,' she announced grimly.

Zeus, who was watching from Mount Ida, sent them a message by Iris: 'If you don't get out of that chariot at once, I'll hurl my thunderbolt at it!' They obeyed, and

presently Zeus told Hera: 'Very well, wife—just to punish you for meddling, I'll let the Trojans win an even bigger victory tomorrow!'

That night the Trojans camped close to the enemy rampart, confident of success. The Greeks were so disheartened by their losses that when, at a Council meeting, Agamemnon wanted to raise the siege and sail home, Diomedes alone dared say: 'That would be the act of a coward. I'm going to stay and fight to the last, even if you all leave me!'

Old Nestor supported Diomedes, adding: 'My lords, our one hope of survival now lies in calming Achilles and persuading him to take the field.' And Agamemnon, since Nestor had not said anything disrespectful, readily admitted his past folly, at the same time promising to apologize and give Achilles a huge compensation for the insult—seven three-legged bronze kettles, ten gold ingots weighing over eighty pounds apiece, twenty polished copper cauldrons, six pairs of prize-winning chariot-horses, seven beautiful girl captives who embroidered marvellously—and to send back Briseis. 'Also, once I'm home in Greece,' he said, 'I'll award Achilles the same rank and honours as my own son Orestes, and one of my three daughters for a wife, whichever he prefers, and seven cities to rule.'

Nestor thanked Agamemnon on behalf of the Council. He suggested that Great Ajax and Odysseus should take the offer to Achilles, accompanied by his old tutor Phoenix. Yet when they arrived, Achilles refused to accept any gift from Agamemnon. 'That rascal behaved,' said he, 'with unpardonable meanness. I can never forget how he robbed me of Briseis, whom I was going to marry.' Though treating his three visitors courteously, he told them straight out: 'I shall sail for Greece tomorrow, and leave Agamemnon to his fate.' Phoenix called him stubborn and stony-hearted. Since, however, nothing more could be done, he wiped away his tears and decided to go too.

### VIII.

### The Camp Endangered

That night, Agamemnon could not sleep. He got up, armed himself and went in search of his brother Menelaus. 'What we need,' he told Menelaus, 'is a really clever scheme for saving our army and fleet. Wake Great Ajax and King Idomeneus of

Crete! Something may occur to them.' Everyone felt vexed at being dragged out of bed in the pitch dark, after a hard day's fighting. Yet Agamemnon called so loudly for immediate action that the Council decided to send scouts into the no-man's land between the camp and the Trojan lines, hoping vaguely that they might bring back news of Hector's plans.

Diomedes volunteered, and when asked to pick a companion, chose Odysseus. Odysseus agreed to come, remembering that Diomedes had seen him shamefully desert Nestor in battle a few hours before. He wanted to clear his good name.

The two set out together across the fosse, and soon stumbled in the dark over a Trojan scout named Dolon. Having made him give them as much useful information as he could, they mercilessly cut his throat. Odysseus hid Dolon's ferret-skin cap, wolf-skin cloak, bow and spear, in a tamarisk bush; then hurried with Diomedes towards the Trojan right flank where, Dolon had told them, they would find King Rhesus of Thrace encamped. No sentries were on duty, so they crawled up stealthily, murdered Rhesus and twelve officers lying asleep beside him, and then drove off his magnificent horses: white as snow and swifter than the wind. They also recovered Dolon's spoils on the way home. Rhesus had arrived at Troy this same evening; and the capture of his team was a remarkable piece of luck for Diomedes and Odysseus, because a prophecy that the Greeks could never capture Troy once these horses had drunk Scamander water, still remained to be fulfilled.

The following day Almighty Zeus again favoured Troy, though King Agamemnon enjoyed a short spell of glory. He headed a chariot charge, speared several Trojan noblemen, and was already close to the City walls when Zeus decided to change the fortunes of battle.

He sent Hector an order to rally and encourage his forces, yet to attempt nothing for the next half-hour; as soon as Agamemnon left the field, the Trojans might slaughter the leaderless Greeks without pause all afternoon. Presently, Agamemnon killed Antenor's two sons; but one of them, before dying, speared him through the

arm, just above the elbow. Agamemnon went on fighting, until his wound grew so painful that he turned his chariot about and drove off, weeping miserably.

Hector at once led a strong attack and, though stunned for awhile when Diomedes flung a spear that struck the crest-socket of his helmet, began pressing the Greeks backward. Paris, hidden behind a stone pillar which marked the tomb of his grandfather, then took aim at Diomedes's foot and pinned it to the ground with an arrow.

Diomedes called Paris a nasty-mouthed, mean, jealous trouble-maker, proud of his toy bow and kiss-curl. 'If we met, spear against spear, what would your chances of victory be?' he bellowed. Nevertheless, after extracting the arrow, he felt so sick that he, too, left the field, and Odysseus had to battle for his life against swarms of Trojans. Hector drove along the bank of the river Scamander, where the Thessalians offered him stiff resistance, until Paris lodged an arrow in the shoulder of their King Machaon, who was not only the best surgeon in Greece but one of the boldest chariot fighters. Nestor rescued Machaon and drove him safely to camp; after which Great Ajax's steadfastness alone saved the Greek army from complete rout.

