

**THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER:  
BOOKS I - XII. TRANSLATED INTO  
ENGLISH VERSE, WITH NOTES  
AND PARALLEL PASSAGES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649660537

The Odyssey of Homer: Books I - XII. Translated into English Verse, with Notes and Parallel Passages by Homer & Sir Charles du Cane

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**HOMER & SIR CHARLES DU CANE**

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BOOKS I-XII.



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ODYSSEY OF HOMER

BOOKS I.-XII.

*TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE*

WITH NOTES AND PARALLEL PASSAGES

BY  
SIR CHARLES DU CANE  
K. C. M. G.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
MDCCCLXXX

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## P R E F A C E.

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I BEGAN this translation more than five years ago, soon after my return from the Antipodes by a voyage round Cape Horn, the monotony of which I sought to beguile by reading once more that poem of which it has been well said that it is, above all others, "The Epic of the Sea." My first intention was to have confined myself to the four books, IX.-XII., in which Ulysses tells his wondrous adventures to the king and court of Phæacia, and holds his listening audience spell-bound with the glamour of his tale. Subsequently, I was induced to add the four preceding ones, which contain the narrative of the hero's departure from Ogygia, the destruction of his raft by the implacable Poseidon, the exquisite picture of Nausicaa and her companions washing their linen upon the banks of the Phæacian river, and the reception of Ulysses by Alcinous and Arete. Finally, as the love for my task grew with the increased proportions it had now assumed, I resolved to work even further backwards—to end, in short, with the beginning, and complete the first half of the poem with the four first books.

I have no intention whatever, in these brief introductory remarks, of entering upon an essay on translating Homer, and discussing at length what should or should not be the aim that a translator should



propose to himself in dealing with his original. The object that I individually have aimed at is to give as faithful a rendering of the sense of the original as the idiomatic differences of the two languages and the exigencies of rhyme and metre will permit; and while so doing, to convey to the ordinary English reader something of that which the scholar feels in reading the original Greek. I have not ventured to set before myself the lofty standard at which Mr Matthew Arnold says that all translators should aim—to reproduce for scholars the enjoyment derived from reading the original poem. "Let the translator ask," says Mr Arnold, in the first of his four lectures on translating Homer, published nearly twenty years ago, "how his work affects those who both know Greek and can appreciate poetry,—whether to read it gives the Provost of Eton, or Professor Thompson at Cambridge, or Professor Jowett at Oxford, at all the same feeling which to read the original poem gives them." Alas! I fear that the translation which shall so affect such men has yet to be written; and I fear further, that so high an aim will be found to be as unattainable in the future as it has been in the past. Of him who attempts it, I will venture to prophesy, as Horace did of the bard who should rashly aim at being the rival of Pindar—

" — ceratis ope Dædaleâ  
Nititur pennis, vitree daturus  
Nomina ponto."

All I can hope for is, that the scholar who may compare any of his favourite passages in the original with their rendering in my translation, may find that while the sense of the original has not been widely departed from, some trace of its spirit has been also preserved.

I am not aware that any translation of the whole of the first twelve books of the *Odyssey* has yet appeared in the metre which I have chosen, which is the same as that into which Chapman has

translated the Iliad, and is more familiarly known as "ballad metre." But I am aware of the objections which have been urged ere now to the selection of that metre as a medium for translating Homer, and I am quite ready to admit that in all those objections there is a great deal of force. I am quite ready to admit that ballad poetry is very apt to degenerate into what is styled "ballad slang;" and I entirely agree with Mr Arnold, that the supreme form of epic poetry, the genuine Homeric mould, is not the form of the Ballad of Lord Bateman. But I would fain hope that it is possible for a translator to adopt the ballad metre without moulding it into the form and manner of the Ballad of Lord Bateman; and though he may fail, as other translators in other metres have done before him, in treating prosaic subjects (such as dressing, eating, drinking, harnessing, travelling, going to bed) nobly, in the grand style and manner of his original, yet he need not on that account let his verse become utterly prosaic and humdrum, or sink into the jingle and doggerel of ballad slang. On the other hand, I cannot but think that the ballad metre is one which encourages rapid movement, and does not discourage that simplicity of style, plainness of language, and natural thought, which are so earnestly insisted upon by Mr Arnold as the most prominent qualities of Homer's poetry.

But the truth is, that I am myself one of those who are much exercised with the doubt whether it is possible for the whole, either of the Iliad or the Odyssey, to be adequately interpreted into English through the medium of only one metre. "Under the immense variety of thought, and feeling, and passion, and imagination summed up in the one word Homer," says my friend Sir Francis Doyle, in his lectures upon Walter Scott, "any single metre now possessed by the English language must, I fear, break down." "For much of Homer," he further goes on to say, "our blank verse is, in my opinion, too heavy and too stilted; for other portions the ballad metre, though

often to be employed with excellent effect, is too loose and broken-backed. The rhymed heroic, again, though occasionally very suitable, is, as a rule, too artificial and too cramping for that ancient river of poetry, when it has to be forced into a new channel." If there be, as I think there undoubtedly is, much truth in these remarks, it follows that the translator of Homer must adopt one of two alternatives: either he must vary his metre to suit the variations of the style of the original—now adopting blank verse, now the ballad metre, now the Spenserian stanza, and so on through the whole range of metres known to English poetry; or else he must select the one metre which in his opinion is best adapted to the greater portion of the original, and do his best to avoid a break-down in the passages with which his metre is inadequate to grapple. Having altogether lacked courage to venture on the somewhat daring innovation which is involved in the first of these alternatives,—the bare suggestion of which, moreover, Sir Francis Doyle acknowledges to have been received with much distaste by Mr Gladstone and other great authorities on Homer to whom he broached his views,—I have had recourse to the second. It was on this latter principle that, whilst fully conscious, as I have already said, of the objections which can be brought against it, I originally chose the ballad metre for my translation, and must now stand or fall by my selection.

The notes which I have appended to my translation are almost entirely composed of parallel passages, which I have fallen in with and noted down from time to time in the course of my reading. No doubt those that I have quoted might be multiplied by hundreds, but they are, I think, sufficiently numerous to give some faint idea of how the spirit of Homer has pervaded the poetry of all ages, from the days of Virgil to the present period. Of those from Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, I may be told, to quote a familiar phrase, that they are such as "every schoolboy knows." But my own experience has