

THE DEATH OF PATROCLUS FROM BOOK XVI OF *THE ILIAD*

“Lie there, Patroclus! and with thee, the joy  
Thy pride once promised, of subverting Troy;  
The fancied scenes of Ilium wrapt in flames,  
And thy soft pleasures served with captive dames.  
Unthinking man! I fought those towers to free,  
And guard that beauteous race from lords like thee:  
But thou a prey to vultures shalt be made;  
Thy own Achilles cannot lend thee aid;  
Though much at parting that great chief might say,  
And much enjoin thee, this important day.  
‘Return not, my brave friend (perhaps he said),  
Without the bloody arms of Hector dead.’  
He spoke, Patroclus march’d, and thus he sped.”

—Homer / Alexander Pope, translator

Homer (c. 850 BCE) is the most famous poet of antiquity, and *The Iliad* is generally considered his masterpiece. Here is Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) translation from Book XVI of Hector's slaying of Patroclus, Achilles' greatest friend. In it we hear an arrogant and contemptuous Hector degrading the dying warrior. Pope's translation remains the best rendering of the poem in English. Samuel Johnson called it, "A performance which no age or nation could hope to equal."

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