Achilles, as he stood on the stern of his beached ship and watched the distant battle, saw Nestor returning at a gallop. His friend Patroclus, whom he sent to ask the wounded king's name, found Nestor already in his hut. A slave-girl was pouring out for Machaon a cool drink of barley boiled in onion juice and sweetened with honey. They invited Patroclus to join them, which he did. After bemoaning the Greek losses, Nestor remarked: 'It seems that Achilles will not fight because of some divine message or other; but surely he cannot wish to see us massacred? Perhaps, if you asked him tactfully, he might let you lead his famous Myrmidons against Hector? They

are fine troops, fresh and well-trained, and their appearance on the field might turn the tide of battle in our favour.'

Hector's forces were now ready to storm the Greek rampart and burn the fleet. They swarmed over the fosse, scaled the parapet, and had soon captured a wide length of wall, despite the stubborn defence by Great Ajax, also by Teucer the Archer, whose broken collarbone had miraculously healed, and their cousin Little Ajax, who always fought without armour—his javelins seldom missed their aim.

Almighty Zeus granted Hector the supreme honour of first entering the Greek camp. He seized a huge boulder and ran towards the main entrance. The high, massive gates were strengthened with cross-bars bolted together. Planting himself a short distance away and advancing one foot, he aimed at the very centre of the gates and let fly. They burst open and Hector rushed through, the light of victory in his eyes, followed by a column of exulting Trojans. The Greeks fled panic-stricken to their ships.

Poseidon, enraged at Hector's success, hurried down from Olympus to his undersea palace off the island of Euboea, where he harnessed a chariot drawn by sea-beasts, put on a golden corslet, grasped an elegant gold whip, and drove across the waves to Troy. There he stabled his team in a sea-cave between the islands of Imbros and Tenedos, and entered the camp on foot, disguised as Calchas. Poseidon dared not take an open part in the war for fear of vexing his brother, Almighty Zeus; nevertheless, he encouraged the Greeks, and with two taps of his staff gave Great Ajax, Little Ajax and Teucer such battle-fury that their hands and feet seemed to weigh nothing. However, Hector and Paris kept up the Trojan attack; and the fight roared on.

Hera now borrowed from Aphrodite the world-famous girdle which forced whomever the wearer pleased to fall madly in love with her. 'I need it,' Hera lied smoothly, 'for an aged aunt of mine, a Sea-goddess whose husband grew tired of her centuries ago. I should be glad to renew their love. They live a most miserable life on the sea-bottom, always snapping at each other because of some stale old quarrel.'

Hera really wanted to use the girdle herself. When she buckled it on, her husband, Almighty Zeus, to whom she had lately seemed the ugliest and stupidest of all goddesses, felt such passionate love for her that he lost interest in the war. Hera fondled him affectionately and lay down beside him in a valley on Mount Ida, where the earth at once sprouted grass, clover, crocuses and hyacinth flowers around them.

Afterwards she persuaded the God of Sleep to close his eyes, and as soon as he began to snore, sent a message to Poseidon: 'Do what you please—the coast is clear!' Poseidon now boldly led the Greek attack. Diomedes and Odysseus followed just behind. Hector and Great Ajax again met face to face. Ajax threw a rock which flew over the rim of Hector's shield, catching him below the neck. He spun around like a top, and was carried off the field, moaning and vomiting blood. The Trojans fled.

When Zeus awoke and saw Poseidon pursuing a mob of Trojan fugitives, he threatened to punish Hera as she deserved. Hera, however, still wearing Aphrodite's girdle, could afford to laugh at his threats, and deny that she had encouraged Poseidon's appearance on the battlefield. So Zeus merely warned him, through Iris: 'Break off the fight at once, brother, or suffer the consequences!'

Poseidon's answer was so rude that she tactfully waited in silence until he thought better of it, and after awhile, indeed, he sulkily obeyed orders. Thereupon Zeus lent his magic shield to Apollo, who shook it in the Greeks' faces, scaring them to a halt, then flew to Hector's side and instantly cured him. The Greeks lost courage and, a few minutes later the Trojans, led by Hector and Aeneas, were slaughtering them by the hundred. They quickly forced their way into the camp, and this time reached the ships which, it will be recalled, were drawn up in rows, with a line of huts separating each of these. All the Greeks except Great Ajax abandoned the first row. He stood aboard the ship that had once belonged to Protesilaus, grasping a thirty-foot pike of the kind wielded in sea-battles by no less than five sailors, and spitted on it dozens of Trojans who brought torches, trying to burn him out.

## Achilles Avenges Patroclus

Patroclus begged Achilles to lead him his own suit of armour and the command of his warlike Myrmidons. 'With their help,' he pleaded, 'I can drive away the Trojans before the fleet is burned and our surviving friends are massacred.' Achilles consented, but made Patroclus promise that once the camp had been cleared of enemies, he would not try to win further glory by chasing them back and attacking Troy itself.

Great Ajax could no longer defend his ship, because Hector lopped off the pike-head and left him only the pole. He jumped down and rejoined his comrades, who were holding the nearest row of huts. This allowed the Trojans to set the ship on fire. As soon as Achilles saw a thin column of smoke rising into the sky, he lent Patroclus his magnificent arms and armour, paraded the Myrmidons, and sent them forward to save the fleet. Their charge was irresistible. Mistaking Patroclus for Achilles, the Trojans were again driven out, and lost heavily.

Almighty Zeus, watching from Mount Ida, could not at first decide whether Patroclus should be immediately destroyed by Hector and stripped of Achilles's armour, or whether he should be granted fresh victories. In the end, Zeus let him go on for another half hour. Patroclus forgot his promise to Achilles as he chased the fleeing Trojans across the plain. A company of Myrmidons were already scaling the walls of Troy—the weak part built by Aeacus—when Apollo showed himself on the Citadel and shook his terrible shield at them. They retired in awe.

