

**COLLEGE SERIES OF GREEK
AUTHORS; INTRODUCTION
TO THE LANGUAGE AND
VERSE OF HOMER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649026296

College Series of Greek Authors; Introduction to the Language and Verse of Homer by Thomas D. Seymour

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THOMAS D. SEYMOUR

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VERSE OF HOMER**

COLLEGE SERIES OF GREEK AUTHORS
EDITED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
JOHN WILLIAMS WHITE AND THOMAS D. SEYMOUR.

INTRODUCTION
TO THE
LANGUAGE AND VERSE
OF
HOMER

BY
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BOSTON, U.S.A. :
PUBLISHED BY GINN & COMPANY.
1902

Educ T1119,0 2.775

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PRESSWORK BY GINN & Co., BOSTON, U.S.A.

PREFACE.

THIS Introduction is not designed to lay stress on Homeric language as contrasted with Homeric poetry, but is intended to relieve the commentary of explanations of dialectic forms and metrical peculiarities, and to call the student's attention to the most noteworthy characteristics of Homeric style and syntax. In reading Homer, certain questions, which cannot be avoided, as to the origin and relation of forms, will attract less of the pupil's attention and demand less of the teacher's time in the class-room if the facts are stated in their proper connection; the grouping of these facts will make them more intelligible and more easily remembered.

Some peculiarities of form have not been mentioned here, since they occur so seldom that they may be treated in the commentary just as conveniently; while for divers reasons other anomalies which are no more frequent have been discussed. Nor has the author planned to make the collection of examples complete; the student should be encouraged to gather illustrations for himself.

Most of this Introduction is of a nature to be read rather than committed to memory. Much of it is unnecessary for a beginner, but the author hopes that none of it is beyond the comprehension and appreciation of the student. While parts of it can be made fully useful only by a wise teacher, most of it should be helpful to the undirected student.

YALE COLLEGE, July, 1885.

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HOMERIC STYLE.

§ 1. a. TRANSLATIONS. Matthew Arnold enumerates four essential characteristics of Homer's poetry:¹ "Homer is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner. Cowper renders him ill because he is slow in his movement and elaborate in his style; Pope renders him ill because he is artificial both in his style and in his words; Chapman renders him ill because he is fantastic in his ideas; Mr. Newman renders him ill because he is odd in his words and ignoble in his manner." Or in other words: "Between Cowper and Homer there is interposed the mist of Cowper's elaborate Miltonic manner, entirely alien to the flowing rapidity of Homer; between Pope and Homer there is interposed the mist of Pope's literary, artificial manner, entirely alien to the plain naturalness of Homer's manner; between Chapman and Homer there is interposed the mist of the fancifulness of the Elizabethan age, entirely alien to the plain directness of Homer's thought and feeling; while between Mr. Newman and Homer is interposed a cloud of more than Egyptian thickness, — namely, a manner, in Mr. Newman's version eminently ignoble, while Homer's manner is eminently noble."

If poets and masters have thus failed, it is evident that it is no easy achievement to translate Homer well, to be at the same time rapid, plain, simple, and noble, — οὐ πρὸς ἄμα

¹ *Essays in Criticism*, Boston, 1865, pp. 264 ff., or *Studies in Celtic Literature and on Translating Homer*, Macmillan, N.Y., 1883, pp. 138 ff.

πάντα δυνήσασαι αὐτὸς ἐλέσθαι. The beginner can at least be simple; he should aim to attain the other qualities also.

It is instructive to compare different translations of a famous passage, © 555 ff. :—

ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἄστροι φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην
φαίνεται ἄριπρεπέα, ὅτε τ' ἐπλετο νήνεμος αἰθήρ·
ἔκ τ' ἔφανε πᾶσαι σκοπιάι καὶ πρόωνες ἄκροι
καὶ νάπαι· οὐρανόθεν δ' ἄρ' ὑπερράγη ἄσπετος αἰθήρ,
πάντα δέ τ' εἶδεται ἄστροι· γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα ποιμῆν·
τόσσα μεσηγὺ νεῶν ἠδὲ Ξάνθοιο ῥοάων
Τρώων καιόντων πυρὰ φαίνετο Ἴλιόθι πρό,
χίλι' ἄρ' ἐν πεδίῳ πυρὰ καίετο, πᾶρ δὲ ἑκάστω
εἶατο πεντήκοντα σέλαι πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο.
ἔπποι δὲ κρὶ λευκὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι καὶ ὀλύρας,
ἔσταότες παρ' ὄχεσφιν, ἐύθρονον Ἥῳ μίμνον.

