ARTICLE VI.

HOMERIC ORATORY.

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No reader of the Homeric poems can fail to observe the prominence which is given to the speech of one and another of the principal actors in these stories of war and adventure. The narrative, to be sure, is the main purpose of the writer, but in its movement, and contributing to that movement, the element of spoken sentiment, opinion, conviction, and emotion is a large and important factor. It is safe to say that nearly one-half of the verses are declarations of this hero or that deity about other heroes and other deities; about events and plottings, about the conduct of war and the issue of battles, and about adventures by sea and land.

The presumption is that these speeches are mainly the creation of a single poet, or in any case compiled and revised by him. But for such composition there must have been examples and types approximating as nearly to his version as the ships and chariots, the shields and spears, he describes, resembled those in actual use, or as the heroes he calls by name resembled those of his own or a former age. Such being the case, the complacent mind of this century is surprised that twenty-seven hundred years ago so good examples of public speech were possible as realities or creations of literature, and the conceit of a generation which calls itself the inheritor of the arts and sciences of all time is lowered by reflections upon the attainment of

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at least one pristine people. Then it will be remembered that the Epics of Homer are the surviving monuments of a literary age unsurpassed in vigor and beauty, standing apart in the grandeur of isolation—a Mount St. Elias amid low foot-hills and surrounding levels.

Discussion of Homeric questions suggested by any allusion to the poems must be waived for once. The probable date of the Trojan war, of the wanderings of Ulysses, the time of Homer, the material upon which he worked, his relation to predecessors and successors, the very personality of the poet himself,—all these and similar questions must be left to whom they may most concern. For the present purpose it is enough that a literature called by the name of Homer exists, and that in it a certain form of composition abounds, corresponding to the reputed character of the speakers, and consistent with their varying moods and the differing occasions which inspired their speech. In these respects the epic poet surpassed later writers in the dramatic virtue of losing himself in the individual peculiarities of his characters, much more, for example, than the great historians Herodotus and Thucydides, whose reputed or imputed orations of generals and ambassadors are a prominent feature of their narrations, but betray considerable uniformity of style and structure. In Homer, on the contrary, the utterances of Achilles are not in the manner of Agamemnon, nor does Ulysses speak like Nestor. Diomed's manner is not that of Ajax Telamon, nor do Hector's deeds surpass Paris's exploits more than his words excel his brother's in nobility of spirit.

The standards by which the speakers of the Iliad and the Odyssey are to be rated are not necessarily those of any subsequent age. The first canon of just criticism should place the listener by the ships of the Argives, upon the towers of Ilium, or at the court of Alcinous and in the assembly of Ithaca. The critic will step out of the town-

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meeting of the Saxon into the council of the Greeks, and from parliament and congress he will turn an historic imagination back twenty-seven centuries to the agora and the army by the Dardanian shore of the Hellespont. If, however, he insists that there are timeless tests which he has a right to apply to the oratory of any age, it may be discovered that the speaking men of the eighth century before our era can abide such tests as creditably as the modern general who is expected to harangue his troops in the field, join in the council of war, or possibly speak in the legislative assembly in later years. For it will be borne in mind that the Greek and Trojan orators were chiefs of the host, and that an upstart speaker from the ranks would not have been in accord with Homer's sense of propriety. The common soldier was always a listener, or at best a critic who used his voice chiefly in shouting approbation or murmuring dissent. At his worst he was Thersites, whose scurrility brought a staff down upon his shoulders. And in his ordinary capacity he was told to "keep still and hear what others say, thy betters far: for thou art good for naught, of small account in council or in fight." Such was the kingly estimate of democratic babblers. It was also Homer's. Accordingly he makes his best oratory a royal thing, going hand in hand with princely achievement. He thus voices a ruling idea of his race and time, that to be good in counsel, as to be valiant in battle, was the prerogative of the kings of men. More than three centuries must elapse before the aristocracy of eloquence should be merged in the popular discussion by all citizens concerning the affairs of the city. But in the heroic age the gift of noble speech belonged to noblemen. The use they made of it corresponds to the patrician character, and also to the personal traits of these first gentlemen of their respective realms, coming from Pylos and Salamis, from Argos and Mycenæ, from Argolis and Crete; and on the

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Trojan side from Dardanum and Abydos, Arisba and Lycia, and Ilium itself.