Hector then challenged Patroclus to a duel. No sooner had they dismounted from their chariots than Apollo stepped quietly behind Patroclus and struck him on the neck with the edge of his palm. Achilles's helmet tumbled off, Achilles's tough spear shattered, Achilles's shield slipped to the ground, and Patroclus stood there unarmed, dazed and trembling. Darting up, Hector speared him low in the belly; and the Trojans rallied when they saw his fall.

A fearful tussle followed for the body. Both Greeks and Trojans treated it like a newly-flayed bull's hide, which farm-boys tug in all directions, to stretch and supple it. At last Menelaus and Idomeneus's lieutenant,

Meriones the Cretan, succeeded in carrying the body back to camp, while Great and Little Ajax acted as rear-guards.

One of Nestor's sons brought the bad news to Achilles, tears blinding his eyes. Achilles's two horses, Xanthus and Balius, which Patroclus had been driving, wept too—huge tears trickled down their noses. But he already knew. Hera had sent a message by Iris, and ordered him to stand on the rampart as soon as the Trojans appeared, and roar out a challenge. This would make them recoil in terror because, having watched Hector strip his well-known armour from Patroclus, they thought him dead. Achilles shouted so loud, and the Greeks halted in such confusion, that forty of them were wounded by the spears of men following behind, or run over by chariots.

Achilles wept, laid his enormous hands on Patroclus's bloody chest, howling horribly, like a lioness whose cub has been killed, and mourned all night long.

Thetis then persuaded Hephaestus, the lame Smith-god, to forge her son a new set of divine arms and armour. Hephaestus began his work immediately: ornamenting the shield with town and country scenes designed in silver, gold and precious stones. At dawn, Thetis brought her splendid gift to Achilles's hut. He put it on delightedly and was soon making a speech at a General Assembly.

'King Agamemnon,' he said, 'neither of us has profited in the least from our recent unfortunate quarrel about my slave-girl. The results have been so bad for you and me that I almost wish she'd never been captured alive. Come, let bygones be bygones! And since your wounded arm still keeps you out of battle, why not make me temporary Commander-in-Chief?'

Agamemnon agreed. He even admitted his unfair treatment of Achilles, though blaming it on the Fates and a dark Fury called Mischievous who, together, had robbed him of his senses.

When Achilles asked permission to advance at once, Agamemnon answered: 'I fear I can't grant you that favour. The men haven't yet breakfasted. But while their food is being got ready, I'll send servants to my store-hut, and have all the treasures fetched that I recently offered you.'

'I want no treasures,' shouted Achilles, 'and the mere thought of breakfast nauseates me, with so many dead strewing the field!'

-12-

Nevertheless, Agamemnon's servants brought him the gold ingots, the tripods, the cauldrons, the slave-girls—including Briseis—and the race-horses. Briseis flung herself on Patroclus's corpse, wailing loudly and praising his gentle, generous nature. 'He had always promised,' she sobbed, 'that Prince Achilles and I would be married in Greece, as soon as Troy fell.' Achilles, it seems, had kept his love of Polyxena a secret even from Patroclus.

He still refused to eat, but Athene gave him divine nourishment by smearing nectar and ambrosia on his skin, which made him feel enormously strong. Both armies then poured into the plain, where Almighty Zeus varied the day's battle by letting all the gods and goddesses take part, and fight one another if they pleased. There were five on each side. For the Greeks: Hera, Athene, Poseidon, Hermes the Herald, and Hephaestus the Smith. For the Trojans: Ares the War-god, Apollo, his sister Artemis the Huntress, his mother the Goddess Leto, and the River-god Scamander.

When the lines of battle clashed, Apollo kept Achilles from meeting Hector. He went to Aeneas in disguise and reminded him of his drunken boast at a recent banquet: 'I'm ready to challenge the bravest of the Greeks—even Prince Achilles!'

Aeneas answered: 'That's very true. The last time we met I was unarmed, and a neutral—I had to run for my life. Besides, Athene was helping him, and no wise man opposes the gods.'

Apollo inspired him with courage. 'You also are under divine protection, Aeneas,' he said, 'and far better born than Achilles. His mother Thetis is an unimportant Sea-goddess; your mother is Aphrodite, a respected member of Zeus's Olympian Council.'

So Aeneas challenged Achilles, who only jeered at him, asking: 'Are you out to win King Priam's favour and get named as his successor? Why fool yourself?' When Aeneas did not reply, he went on: 'Priam still has several sons of his own. He'd never prefer a cousin to a son. Take my advice: retire unhurt!' 'And you, I suppose, fancy yourself as Agamemnon's successor?' Aeneas shouted, stung to anger.

Achilles found equally unkind things to say in return, but at last Aeneas, somehow controlling his temper, said: 'Why are we standing about and arguing like little boys? Words are cheap, so are insults. If we had time to spare, we could exchange enough of them to fill a two-hundred-oar galley. I came here to fight, not to gossip. Guard your head!'

