

THE ILIAD

**Rendered into English Prose by
Samuel Butler**

Sample



THE DUNYAZAD DIGITAL LIBRARY

WWW.DUNYAZAD-LIBRARY.NET

The Iliad
Rendered into English Prose
by Samuel Butler
First published 1898

The Dunyazad Digital Library
www.dunyazad-library.net

The Dunyazad Digital Library (named in honor of Shahrazad's sister) is based in Austria. According to Austrian law, the text of this book is in the public domain (“gemeinfrei”), since all rights expire 70 years after the author's death. If this does not apply in the place of your residence, please respect your local law.

However, with the exception of making backup or printed copies for your own personal use, you may *not* copy, forward, reproduce or by any means publish this e-book without our previous written consent. This restriction is only valid as long as this e-book is available at the www.dunyazad-library.net website.

This e-book has been carefully edited. It may still contain OCR or transcription errors, but also intentional deviations from the available printed source(s) in typography and spelling to improve readability or to correct obvious printing errors.

A Dunyazad Digital Library book
Selected, edited and typeset by Robert Schaechter
First published (originally on milletre.net) January 2011
Release 1.02 · April 2014

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

While common wisdom has it that Homer was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the fact is, we know nothing about him. We do not know if his name was indeed Homer, nor if he was the author of both epics or of only one of them, nor whether he put them down in writing, nor, if not, when and by whom this has first been done, nor do we know to what extent his words have been edited during the centuries down to the Hellenistic period. We do not know when he lived (probably during the 7th, the 8th, or the 9th century BC), nor where he was born (possibly on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor), nor whether he (or maybe she, as Butler argues for the author of the *Odyssey*) has lived at all. If you are interested in forming your own opinion, you can start with the article *Homer* on Wikipedia.

While Homer, as a single author, is still widely credited with the authorship of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the other epics of the *Epic Cycle*, all of them lost but for a few fragments and retold in much later times, are today attributed to different authors. When the *Iliad* begins, the fatal event that ultimately leads to the war, the famous (or infamous) Judgement of Paris, is long past, and the war is in its ninth year. Only after the *Iliad* ends, Penthesilea, the Amazon queen, will arrive and fall by the hand of Achilles, Achilles himself will be slain by Paris, the Trojan horse will be built, Cassandra's and Laocoon's warnings will go unheeded, Troy will be destroyed and its inhabitants killed or enslaved. Aeneas will embark on his flight to Italy, and the surviving Greek heroes, unless they perish on their way, will return to their homes, among them Agamemnon, who will be killed by his wife

Clytemnestra, and, of course, Odysseus, whose adventures are told in the *Odyssey*. Finally, after the *Odyssey*, the last of the epics tells us how Odysseus is unknowingly killed by his and the goddess Circe's son Telegonos, son and father only recognizing each other as Odysseus lies dying; the *Epic Cycle* ends with Odysseus's funeral, and the double wedding of his sons — Telegonos to Penelope, and Telemachos to Circe, who makes them all immortal.

All those stories, from the fateful affair with the apple to the death of Odysseus and the wedding of his sons, date back to the time of Homer, or were already old then; about their authors we know as little, or nothing, as we know about Homer.

Samuel Butler, grandson of the scholar and Bishop Samuel Butler, was born December 4th, 1835, and died June 18th, 1902. He is not only the author of two well-known and influential novels, *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, but also of a great number of works dealing with religion, biology, philosophy, history, art and literature, and he also tried his hand at sheep-farming in New Zealand, painting and musical composition. Always the intellectual outsider, heretic and iconoclast, he was critical both towards Christianity and Darwinism — “I have never written on any subject unless I believed that the authorities on it were hopelessly wrong,” he stated.

Butler's translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which date from 1898 and 1900, are eminently readable. He tells the story faithfully, though without tormenting the reader with hexameter verses or other vain attempts at getting close to the “feel” of the Greek original. What is lost in linguistic authenticity, or rather the semblance of it, is more than made up for in clarity and in the ease with which we can follow the flow of the tale.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Some changes to the original text of Butler's translation have been made for this edition.

The footnotes were omitted, and also omitted were the headlines, that is the short synopses at the beginning of each chapter.

The gods, whom Butler called by their Roman names, on the argument that the general reader would be more familiar with them, have here been restituted their Greek names.

A few other geographical and personal names have been changed from their Latin to their Greek forms for this edition: Ilion (Ilius), Pergamos (Pergamus), Oceanos (Oceanus; actually, the correct form would be Okeanos), Odysseus (Ulysses), Menelaos (Menelaus), and Alexandros (Alexandrus). All other names (for instance Priam, Helen, Idomeneus) and geographical denominations (for instance Olympus) that do not appear in their Greek forms have been left unchanged from Butler's version.