What these knightly men were in battle, Homer recounts with a realism which jars upon the military taste of an age which murders the enemy at a distance made respectful by the inventions of science. But it cannot deny personal courage to warriors who faced each other in hand-to-hand encounters with spear and sword and stone. Something of the same spirit appears in their speech, and the qualities which made them valiant in war gave effectiveness to their words in the military council and before the larger audience of the assembled host.

Contributing to the exercise of these qualities, to be presently mentioned, is the circumstance that a large proportion of the speeches are spoken in debate, or between man and man, or, less seldom, from a leader to his immediate comrades and followers, as distinguished from the address of one person to an impressive audience. In these debates may be observed the characteristics of the best deliberative oratory. Each speaker contributes to the full discussion of the point at issue. What escapes one is seized by another. Each opposing view is met squarely and without the cheap answer of ridicule. Fallacies are scarce. Rejoinders are numerous but weighty, and, if sometimes bitter, they have sufficient cause. Even across the line of battle, Æneas answers Achilles' lofty speech, saying: "Cease we now like babbling fools to prate; for glibly runs the tongue, and can discourse at will in every vein; wide is the range of language, and such words as one may speak, himself may hear returned. What need that we should insults interchange like women who some paltry quarrel wage, scolding and brawling in the public street." 'He said, and hurled his brazen spear.'

A charge which is backed by evident truth is accepted with honorable grace, and wordy war is stopped before it

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begins to lose dignity and descend to bickering. In the great controversy of the principals in the Iliad, the side of justice and right prevails at last by cordial agreement. On lesser occasions the wiser counsel commonly triumphs, whether advocated by few or many, and receives the support of all, if not their sympathy. It is only in ungoverned Ithaca that a dissenting party bolt from an assembly which had not been convened for twenty years.

From these heroic men, dealing at first hand with friends and foes, may be expected, as the first note of their speech, an uncompromising plainness and directness. Having definite opinions and beliefs, they make them clear by straightforward expression. No ambiguity is needed, no duplicity or diplomacy requiring double-faced phrases. Even the wily Ulysses' arts do not include dissembling speech with his equals. These peers in the Achæan league against Troy say to each other what they mean, and mean what they say. It is also received in the same spirit. One of Lord Bacon's biographers suggests that this would be a better world if every man should tell his neighbor what he thinks of him. Probably no age has come nearer than the heroic to carrying out the spirit of this recommendation. And yet evidences of friction on this account are few, after the stormy quarrel of the first Iliad, where Achilles' reproaches of Agamemnon show the incompetency of words to voice his righteous indignation for a public and unmerited insult. Later he confesses the folly of perpetuating his resentment. Other Greeks accept personal criticism in a heroic way, as Diomed does in silence, "submissive to the monarch's stern rebuke," or as Paris in his words to Hector, "I own thy censure just." Ulysses alone chafes once, as becomes a prince who is called "master of all tricky arts," and tells the king that his words are empty wind; but Atrides' smile and apology restore him. The Trojan Hector, too, makes no retort when his wisdom is

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compared unfavorably with his valor by Polydamas; and when he himself loads Paris with contempt, that squire of dames receives his scoring with his accustomed grace and some humility. Thus in debate and in colloquy everything is free, straightforward, and above-board. Hard blows may be given, but they are taken or returned without abiding resentment and cherished hate. There is the truth and frankness of a race in its childhood, made up of men in their manhood,—the speech of a nobility with which is always present the spirit of *noblesse oblige.* Diomed considers it his duty and his right to confront the folly of the king; Patroclus charges his best friend, Achilles, with hard-heartedness and stubbornness; Nestor presumes upon his years to tell Diomed that, eminent as he is in war and in council, his youth has not apprehended the end and object of debate, and then with his customary self-complacency declares that he will go through the entire subject to the satisfaction of everybody. It may be noticed, however, that Nestor is by no means the only example of a complacent self-esteem. They all estimate themselves highly with a knightly measure of self-respect, and announce this sentiment without reserve. Achilles alone confesses his inequality to others in debate,—as the chief orator of the Iliad could afford to, since no one would agree with him in his generous self-depreciation.