The spear, flung with all his strength, made no dint in the wonderful shield that Hephaestus had forged; whereas Achilles's spear drove clean through the top of Aeneas's targe, burying itself in the ground behind him. Aeneas picked up a huge rock which, if he had thrown it, must merely have bounced back from the divine armour. Yet Poseidon knew that Almighty Zeus would be enraged if Aeneas, whose life he had decided to spare for his own best reasons, were to die. So he shrouded Achilles's eyes in a magical mist, and swung Aeneas high above the battlefield; laying him down beyond the Trojan lines, where his arrival greatly surprised some allied troops who were late in arming themselves. Achilles, no less surprised to find him vanished, shrugged his shoulders and went in search of Hector. He caught sight of twelve-year-old Polydorus, King Priam's youngest and favourite son. The boy, despite strict orders to avoid danger, was dodging between the front row of fighters. Achilles transfixed his body with a javelin. Though Hector had been warned by Apollo to avoid Achilles's rage, the death of his little brother so infuriated him that he ran up, vengefully shaking a long spear.

'We meet at last!' cried Achilles.

Hector threw the spear, but a gust of wind sent by Athene made it curve back and fall at his feet. When Achilles rushed forward yelling vengeance, Apollo shrouded Hector in another thick mist. Three times Achilles vainly charged at his invisible enemy, then turned his anger against lesser Trojans, roaring on like a forest fire as they broke and fled towards the Scamander. There, in the shallows and in hollows under the river banks, he massacred hundreds of them. The angry River-god Scamander appeared in human shape, crying 'Begone!' Achilles furiously sprang into mid-stream and yelled a challenge. Scamander gathered a great head of water and brought it rushing at Achilles, who braced himself by clutching at an elm-tree. This was soon up-

rooted, but he scrambled ashore, chased by Scamander in the form of a towering green wave. He would have drowned like a rat, had not Poseidon and Athene dragged him away, each holding a hand.

Scamander and his partner, the River-god Simoeis, together pursued Achilles as he hurried off, but Hera ordered her son Hephaestus to oppose them. He kindled a fierce blaze on the plain, which burned the elms, willows, tamarisks, rushes and sedge of the river bank. Scamander's water soon boiled with such furious heat, that he appealed to Hera in pain and terror. 'Please recall your son!' he pleaded. 'I'll promise never to help Troy again.' Hera did as he asked, and Achilles continued his slaughter of Trojans.

Some other gods and goddesses had already come to blows. Ares attacked Athene, but his spear proved useless against the shield lent her by Almighty Zeus, and, throwing a huge black boundary-stone at his head, she knocked him flat. Ares's fallen body covered seven acres of land. Aphrodite was helping him to his feet, when Athene, at Hera's orders, felled her with a tremendous slap on the chest.

Hermes would not fight against the Goddess Leto, mother of Apollo and Artemis. He replied politely to her invitation: 'Madam, the victory is already yours.' Poseidon then challenged Apollo to a single combat, which he also refused. 'Why should we Gods injure each other for the sake of a few wretched mortals?' he asked calmly. Artemis the Huntress screamed at her brother, calling him a pitiful coward, but Hera rushed up, seized both of Artemis's wrists in one hand, snatched bow and arrows from her, and soundly boxed her ears.

Achilles meanwhile drove the Trojans headlong towards Troy, where Priam opened all the gates to admit them. Hector alone stood fast, in defence of the Western gateway. Priam wept and tore his white hair, begging him to come inside quickly, before he was shut out. Hector would not listen and, as Achilles rushed to the attack, turned and ran at great speed around the walls, hoping that the Trojans would drop heavy stones on his pursuer from the battlements. Achilles, however, followed too close behind to make this possible. The pair circled Troy four times. At last Athene, disguised as Hector's brother Prince Deiphobus, appeared beside him, yelling: 'Stop, Hector! Let us meet Achilles together, two against one!'

Deceived by the Goddess, he halted, faced about, and said sadly: 'Achilles, since this is a death-duel, you and I should swear that whoever kills and strips the other, will send the corpse to his people for decent burial.'

Achilles's only reply was the whiz of a spear. Hector ducked, and hurled his own, which bounced harmlessly from the divine shield. He called over his shoulder: 'Quick, Deiphobus, lend me yours!' Getting no answer, Hector realized that Athene was tricking him. He drew his broadsword and charged. Athene had meanwhile invisibly restored Achilles's spear to him. Taking aim at Hector's bare neck, he sent his enemy crashing down.

'Spare my corpse,' Hector whispered. 'King Priam will ransom it at a noble price.' 'Scoundrel!' shouted Achilles. 'For the injury you've done me, I'll let the crows pick out your eyes and the dogs crunch your bones.'

So Hector died. Achilles stripped his body naked, then cut slits behind his heel-tendons, pulled Ajax's embroidered belt through them, buckled it to the tailboard of his chariot, lashed the team on, and dragged Hector after him, round and round the walls of Troy. Priam, Hecuba and Andromache all watched horror-stricken from above.

Back in the camp, Achilles built a hundred-foot-square pyre for Patroclus's corpse, and there sacrificed a huge flock of sheep to his ghost; also four horses, nine hounds, and twelve noble Trojan prisoners of war, whom he had reserved for this fate. The blaze lit up many miles of the countryside. Next day he held funeral games in Patroclus's honour: a chariot race, a boxing bout, a wrestling match, a foot race and a javelin-throwing competition, all with valuable prizes. Still crazed by grief, he would rise every dawn to drag Hector's corpse three times round Patroclus's tomb. Apollo, however, tenderly protected it from decay or mutilation.