And finally, all genitives of names ending on *s* (including the names of gods) are here consistently rendered *-s's*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Book 1	7
Book 2	24
Book 3	48
Book 4	60
Book 5	75
Book 6	100
Book 7	114
Book 8	127
Book 9	142
Book 10	161
Book 11	177
Book 12	201
Book 13	215
Book 14	239
Book 15	254
Book 16	275
Book 17	300
Book 18	321
Book 19	338
Book 20	350
Book 21	365
Book 22	382
Book 23	397
Book 24	422

BOOK I

Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles, son of Peleus, that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans. Many a brave soul did it send hurrying down to Hades, and many a hero did it yield a prey to dogs and vultures, for so were the counsels of Zeus fulfilled from the day on which the son of Atreus, king of men, and great Achilles, first fell out with one another.

And which of the gods was it that set them on to quarrel? It was the son of Zeus and Leto; for he was angry with the king and sent a pestilence upon the host to plague the people, because the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses his priest. Now Chryses had come to the ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, and had brought with him a great ransom: moreover he bore in his hand the sceptre of Apollon wreathed with a suppliant's wreath, and he besought the Achaeans, but most of all the two sons of Atreus, who were their chiefs.

"Sons of Atreus," he cried, "and all other Achaeans, may the gods who dwell in Olympus grant you to sack the city of Priam, and to reach your homes in safety; but free my daughter, and accept a ransom for her, in reverence to Apollon, son of Zeus."

On this the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the priest and taking the ransom that he offered; but not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away. "Old man," said he, "let me not find you tarrying about our ships, nor yet coming hereafter. Your sceptre of the god and your wreath shall profit you nothing. I will not free her. She shall grow old in my house at Argos

far from her own home, busying herself with her loom and visiting my couch; so go, and do not provoke me or it shall be the worse for you.”

The old man feared him and obeyed. Not a word he spoke, but went by the shore of the sounding sea and prayed apart to King Apollon whom lovely Leto had borne. “Hear me,” he cried, “O god of the silver bow, that protectest Chryse and holy Cilla and rulest Tenedos with thy might, hear me, O thou of Sminthe. If I have ever decked your temple with garlands, or burned you thigh-bones in fat of bulls or goats, grant my prayer, and let your arrows avenge these my tears upon the Danaans.”

Thus did he pray, and Apollon heard his prayer. He came down furious from the summits of Olympus, with his bow and his quiver upon his shoulder, and the arrows rattled on his back with the rage that trembled within him. He sat himself down away from the ships with a face as dark as night, and his silver bow rang death as he shot his arrows in the midst of them. First he smote their mules and their hounds, but presently he aimed his shafts at the people themselves, and all day long the pyres of the dead were burning.

For nine whole days he shot his arrows among the people, but upon the tenth day Achilles called them in assembly — moved thereto by Hera, who saw the Achaeans in their death-throes and had compassion upon them. Then, when they were got together, he rose and spoke among them.

“Son of Atreus,” said he, “I deem that we should now turn roving home if we would escape destruction, for we are being cut down by war and pestilence at once. Let us ask some priest or prophet, or some reader of dreams (for dreams, too, are of Zeus) who can tell us why Phoibos Apollon is so angry, and say whether it is for some vow that

we have broken, or hecatomb that we have not offered, and whether he will accept the savour of lambs and goats without blemish, so as to take away the plague from us.”

With these words he sat down, and Calchas, son of Thestor, wisest of augurs, who knew things past present and to come, rose to speak. He it was who had guided the Achaeans with their fleet to Ilion, through the prophesyings with which Phoibos Apollon had inspired him. With all sincerity and goodwill he addressed them thus:

“Achilles, loved of heaven, you bid me tell you about the anger of King Apollon, I will therefore do so; but consider first and swear that you will stand by me heartily in word and deed, for I know that I shall offend one who rules the Argives with might, to whom all the Achaeans are in subjection. A plain man cannot stand against the anger of a king, who if he swallow his displeasure now, will yet nurse revenge till he has wreaked it. Consider, therefore, whether or no you will protect me.”

And Achilles answered, “Fear not, but speak as it is borne in upon you from heaven, for by Apollon, Calchas, to whom you pray, and whose oracles you reveal to us, not a Danaan at our ships shall lay his hand upon you, while I yet live to look upon the face of the earth — no, not though you name Agamemnon himself, who is by far the foremost of the Achaeans.”

Thereon the seer spoke boldly. “The god,” he said, “is angry neither about vow nor hecatomb, but for his priest’s sake, whom Agamemnon has dishonoured, in that he would not free his daughter nor take a ransom for her; therefore has he sent these evils upon us, and will yet send others. He will not deliver the Danaans from this pestilence till Agamemnon has restored the girl without fee or ransom to her father, and has sent a holy hecatomb to Chryse. Thus we may perhaps appease him.”

With these words he sat down, and Agamemnon rose in anger. His heart was black with rage, and his eyes flashed fire as he scowled on Calchas and said, "Seer of evil, you never yet prophesied smooth things concerning me, but have ever loved to foretell that which was evil. You have brought me neither comfort nor performance; and now you come seeing among Danaans, and saying that Apollon has plagued us because I would not take a ransom for this girl, the daughter of Chryses. I have set my heart on keeping her in my own house, for I love her better even than my own wife Clytemnestra, whose peer she is alike in form and feature, in understanding and accomplishments. Still I will give her up if I must, for I would have the people live, not die; but you must find me a prize instead, or I alone among the Argives shall be without one. This is not well; for you behold, all of you, that my prize is to go elsewhere."

