

The Iliad

BY HOMER

Achilles mad with rage darted toward Hector, with his wondrous shield before his breast, and his gleaming helmet, made with four layers of metal, nodding fiercely forward. The evening star that shines brighter than all others through the stillness of night was the gleam of the spear which Achilles poised in his right hand, fraught with the death of noble Hector. He eyed Hector's fair flesh over and over to see where he could best wound it - all was protected save the throat where the collar-bones divide the neck from the shoulders, and this is a most deadly place: here then did Achilles strike Hector as he was coming on toward him, and the point of his spear went right through. Hector fell headlong, and Achilles vaunted over him saying, "Hector, now I have laid you low. Dogs and vultures shall work their will upon you."

Then Hector said, as the life ebbed out of him, "I pray you by your life and knees, and by your parents, let not dogs devour me at the ships of the Achaeans. Accept the rich treasure of gold and bronze which my father and mother will offer you, and send my body home, that the Trojans and their wives may give me my dues of fire when I am dead."

Achilles glared at him and answered, "Though Priam should bid them offer me your weight in gold, your mother shall never lay you out and make lament over the son she bore. The dogs and vultures shall eat you utterly up."

Hector with his dying breath then said, "I know you what you are, and was sure that I should not move you, for your heart is hard as iron; look to it that I bring not heaven's anger upon you on the day when Paris and Apollo, valiant though you be, shall slay you at the Scaean gates."

When he had thus said the shrouds of death enfolded him, whereon Hector's soul went out of him and flew down to the house of Hades, lamenting its sad fate that it should have youth and strength no longer. But Achilles said, speaking to the dead body, "Die; for my part I will accept my fate whenever Zeus and the other gods see fit to send it."