In all the discussions of both epics is exhibited the gift of public speech at its best in what may be termed its natural phase. Nine or ten generations must come and go before an art should be evolved extending this native power to lesser men according to their talents and their diligence in improving them. Demosthenes will toil by lamplight, Isocrates will labor ten years over an artistic oration; but in this age of bronze each chieftain utters the thoughts of his soul in the simplicity of his heart. Not in simpleness, however. If art is an imitation of nature, or

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even an improvement upon it, the type will have some features of the copy. These may be idealized but not destroyed. The wilderness must have the hills and the forests, the rocks and the streams, of the cultivated landscape, and natural oratory will contain the elements which are fundamental in cultured eloquence. Primitive expression is not necessarily privative and partial, weak and imperfect. It is oftener defective in manner than wanting in force and efficiency. This has been observed already in the efficacy of straightforward speech between open-hearted men.

To this directness may be added a second cardinal virtue of persuasiveness. According to the later science, persuasion to action is the end of all public speech beyond that which informs or amuses. Included in this is argumentation, but only as a single step toward conviction, and operative chiefly with cultivated minds. Many of these have been logically convinced of obligations who have not been persuaded to fulfill them. With a primitive people, therefore, and even with a cultured, persuasion, by whatever methods accomplished, has been regarded as the triumph of eloquence. Homer was enough of an orator not to need a logician to tell him this. Instead, he gave points to Aristotle. And to his heroes he gave the faculty of persuasive speech.

It must suffice within the present limits to illustrate this statement by their efforts in the one instance in which, through no fault of their own, the chief speakers failed. To persuade Achilles to leave his tent and join forces with Agamemnon was a task greater than to win over a majority in council, or to turn back homesick troops from launching their ships. To this doubtful undertaking the best available talent is deputed. Nestor nominates the envoys, having first by his own prudent and authoritative counsel brought the king to terms, adding many a direction to the embassy "how best to soften Peleus' matchless

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son." But he himself stays behind, remembering perhaps the first day of the wrath when his conciliating intervention was of no avail. He will let Ulysses and Phœnix and Ajax make a second attempt, being Achilles' best loved friends. Addressing him in the above order upon the crucial issue of the war, persuasion is their single object. Every other form of discourse is subservient to their direct appeal to motives which lie nearest the will of the stubborn chieftain. First "the man of many devices" tries one and another of them. Greek fear of Trojans close at hand, led by raging Hector who can be turned back by Achilles alone, should appeal to his patriotism and his pride; his future happiness will be destroyed by remorse; his filial sentiment is to be aroused by recalling a father's words; his cupidity by Agamemnon's promised gifts; pity for all other Greeks excited; honor even as to a God will be paid; his revenge gratified in a triumph over Hector. Ulysses the many-sided had approached his friend on every side, to be rebuffed in the end, and told to take back an answer whose frank opening was: "Him as the gates of hell my soul abhors, whose outward words his inmost thoughts conceal." Then the aged Phœnix, trusting to a foster-father's place near the hero's heart, reminds him of boyhood days; that renowned men and gods have been mollified; that he who had swayed others' hearts should himself be moved; by best loved friends; for honor's sake; and "by love for me, thy reverend sire." It is the climax of persuasive affection, and the invitation to stay and postpone decision till morning shows that Achilles' heart had been touched.

Blunt Ajax, in the failure which he sees to be imminent, blurts out his opinion of such obduracy, emphasizes the importance of an ambassage from all the host, reminds him once more of the gifts, and of the envoy's friendship. Achilles assures Ajax that his message is full of truth, but

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is also in vain. Persuasion failed, but the power and value and variety of its elements are enhanced by the difficulty of the undertaking. By these best qualities the greatness of the wrong and the bitterness of the wrath were to be measured and emphasized. And if such persuasiveness failed, of what avail would have been description, exposition, or argumentation? The *a fortiori* is attempted once or twice, but Achilles little recks of what men or gods have done. Just one element was wanting to crown this great oratorical episode with success, that is the ethical,—the moral power of justice done. When that was accomplished by the king's admission of the wrong he had committed, persuasion was easy; but the full power of Homeric oratory had been put forth and the glory of it established for all generations. It could not have been so great if the despair of success had been less than it was when the embassy returned.