And Achilles answered, "Most noble son of Atreus, covetous beyond all mankind, how shall the Achaeans find you another prize? We have no common store from which to take one. Those we took from the cities have been awarded; we cannot disallow the awards that have been made already. Give this girl, therefore, to the god, and if ever Zeus grants us to sack the city of Troy we will requite you three and fourfold."

Then Agamemnon said, "Achilles, valiant though you be, you shall not thus outwit me. You shall not overreach and you shall not persuade me. Are you to keep your own prize, while I sit tamely under my loss and give up the girl at your bidding? Let the Achaeans find me a prize in fair exchange to my liking, or I will come and take your own, or that of Ajax or of Odysseus; and he to whomsoever I may come shall rue my coming. But of this we will take thought hereafter; for the present, let us draw a ship into the sea, and find a crew for her expressly; let

us put a hecatomb on board, and let us send Chryseis also; further, let some chief man among us be in command, either Ajax, or Idomeneus, or yourself, son of Peleus, mighty warrior that you are, that we may offer sacrifice and appease the anger of the god.”

Achilles scowled at him and answered, “You are steeped in insolence and lust of gain. With what heart can any of the Achaeans do your bidding, either on foray or in open fighting? I came not warring here for any ill the Trojans had done me. I have no quarrel with them. They have not raided my cattle nor my horses, nor cut down my harvests on the rich plains of Phthia; for between me and them there is a great space, both mountain and sounding sea. We have followed you, Sir Insolence! for your pleasure, not ours — to gain satisfaction from the Trojans for your shameless self and for Menelaos. You forget this, and threaten to rob me of the prize for which I have toiled, and which the sons of the Achaeans have given me. Never when the Achaeans sack any rich city of the Trojans do I receive so good a prize as you do, though it is my hands that do the better part of the fighting. When the sharing comes, your share is far the largest, and I, forsooth, must go back to my ships, take what I can get and be thankful, when my labour of fighting is done. Now, therefore, I shall go back to Phthia; it will be much better for me to return home with my ships, for I will not stay here dishonoured to gather gold and substance for you.”

And Agamemnon answered, “Fly if you will, I shall make you no prayers to stay you. I have others here who will do me honour, and above all Zeus, the lord of counsel. There is no king here so hateful to me as you are, for you are ever quarrelsome and ill affected. What though you be brave? Was it not heaven that made you so? Go home, then, with your ships and comrades to lord it over the Myrmidons. I care neither for you nor for your anger; and thus will I do: since

Phoibos Apollon is taking Chryseis from me, I shall send her with my ship and my followers, but I shall come to your tent and take your own prize Briseis, that you may learn how much stronger I am than you are, and that another may fear to set himself up as equal or comparable with me.”

The son of Peleus was furious, and his heart within his shaggy breast was divided whether to draw his sword, push the others aside, and kill the son of Atreus, or to restrain himself and check his anger. While he was thus in two minds, and was drawing his mighty sword from its scabbard, Athena came down from heaven (for Hera had sent her in the love she bore to them both), and seized the son of Peleus by his yellow hair, visible to him alone, for of the others no man could see her. Achilles turned in amaze, and by the fire that flashed from her eyes at once knew that she was Athena. “Why are you here,” said he, “daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus? To see the pride of Agamemnon, son of Atreus? Let me tell you — and it shall surely be — he shall pay for this insolence with his life.”

And Athena said, “I come from heaven, if you will hear me, to bid you stay your anger. Hera has sent me, who cares for both of you alike. Cease, then, this brawling, and do not draw your sword; rail at him if you will, and your railing will not be vain, for I tell you — and it shall surely be — that you shall hereafter receive gifts three times as splendid by reason of this present insult. Hold, therefore, and obey.”

“Goddess,” answered Achilles, “however angry a man may be, he must do as you two command him. This will be best, for the gods ever hear the prayers of him who has obeyed them.”

He stayed his hand on the silver hilt of his sword, and thrust it back into the scabbard as Athena bade him. Then she went back to Olympus among the other gods, and to the house of aegis-bearing Zeus.



...>

... to read on, get the full book from the Dunyazad Digital Library!

THE DUNYAZAD DIGITAL LIBRARY gives you classical books (and the occasional modern one) of history, fantasy and adventure. Carefully and professionally proofread, edited and typeset, the Library's editions offer a far better quality than the free-for-download fare usually found on the web.

Intended for reading devices with sufficient screen sizes (8 inches or more) the PDF format allows for a careful design of lines and pages, resulting in a more pleasant reading experience than the necessarily random line and page breaks of other e-book formats.

All books in the Dunyazad Digital Library are also available in ePub, Mobi (Kindle) and plain text format.

All e-book files in the Library are free from any DRM restrictions.

To download any of the books in PDF, ePub or Mobi format you need a "Library Card." It is free, without even the need to register.

Get your free Library Card:

www.dunyazad-library.net/librarycard.htm

For more information, see

www.dunyazad-library.net/about.htm

The Reading Room (list of available books):

www.dunyazad-library.net/readingroom.htm