At last the God Hermes led King Priam to Achilles's hut under cover of darkness, and commanded Achilles to accept a fair ransom: the corpse's weight in pure gold. Priam loathed having to clasp his enemy's knees and kiss the terrible hands that had murdered so many of his sons, but forced himself to undergo this shame. Achilles treated him courteously, and even praised his courage in entering the enemy camp at night. They agreed on the ransom. However, by now so little gold

remained in Priam's treasury, that when they presently met in the temple of Apollo, his daughter Polyxena had to tip down the scale with her necklace and bracelets.

Achilles, impressed by this sisterly kindness and still deeply in love, told Priam: "I'll cheerfully exchange your dead son for your living daughter. Keep this gold, marry her to me, and if you then return Helen to Menelaus, I'll arrange an honourable peace between our two peoples."

Priam answered: "No, take the gold, as we agreed, and let me have my son's body. But I'm ready to barter one live woman against another. Persuade your comrades to leave Helen at Troy, and I'll ask no marriage fee for Polyxena. We should be lost without Helen."

Achilles undertook to do his best.

## X.

### The Wooden Horse

The war dragged on. New allies came to King Priam's help, including the Amazon Queen Penthesileia from Armenia, who killed King Machaon and three times drove Achilles himself off the field. Finally, with Athene's help, Achilles ran her through. Memnon, the negro King of Ethiopia, accounted for hundreds of Greeks, including Nestor's eldest son, and almost succeeded in burning the Greek ships; but Great Ajax challenged him to a duel, which was rudely interrupted by Achilles. He ran up, brushed Ajax aside, speared Memnon, and threw the Trojans back once more.

This proved to be Achilles's last victory, because when that night he met Polyxena by private arrangement in Apollo's temple, she wormed out of him his most important secret. Polyxena was sworn to avenge her beloved brother Hector, and there is nothing a beautiful girl cannot make a man tell her as a proof of love. He revealed that when Thetis dipped him in Styx water as a child, to make him invulnerable, she had tightly held his right heel, which stayed dry and unprotected.

They met again next day at the same place, to confirm his promise that, after marrying Polyxena, he would so arrange matters that the Greeks went home without Helen. King Priam had insisted on his offering a sacrifice to Apollo and taking an oath at the God's altar. Achilles came barefoot and unarmed; but two of Priam's

sons, whom he sent to represent him, were secretly plotting murder. Prince Deiphobus embraced Achilles, in pretence of friendship, while Paris, hiding behind a pillar, shot at his heel. The barbed arrow, guided by Aphrodite, wounded him mortally. Though Achilles snatched firebrands from the altar and struck vengefully at Paris and Deiphobus, they got away; and he killed a couple of temple servants only.

Odysseus and Great Ajax, who suspected Achilles of treachery, had crept after him into the temple. Dying in their arms, he made them swear that when Troy fell they would sacrifice Polyxena at his tomb. Paris and Deiphobus returned to fetch the body; but Odysseus and Ajax beat them off in a stiff fight and brought it safely back.

Agamemnon, Menelaus and the rest of the Council shed tears at Achilles's funeral, though few ordinary soldiers regretted the death of so notorious a traitor. His ashes, mixed with those of Patroclus, were placed in a golden urn and buried in a lofty barrow at the entrance to the Hellespont.

Thetis awarded Achilles's arms and armour to the bravest Greek leader left before Troy; and to embarrass Agamemnon, for whom she felt a deep scorn, appointed him the judge. Odysseus and Great Ajax, having successfully defended his corpse against the Trojans, came forward as rivals for this honour. But Agamemnon feared the anger of whoever lost so valuable a prize, and sent spies by night to listen under the walls of Troy and report what the Trojans themselves thought.

The spies crept up close, and after awhile a party of Trojan girls began to chat above them. One praised Ajax's courage in lifting Achilles's corpse on his shoulders and taking it through a shower of spears and arrows. Another said: "Nonsense, Odysseus showed far greater courage! Even a slave-girl will do what Ajax did, if given a corpse to carry; but put weapons in her hand, and she'll never dare use them. Ajax used that corpse as a shield, while Odysseus kept our men off with spear and sword."

On the strength of this report, Agamemnon awarded the arms to Odysseus. The Council knew that he would never have preferred him to Great Ajax if Achilles had been alive—Achilles thought the world of his gallant cousin. Besides, the spies understood no Phrygian, and were probably prompted by Odysseus. Yet no one dared say so.

In a blind rage, Ajax swore revenge on Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, and their fellow-Councillors. That night Athene sent him mad and he ran howling, sword in hand, among the flocks he had captured in raids on Trojan farms. After immense butchery, he chained the surviving sheep and goats together, hauled them to camp, and went on with his bloody work. He chose two rams, cut out the tongue of the largest, which he mistook for Agamemnon, and lopped off its head. Then he tied the other to a pillar by the neck and flogged it unmercifully, screaming abuse and shouting: "Take that, and that, and that, treacherous Odysseus!" At last, coming to his senses, and greatly ashamed of himself, he fixed the sword which Hector had given him upright in the ground, and leaped upon it. His last words were a prayer to the Furies for vengeance. Odysseus wisely avoided this danger by presenting the armour to Achilles's ten-year-old son Neoptolemus, who had just joined the Greek forces and, like his father at the same age, was already full-grown. His mother had been one of the princesses among whom Thetis hid Achilles at Scyros.