There are other features besides directness of address and persuasiveness of appeal in the deliberative oratory of Homer. Picturesque description of fatherland and the scenes of childhood; reminiscent narration stirring ancestral pride; adventures recounted, stimulating valor and exciting emulation,—all working mightily on the hearts of an emotional race whose unspeculative minds would have wandered from the close-linked subtleties of a later logic. A primitive *ad hominem* in its varied forms, from man to man, was what they employed freely and took without resentment. If they could not reply in kind they yielded with grace. And about all their interchange of views there was a largeness of comprehension and a natural dignity which belongs to an early civilization having immense possibilities in succeeding centuries.

From this necessarily brief enumeration of general characteristics it is time to turn to individual traits in the speeches which constitute the larger part of Homeric elo-

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quence. As in the conduct of the War and the Wandering they belong to a few chieftains of strong personality,—the majority of whom the Poet, with a natural patriotism, ranges on the Grecian side. Of these Achilles holds the primacy in words as in deeds. This is illustrated in the Contention of the first Iliad, the Rejection in the ninth, and the Reconciliation in the nineteenth. In these three progressive acts, bordering upon the tragic, the movement in its beginning, continuation, and conclusion is principally maintained by the masterly oratory of the son of Peleus rather than by his deeds, since he remained inactive all this time in his tent and by his black ships.

To appreciate his utterances a just view must be taken of the offense he resented, and this according to the judicial and ethical standards of an age long previous to the publication of a gospel of good for evil. In that time the sense of injustice done was in no danger of being dulled by confounding it with the later duty of forgiveness. Reparation, or else retribution, followed wrong as a shadow, and atonement was not remitted in overlooking crime or explaining it away. It was the time when men were learning the antipodal position of right and wrong—a lesson which may be forgotten amidst maudlin philanthropies and sheltering casuistries. Achilles' wrath was not, therefore, a petulant sulking, but a just and righteous indignation at his ignominious and infamous disgrace by the commander-in-chief before the contending armies, and without the remonstrance of his brother officers, Nestor alone excepted. He knew his natural superiority to the son of Atreus, and that there was no divine right of kings to rob. Accordingly a godlike sense of outrage becomes the inspiration of his speech, since Heaven forbade him to draw his sword, but allowed him to arraign the king with bitter words. Invective was the natural form they took; reproach, accusation, reproof, censure, and scorn, such as has

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been matched since only in the high places of eloquence. "Cowardly, plundering despot of slaves, the time shall come when, bereft of troops, impotent and despairing thy soul shall mourn this dishonor cast on me thy bravest warrior. Take this best prize of mine, but touch no other lest thy life blood reek upon my spear." Such are the crests on the torrent of indignation which rolls on with steadied impetuosity, without overflow or dissipating shallows. There is no frothy incoherence in his princely anger. His speech and his vengeance have deep reserves of power in things unsaid and undone. Like his half-sheathed sword, his speech and wrath are half restrained. They do not shatter themselves with insensate fury, but keep their strength till the wrong is righted.

In the Rejection, another aspect of Achilles' speech is displayed. Fifteen days have elapsed since the king's offense when the Embassy is sent to deliver its carefully chosen words. The protagonist's reply shows that his wrath is past its first outburst, but is still flowing with full banks. The method in his madness is shown by the frankness of his words in declaring his hatred of duplicity and hypocrisy. With fine irony he mentions the uselessness of toil in battle for a king who keeps its best spoils for himself, and asks if no mortals love their wives save Atreus' sons alone. "Then let them alone, and without Achilles devise how best to save themselves." With mocking scorn he points to the lofty wall, the deep trench and palisade which Agamemnon has built to be, instead of himself, a defense against Hector and the Trojans, and in a climax of contempt he returns his answer: "He hath deceived and wronged me. Of him enough; I pass him by whom Jove hath robbed of sense. His gifts I loathe and spurn. Go bid the chiefs of Greece some better counsel to devise to save their ships and men." The dignity and majesty of his words and bearing are another testimony to

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Achilles' preëminence among the Argive princes. He was as great in speech as in action.