This is translated by Chapman :¹—

¹ *The Iliads of Homer, Prince of Poets, never before in any language truly translated, with a comment upon some of his chief places, done according to the Greek by George Chapman.* Of this translation, A-B, H-A were published in 1608. The first twelve books of the Iliad were published in 1610, and the other twelve in 1611. The first half of the Odyssey was published in 1614, and the rest in 1615. Chapman was about six years older than Shakespeare. The reader will notice that the metre is the "common metre" of our hymn-books.

Chapman says in his "Preface to the Reader": "Alwaies conceiving how pedanticall and absurd an affectation it is, in the interpretation of any Author (much more of *Homer*) to turn him word for word; when (according to *Horace* and other best lawgivers to translators) it is the part of every knowing and judicall interpreter, not to follow the number and order of the words but the material things themselves, and sentences to weigh diligently; and to clothe and adorne them with words, and such a stile and form of oration as are most apt for the language into which they are converted. If I have not turned him in any place falsly (as all other his interpreters have in many, and most of his chiefe places;) if I have not left behind me any of his sentence, elegancie, height, intencion and invention: if in some few places . . . I be something paraphrasticall and faulty; is it justice in that poore fault (if they will needs have it so) to drowne all the rest of my labour."

Pope criticises Chapman's translation as "loose and rambling," and for its "frequent interpolations." "He appears to have had a strong affectation of extracting new meanings out of his author. . . . But that which is to be allowed him, and which very much contributed to cover his defects, is a daring, fiery

“ Fires round about them shinde

As when about the silver Moone, when air is free from winde,
 And stars shine cleare; to whose sweets beames, high prospects,
 and the brows
 Of all steepe hills and pinnacles, thrust up themselves for showes;
 And even the lowly vallies joy, to glitter in their sight,
 When the unmeasur'd firmament, bursts to disclose her light,
 And all the signes in heaven are seene, that glad the shepherds
 hart;
 So many fires disclose their beames, made by the Trojan part,
 Before the face of *Iliou*; and her bright turrets show'd.
 A thousand courts of guard kept fires; and every guard allow'd
 Fiftie stout men, by whom their horse, eate oates and hard white
 corne,
 And all did wilfully expect, the silver-throned morne.”

Pope's translation¹ follows:—

“ And beaming fires illumin'd all the ground,
 As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night!
 O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
 When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,

pirit that animates his translation, which is something like what one might imagine Homer himself would have writ before he arriv'd to years of discretion.”

¹ Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was published in 1715-20. It is said that the great Bentley (see § 14 *d R.*) remarked to Pope “that it was a very pretty poem but that he must not call it Homer.” It is in such simple narrative as quoted above that Pope's style is worst; it is best in descriptions of action.

Pope says in his preface: “That which in my opinion ought to be the endeavour of any one who translates Homer, is above all things to keep alive that spirit and fire which makes his chief character. In particular places, where the sense can bear any doubt, to follow the strongest and most poetical, as most agreeing with that character. To copy him in all the variations of his style and the different modulations of his numbers. To preserve in the more active or more descriptive parts, a warmth and elevation; in the more sedate or narrative, a plainness and solemnity; in the speeches, a fulness and perspicuity; in the sentences [*sententiae*], a shortness and gravity. Not to neglect even the little figures and turns on the words, nor sometimes the very cast of the periods. Neither to omit or confound any rites or customs of antiquity. . . . To consider him attentively in comparison with Virgil above all the ancients, and with Milton above all the moderna.”