

**PENTHESILEA:  
A POEM. [1905]**

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Penthesilea: A Poem. [1905] by Laurence Binyon

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**LAURENCE BINYON**

**PENTHESILEA:  
A POEM. [1905]**



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

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THE DEATH OF ADAM.

ODES.

PORPHYRION, AND OTHER POEMS.

LYRIC POEMS.

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# PENTHESILEA

A POEM BY

LAURENCE BINYON



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To  
SIDSEY COLVIN



## ARGUMENT

PENTHESILEA, queen among the Amazons inhabiting the Euxine coast of Phrygia, having unwittingly killed her own sister, and the fame of Hector's death by Achilles being brought over the mountains to the ears of her people, leads her chosen Amazons to Troy; she means to challenge the victorious Achilles, and in battle throw away her life for atonement of her sister's blood. Priam receives her, at first with doubt and incredulity of the prowess of a woman, then, persuaded by her speech, welcomes with some rekindlings of hope. At night she is visited by Andromache, who had supposed her a goddess come to avenge her husband's slaying. Their mutual anger, relenting, and farewell. On the morrow the Greeks, unready for battle, are set on by Trojans and Amazons and driven back to their ships, till Achilles, at first scorning to fight in such war, assails the Trojans in the centre; their confused rout and slaughter on the banks of Simois; Penthesilea's vain quest of Achilles through the disordered battle, till at last he returns from pursuit; their meeting and single combat: the queen dies by his hand, but in dying fills the soul of her conqueror with love.

## PENTHESILEA

### I.—THE COMING OF THE AMAZONS

DARK in the noonday, dark as solemn pines,  
A circle of dark towers above the plain,  
Troy sat bereaved ; her desolation seemed  
To have drawn slowly down in sultry drops  
The sky of gathered and contracted cloud,  
Hung silent, close as is a cavern roof,  
That deep in heavy forests, lost from day,  
Echoes the groans of a hurt lioness  
For her slain cubs ; she fills her den with groans,  
Stretching her hoarse throat to the flinty floor ;  
And with like lamentable echo, barred  
Within the great gates, dirge of women swelled  
Along the dark-door'd streets that lately shone  
With Hector's splendour as he strode to war,  
Wailing for Hector fallen ; upon towers

Unchampioned men grasped idle spears and groaned.  
But in the heart of Troy dead silence dwelt.  
There to a temple, throned on a green mound,  
Andromache was stolen ; there she bowed  
Her widowed forehead, pressed upon the strength  
Of a square pillar ; not a sob, nor sigh  
Passed from her, but immovably inclined  
She waited yet expected nought ; that hour  
Of grief was on her, when the exhausted flood  
Of passion ebbs, and the still shaken heart  
Hungers for staunching silence : then the touch  
Of patient cold stone is desired like bliss.  
So mourned Andromache, unmoved to know  
If earth that lacked her Hector, still endured,  
Absorbed into the vastness of a grief  
Only by its own majesty consoled.  
Crouched at her feet the child Astyanax  
Played on the slabbed floor with the creviced dust,  
Or followed with soft parted lips and eyes  
Bemused, the foiled flight of a swallow's wings  
That, strayed within, sighed swiftly up and down  
The temple gloom ; there was no other stir