Three days later, great grief for the loss of his dearest friend has overwhelmed the hatred for his foe, and to avenge Patroclus' death he dismisses resentment for wrongs received. Noble in his indignation, he is nobler still in abjuration. Before the chieftains assembled at his call, Agamemnon among the rest, he attains the third and highest plane of eloquence in saying, "What hath been the gain to thee or me in heart-consuming strife? Great is the gain to Troy; but the Greeks will long retain the memory of our feud. Yet pass we that and let us school our angry spirits down. My wrath I here abjure." The height of graceful speech he reaches when he indorses Agamemnon's weak apology for wrongdoing in attributing it to adverse facts: "O Father Jove, how dost thou lead astray our human judgments! Atreus' son had ne'er filled my bosom with wrath, but that thy will had predestined many a valiant Greek to die."

The loftiest reach of Achilles' eloquence is in the elegy over Patroclus slain. "Ne'er again shall I such sorrow know, not though I hear of my father's death, nor of my godlike son's. My hope had been that here in Troy I was doomed to die alone, and that thou, returned home in safety, should be to Neoptolemus in place of me his father." Nothing in the literature of the elegy outside Homeric poems approaches the pathos of this lament, unless it be that of David over the two who were slain on the mountains of Gilboa, and the echo of it in Ambrose's eulogy upon Gratian and Valentinian. In the Iliad itself this lamentation is to be reckoned with the dirges of the twenty-second and twenty-fourth books.

It is often observed that Homer has employed every resource of his art to make Achilles' preëminence emphatic. Prowess in arms would of necessity be insisted upon, but

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next to this, if not equally with it, his power in speech is emphasized. Accordingly its range is made coextensive with the opulence of his nature, running from the sobriety of deliberation to intensity of invective; from light irony to impassioned pathos. He is thus made the first orator as well as the first warrior of the Iliad.

Who is the second? Is it that hero who was to be the protagonist of another epic, the Odyssey? If the point of estimate be changed from variety of speech to number of speeches, and from the deliberative assembly to the audience chamber of royalty, Ulysses will stand next to Achilles. Homer seems to sanction this order by giving him command of the propitiatory expedition to Chryses, and appointing him to make the conciliatory address. So in the embassy from Agamemnon to Achilles, it is Ulysses who makes the speech of propitiation, as he had already been sent to Troy with Menelaus as an ambassador to ask the return of Helen before the war began.

The principal feature of his oratory is the general one which belongs to his character, its adaptive tact, always suited to the occasion. He was not so much greater than the occasion as to be its creator and controller, as Achilles was, but by going with its current he often found opportunity to direct it to his own purposes. Being thus equal to every occasion, he became the man of many counsels, a director rather than leader, steering men whither they felt that they were going of their own accord. Hence when they came to themselves they called him the sage, the crafty, the man of many wiles. His speech is full of art. He is a prototype of later rhetors and sophists. The adaptive art is apparent in the midst of great natural abilities. His pledging Achilles and his compliment to the "table spread nobly" in the beginning of his speech and its graceful transition is worthy of an accomplished ambassador at a state dinner. The succeeding steps of his ad-

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dress have already been indicated. The rest of his speeches in the Iliad are shorter, but always in harmony with his character. In the Odyssey, however, there is abundant discourse of his, enough to make him Homer's chief spokesman when the number of his speeches is considered.