Calchas prophesied that Troy could be taken only with the help of Heracles's bow and arrows, now owned by King Philoctetes. Odysseus and Diomedes sailed to fetch them from the small island off Lemnos where Philoctetes was still marooned. Even after nine years, his wound smelt as badly as ever, nor had the pain grown less. Odysseus stole his bow and arrows by a trick; but Diomedes, not wishing to be mixed up in so dishonourable an affair, made him restore them, and persuaded Philoctetes to come aboard their ship. When they landed at Troy, Machaon's brother cured him with soothing herbs and a precious stone called serpentine.

No sooner was Philoctetes well again than he challenged Paris to an archery duel. Paris shot first, and aimed at his enemy's heart, but the arrow went wide—Athene, of course, saw to that. Philoctetes then let loose three arrows in quick succession. The first pierced Paris's bow-hand, the next his right eye, and the last his ankle. He hobbled from the fight and, though Menelaus tried to catch and kill him, managed to reach Troy and die in Helen's arms.



Helen was now a widow, but King Priam could still not bear the idea of restoring her to Menelaus; and his sons wrangled among themselves, each wanting to be her husband. Helen then remembered that she had been Queen of Sparta and Menelaus's wife. One night a sentry caught her as she was about to climb down a rope from the battlements; whereupon Deiphobus married her by force—an act which disgusted the entire royal family.

Jealous quarrels between Priam's sons grew so fierce that he sent Antenor to discuss peace terms with the Greeks. But Antenor had not forgiven Deiphobus for having helped Paris to murder Achilles in Apollo's own temple, a sacrilege which Priam left unpunished. He told Agamemnon's Council that he would betray Troy if they made him King afterwards and gave him half the spoils. According to an ancient oracle, he said, Troy would not fall until the Palladium, a legless wooden image of Athene, some four feet high, had been stolen from her temple on the Citadel. As it happened, the Greeks already knew of this prophecy through Helenus, who was madly jealous of Deiphobus's marriage. So Antenor promised to hand over the Palladium when Athene's two favourites, Odysseus and Diomedes, had entered Troy by a secret way he would show them.

That night, Odysseus and Diomedes set out together and, following Antenor's instructions, cleared away a pile of stones under the western wall. They found that it hid the exit of a long, wide, dirty-water pipe leading straight up to the Citadel. Antenor's wife Theano, warned what to expect, had drugged the temple servants; so that Diomedes and Odysseus met no trouble at all once they reached the top by a hard, filthy climb. To make sure that the servants were not shamming sleep, they cut their throats and then returned the same way. Theano lowered the Palladium down after them, and put a replica in its place.

Diomedes, being higher in rank, carried the Palladium strapped to his shoulders, but Odysseus, who wanted all the glory for himself, let him go ahead and then stealthily unsheathed his sword. The rising moon peered large and bright over a crest of Mount Ida, throwing the shadow of Odysseus's upraised sword-arm in front of Diomedes.

He spun around, drew his own sword, disarmed Odysseus, tied his hands behind him, and drove him forward with repeated kicks and blows. Back in the Council Hut, Odysseus protested violently against Diomedes's treatment. He claimed to have unsheathed his sword because he heard a Trojan coming in pursuit. Agamemnon counted too much on Odysseus's help not to agree that Diomedes must have been mistaken.

Athene now inspired Odysseus to think of a stratagem for getting armed men into Troy. Under his directions, Epeius the Phocian, the best carpenter in camp though a fearful coward, built an enormous hollow horse out of fir planks. It had a concealed trap-door fitted into the left flank, and on the right a sentence carved in tall letters: 'With thankful hope of a safe return to their homes after nine years' absence, the Greeks dedicate this offering to Athene.' Odysseus would enter the horse by means of a rope-ladder, followed by Menelaus, Diomedes, Achilles's son Neoptolemus, and by eighteen more volunteers. Coaxed, threatened and bribed, Epeius was forced to sit by the trap door, which he alone could open quickly and silently.

Having gathered all their gear together, the Greeks set fire to their huts, launched the ships, and rowed off; but no farther than the other side of Tenedos, where they were invisible from Troy. Odysseus's companions already filled the horse, and only one Greek was left in the camp: his cousin Sinon.

When Trojan scouts went out at dawn they found the horse towering over the burned camp. Antenor knew nothing about the horse and therefore kept quiet, but King Priam and several of his sons wanted to bring it into the city on rollers. Others shouted: 'Athene has favoured the Greeks far too long! Let her do what she pleases with her property.' Priam would listen neither to their protests nor to Aeneas's urgent warnings.

The horse had been purposely built too large for Troy's gates, and stuck four times even when these were removed and some stones pulled away from the wall on one side. With strenuous efforts the Trojans hauled it up to the Citadel, but at least took the precaution of re-building the wall and putting the gates back on their hinges. Priam's daughter Cassandra, whose curse was that no Trojan would ever take her prophecies seriously, screamed: 'Beware: the horse is full of armed men!'

Meanwhile two soldiers came across Sinon, hiding in a turret by the camp gate, and marched him to the Royal Palace. Asked why he had stayed behind, he told King Priam: 'I was afraid to sail in the same ship as my cousin Odysseus. He has long wanted to kill me, and yesterday nearly succeeded.'

'Why should Odysseus want to kill you?' asked Priam.

'Because I alone know how he got Palamedes stoned, and he doesn't trust my discretion. The fleet would have sailed a month ago, if the weather hadn't been so bad. Calchas of course prophesied, just as he did at Aulis, that a human sacrifice was needed, and Odysseus said: "Name the victim, please!" Calchas refused an immediate answer, but some days later (bribed, I suppose, by Odysseus) he named me. I was on the point of being sacrificed, when a favourable wind sprang up, I escaped in the excitement, and off they went.'