The nature of this poem necessarily gives a different tone to his oratory. It is narrative rather than deliberative, or at most the discourse of a guest whose thoughts are upon his home. His counsels to his companions are with authority, his talk with hosts conciliatory, the story of his wandering an unconscious appeal to their sympathy, followed in most instances by proffers of aid. Eloquence availed little with Cyclops or Circe, but with an assembled court and company, its proper sphere, there was abundant evidence that Ulysses succeeded in a measure where Homer and the Rhapsodists distinguished themselves in subsequent times. In this character of raconteur, the poet consciously or unconsciously made the Wanderer his own prototype, reciting epics of war and adventure from place to place. If the Odyssey is a successor to the Iliad, there may possibly be in it a token or perhaps a prophecy of a transfer of glory from the sword to the spoken word, which in a previous age had been evenly balanced in the poet's estimate. In any case, the importance of his recitals compares favorably with that of his adventures. The poet has preserved the orator's manner even, in Antenor's account of a former embassy, recalling Ulysses' "downcast visage when he rose to speak like one untaught; but when his deep-toned voice sent forth words that fell like flakes of wintry snow, no mortal could with him compare, and little reck'd we of outward show."

Besides these two chief speakers, there were others in the Iliad who are prominent, and also remarkable in their distinctive personality. Nestor of course cannot be overlooked, as, presuming upon his age and experience, he

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never allowed himself to be passed by. Moreover it is not unlikely that he was sensible of his reputation as "the smooth-tongued chief, from whose persuasive lips sweeter than honey flowed the stream of speech." At least he recalls his reputation among men "abler in council and greater than the heroes of this degenerate age." With a vision of the glory of the former time which always haunts the aged, he asserts the prerogative of gray hairs to give advice on all occasions. The assurance of his rebuke and criticism is refreshing when he tells Ulysses and the rest that they debate like children, or patronizes young Diomed's creditable discourse. Still the concurrent applause of the host and the constant reference to his eloquence testify to its power, backed as it is by personal valor. "His words fresh courage roused in every breast." A sort of speaker of the house, and leader of the right wing, he becomes the prototype of all those who at various times have borne the title of "Old Man Eloquent" from Isocrates to Gladstone.

Next to him, at least as immortalized in a later epic, if reference to it is permitted, comes Æneas, whom Virgil has made to sustain the reputation for goodly speech which Homer bestowed in opposing him to Achilles, first in the war of words and then in the strife of arms. It must be allowed in this encounter that Æneas' words are a dignified reply to Achilles' taunt, although for the poet's purposes he is betrayed into dwelling at length upon the nobility of his descent, foreshadowing his long recital in the second and third Æneid. But he comes to himself directly, and is the first to propose to fight, and first to cast the spear. In other places his speech compares favorably with that of Argive chiefs and counsellors, a testimony to Homer's fairness toward the enemy.

Menelaus is another orator, whose speeches Homer has supplemented by characterization of his appearance. "High

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over Ulysses standing, with broad set shoulders Menelaus in fluent language spoke, his words though few yet clear; though young in years, no wordy babbler, wasteful of his speech." This laconic ease is especially noticeable in the speeches which are incident to the challenge of Paris, and the championship duel. Even Paris, butt as he is of Hector's banter, is able to make answer for himself, like a gentleman, sometimes admitting the justice of his brother's taunts, but, while allowing his greater prowess, defending his own valor with such grace and dignity that "the hero's words wrought on his brother's mind." As for Hector himself, his speech has that quality which has come to bear his name. He is always nagging Paris; Ajax he accosts as a "babbling braggart, vain of speech"; he tells Polydamas, "I know how unapt thou art to hearken to advice—thy wisdom does not surpass all other men's." And yet when his fate draws near and he holds communion with his warlike soul, there is that in his soliloquy which might have suggested Cato's and Hamlet's. "Better to dare the fight, and know at once to which the victory is decreed by Heaven." And what more nobly tender than his parting with Andromache? As for Telamon Ajax his speech has a martial quality which is emphasized by unimpeachable valor. The note of his harangue to comrades and the host is, "Quit you like men," and his prayer to Jove, "Clear the sky that we may see our fate and die in the open light of day."

Equaling him in bravery, and surpassing him in mental power, is Diomed the valiant youth, dear to Homer. It is he who first confronts the king when he proposes the homeward flight, and tells him to his face that Heaven had not conferred valor upon him together with the throne. For boldness, directness, and effectiveness, his short speech is not matched by any similar utterance in the councils of the Iliad, and "with loud applause the sons of Greece his words confirmed." So, too, when the Em-

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bassy returns from its bootless errand to Achilles, it is Diomed who breaks the silence that fell on the disheartened assembly, telling Agamemnon to let the over-proud chieftain go or stay according to his wayward will, and meantime to prepare for to-morrow's battle. Again the chiefs confirmed his speech with loud applause. What such applause was like, the poet states in the second book, after the king himself had spoken,—"a loud sound as when the ocean wave driven by the wind dashes against a crag exposed to blasts from every storm that roars around." Diomed, moreover, is not unskilled in conciliatory speech also, as Glaucus found to his cost on that day when they compared pedigrees and exchanged armor in an excess of good feeling, "gold for brass," however, "a hundred oxen's worth for that of nine"!

There were other warriors whose brief harangues or exultant boasts of victory carry with them a tone as personal as their mode of warfare or their names. Polydamas, frank, generous, and critical, sends after his flying spear the ironical assurance that it shall be to some Greek for a staff to Pluto's realm. Sarpedon's death-cry is an appeal to save him from the reproach of being spoiled of his armor, and Glaucus begs Hector to come to the rescue. Patroclus on the other side conjures the Ajaces to seize the prize with the same ardor with which he had upbraided Achilles for withdrawing from the fight. Exulting in carnage, he jests bitterly over his stricken enemy's headlong plunge from the chariot, calls him an accomplished tumbler and diver for oysters; but when his own turn comes he reviles Hector his slayer, and prophesies his doom by an avenging hand. Lysaon, far from the home he fondly remembers and the steeds he left behind, upbraids the bow that has failed him, and rushes to his death with boastful words. Automedon over Aretus fallen exclaims that his heart is relieved of some small portion of its grief for Pa-

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troclus slain. Thus they fight on and speak on, each out of the fullness of his heart and the bent of his nature, the words that show what sort of spirit reigned in each in that age of untrammeled thought, free action, and unbridled speech.

It would add to the reputation of Homer as a rhetorician if the discourse of his deities could be estimated; but he esteems them so slightly above heroes in mental and ethical directions, that the gain would be chiefly in the matter of variety. The Thunderer himself excels mortals in voice more than in sense or language, while Juno's billingsgate to Diana is worthy of a fishwife brawl, to say nothing of boxing the huntress' ears. Not all, to be sure, followed these high examples, but it is evident that the poet made no choice reserves of oratory for the dwellers on Olympus. He had not the advantages which Milton enjoyed of a later revelation, nor of a still later Calvinism to furnish him with "freewill, foreknowledge absolute," and predestination, although "fixed fate" was probably an article of his creed. This is left for warriors to discuss on the battlefield.

As we read the two finished epics with which Greek literature began its full-grown life, the truth is forced home which a guest announces in Xenophon's Symposium: "If any of you wishes to become an orator or a general, let him study Homer." In the suddenness of his unheralded appearance, it is not possible to say where he found examples for an eloquence which he could not have created; but it may reasonably be wondered that, amid the comments and annotations of all the centuries, so little heed has been paid to so large an element as the oratorical.[1] These speeches are not mere rhetoric. Deliberative de-

[1] For instance, out of three hundred and forty-nine review articles on Homeric topics, none appear, judging by their titles, to discuss at length the speeches which occupy so large a portion of the poems.

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bate, military address, the formalized converse of man with man, friend with friend, and foe with foe; solid, dignified, earnest, they betoken a great orator-poet and the existence of a pristine age of speaking men. Judicial, commemorative, and advisory in form, in spirit they are sincere and sagacious, emotional and persuasive. Their ethical tone is high, their atmosphere self-respecting, their diction that of gentlemen and noblemen. Therefore there is something to learn from the courtesy, the honesty, and the skill of an age whose attainments in debate and discussion, in conference and personal address, have not been surpassed in all the centuries since Homer made speech the stay of the state, as the sword was its defense.

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