Priam believed Sinon's tale, freed him and asked for an explanation of the horse. Sinon answered: 'You remember those two temple servants who were found mysteriously murdered on the Citadel? That was Odysseus's work. He came by night, drugged the priestesses, and stole the Palladium. If you don't trust me, look carefully at what you think is the Palladium. You'll find that it's only a replica. Odysseus's theft made Athene so angry that the real Palladium, hidden in Agamemnon's hut, sweated as a warning of disaster. Calchas had a huge horse built in her honour, and warned Agamemnon to sail home.'

'Why was it made so huge?' asked Priam.

'To prevent it from being brought into the city. Calchas prophesied that if you succeeded in this, you could then raise an immense expedition from all over Asia Minor, invade Greece, and sack Agamemnon's own city of Mycenae.'

A Trojan nobleman named Laocoön interrupted Sinon by shouting: 'My lord King, these are certainly lies put into Sinon's mouth by Odysseus. Otherwise Agamemnon would have left the Palladium behind as well as the horse.' He added: 'And by the way, my lord, may I suggest that we sacrifice a bull to Poseidon—whose priest you stoned nine years ago because he refused to welcome Queen Helen?'

'I don't agree with you about the horse,' said Priam. 'But now that the war has ended, let us by all means regain Poseidon's favour. He treated us cruelly enough while it lasted.'

Laocoön went off to build an altar near the camp, and chose a young and healthy bull for sacrifice. He was preparing to strike it down with his axe, when a couple of immense monsters crawled from the sea and, twining around Laocoön's limbs and those of the two sons who were helping him, crushed the life out of them. The monsters then glided up to the Citadel, and there bowed their heads in honour of Athene—a sight which Priam unfortunately took to mean that Sinon had told the truth, and that Laocoön had been killed for contradicting him. In fact, however, Poseidon sent the sea-beasts at Athene's request: as a proof that he hated the Trojans as much as she did.

Priam dedicated the horse to Athene, and although Aeneas led his men safely away from Troy, suspecting any gift of the Greeks and refusing to believe the war ended—everyone else began victory celebrations. Trojan women visited the Scamander for the first time in nine years, gathering flowers by its banks to decorate the horse's wooden mane. They also spread a carpet of roses around its hooves. A tremendous banquet was got ready at Priam's palace.

Meanwhile, inside the horse, few of the Greeks could stop trembling. Epeius wept silently in utter terror, but Odysseus held a sword against his ribs, and if he had heard so much as a sigh would have driven it home. That evening, Helen strolled along and took a closer look at the horse. She reached up to pat its flanks and, as though to amuse Deiphobus who came with her, teased the hidden occupants by mimicking the voices of all their wives in turn. Not being a Trojan, she knew that Cassandra always spoke the truth; and also guessed which of the Greek leaders would have volunteered for this dangerous task. Diomedes and two others were tempted to answer 'Here I am!' when their heard their names spoken, but Odysseus restrained them and even had to strangle one man in the process.

Worn out by drinking and dancing, the Trojans slept soundly, and not even the bark of a dog broke the stillness. Helen alone lay awake, listening. At midnight, just before the full moon rose, the seventh of the year, Sinon crept from the city to light a beacon on Achilles's tomb;

and Antenor waved a torch from the battlements. Agamemnon, whose ship lay anchored close offshore, replied to these signals by lighting a brazier filled with chips of pinewood. The whole fleet then quietly landed.

Antenor, tip-toeing up to the wooden horse, said in low tones: 'All's well! You may come out.' Epeius unlocked the trap door so noiselessly that someone fell through and broke his neck. The rest climbed down the rope-ladder. Two men went to open the City gates for Agamemnon; others murdered the sleeping sentries. But Menelaus could think only of Helen and, followed by Odysseus, ran at full speed towards Deiphobus's house.

## XI. The Sack of Troy

Odysseus had undertaken to spare the life of any Trojans who offered no resistance; but, while respecting Antenor's mansion, on the door of which was chalked a leopard's skin design, his companions silently broke into all other houses and stabbed their occupants as they slept. Agamemnon's troops followed the example. Hecuba and her daughter fled to a sacred laurel-tree which overhung Almighty Zeus's altar. She kept tight hold of old Priam's arm to prevent him from fighting. It was only when Neoptolemus ran up and butchered their youngest child, splashing the altar with blood, that Priam broke away and seized a spear. Neoptolemus at once speared him and dragged his headless corpse off to Achilles's tomb, where he left it to rot unburied.

Prince Deiphobus, who was a magnificent swordsman, struggled for his life against Odysseus and Menelaus on the stairs of his palace, and would have killed them both, had Helen not stolen quietly down and stabbed her hated new husband between the shoulders. Menelaus, though intending to cut Helen's throat, realized that she still loved him and, sheathing his sword, led her safely back to the ships.

Cassandra stood in Athene's temple clutching the wooden replica of the stolen Palladium. Little Ajax caught her by the hair, crying: 'Come, slave!' But she clung so tightly to the image that he had to bring it along, too. Later in the day, Agamemnon claimed Cassandra as his prize of honour and, to please him, Odysseus put the story about that Little Ajax had grossly in-

sulted Athene by mishandling her priestess. To avoid being stoned to death, like Palamedes, Little Ajax took refuge at Athene's own altar and swore that Odysseus was lying 'once more. Nevertheless, Athene herself punished Little Ajax's violence: for when his ship was wrecked on the way home to Greece, she borrowed one of Almighty Zeus's thunderbolts and struck him dead as he scrambled ashore.

Agamemnon's people plundered Troy for three days and nights. Then they divided the spoils, burned the houses, pulled down the walls, and sacrificed immense numbers of cattle and sheep to the Olympians. Andromache had been given as a slave to Achilles's son Neoptolemus; and the Council discussed what should be done with young Scamandrius. Odysseus recommended the wiping out of all Priam's descendants, on the grounds that Heracles made the Trojan War possible by foolishly sparing Priam at the same age; and Calchas obligingly prophesied that Scamandrius, if left alive, would avenge his father and grandfather. Since everyone else shrank from so horrible a deed, Odysseus grimly flung the child over the battlements.

The Council also discussed Polyxena's fate: Calchas's view was that she should be sacrificed at Achilles's tomb, in accordance with his dying wish. Agamemnon protested. 'Enough blood has been spilt—the blood of old men and infants, as well as of fighters. Dead princes, however famous, have no claim upon the living.' But two Greek Councillors who had not got as much treasure as they hoped at the distribution of spoils, shouted that Agamemnon said this only to please Polyxena's sister Cassandra, and make her a more submissive prisoner. After a good deal of heated argument, Odysseus forced Agamemnon to give way. Polyxena was therefore slaughtered on Achilles's tomb, in sight of the whole army. Young Neoptolemus beheaded her with an axe. 'May you meet the same fate as I!' were her last words.

Favourable winds sprang up, and the Greek fleet was soon ready for launching. 'Off we sail at once, while the breeze holds!' cried Menelaus.



'No, no,' said Agamemnon. 'We must first sacrifice to Athene.'

'I owe the Goddess nothing,' grumbled Menelaus. 'She defended the Trojan Citadel against us far too long!'

The brothers parted on bad terms, and never saw each other again.

It remained to murder Polydorus, a child of Hecuba's old age, sent by her, a few years before, to safety in Thrace, where King Polymnestor reared him as though he were his son. Agamemnon's envoys now required Polymnestor to kill the boy, offering as payment a vast sum in gold and the hand of his daughter Electra. Fearing that to refuse would mean disaster, Polymnestor accepted the gold but, rather than break faith with Hecuba and Priam, killed his own son, Polydorus's playmate, in the envoys' presence. Seeing the King and Queen plunged in grief, and not knowing the secret of his own birth, Polydorus was so mystified by the murder that he went to consult the Delphic oracle. He asked Apollo's priestess: 'What troubles my parents?' She answered: 'Why are you not troubled yourself? Is it a small thing that your city has been burned, your father left unburied, your mother enslaved?' Polydorus returned in anxiety to Thrace, where he found nothing changed since his departure. 'Can Apollo be mistaken?' he wondered. Then the Queen told him who his parents really were.

Hecuba had indeed been enslaved by Odysseus. He was about to sail off with her, but she heaped such hideous curses on him and the other cruel, lying, treacherous Greek leaders, that he decided to kill her. However, she transformed herself by magic into a fearful black bitch, and ran around howling so dismally that everyone fled in terror and confusion.

Antenor never became King of Troy as he had been promised, nor got any share in the spoils; but Menelaus generously took him, his wife Theano, and their four surviving sons aboard his ship. They settled first in North Africa, then in Thrace, and finally colonized the islands of Henetica, now Venice. He also founded the town of Padua. The one other Trojan hero who escaped

was Aeneas: from Dardanus, his city near Mount Ida, he had seen the distant flames of Troy and, crossing the Hellespont, took refuge in Thrace. The Romans say he eventually wandered to Italy, and there became Julius Caesar's ancestor.

Troy lost its importance, since the Greeks were at last able to enter the Black Sea freely and trade with the East. A few landless, houseless folk settled in the city ruins. Aeneas's grandson Ascanius ruled them; but it was a poor kingdom. And a generation later, Zeus taking Hera at her word, destroyed the three cities, Mycenae, Argos and Sparta, which she loved best.

Calchas travelled southward through Asia Minor to Colophon, where he died (as an oracle had warned him) on meeting a rival who could foretell the future better than himself. This was Apollo's son Mopsus. A large fig-tree grew at Colophon, and Calchas tried to shame Mopsus by challenging him: 'Can you perhaps tell me, dear fellow-prophet, how many figs grow on that tree?' Mopsus, closing his eyes, because he trusted to inner sight rather than to calculation, answered: 'Certainly: first ten thousand figs, then a bushel of figs according to the measure used in Aegina, carefully weighed—and, yes, one single fig left over.' Calchas laughed scornfully at the extra fig; but when the tree had been stripped, and the fruit weighed and counted, Mopsus proved exactly right.

'To come down from thousands to lesser quantities, dear fellow-prophet,' said Mopsus. 'Can you perhaps tell me how many piglings that fat sow will produce, and when they'll be born, and of what sex they'll be?'

'Eight piglings, all male, and she'll have them within nine days,' answered Calchas at random, hoping to have left Colophon before his guess could be checked.

'I believe that you're in error,' said Mopsus, again closing his eyes. 'I prophesy that she'll have no more than three piglings, only one of them male, and that they'll be born at midnight tomorrow, not a minute earlier.'

Mopsus was right, and Calchas died of shame—Apollo's punishment for the many bad guesses he had made to please Agamemnon and Odysseus.