

[452] His course flew thence through Phrygia's citadels,
toward Ilion— walls built on broken faith! —
and there he wandered the Idalian groves,
where winged Jove seized with betaloned feet
the comely boy of lovely mouth, bearing
his pleasing prize above the heaven's bounds.
While zealously he sought at least the trace
of ancient glory, there he came upon
Oenone's poplar, rooted by a stream
where the adulterer's blade had carved in stealth
his record: there one read of Paris' loves.
A thick-grown vale lies there, where as a jest
the case was tried in which the profligate
profaned the judgment. Thence flowed the first source
of Ilion's fall, the evil stain, and fire
upon Pergamum— now a meagre place.
And yet one may consider its past greatness
from present traces: ancient ruins witness
how vast the measure was of crumbling Troy.
[468] As thus the Macedonian slowly wandered
among so many tombs of Argive warriors,
their buried shades and ashes, whom inscriptions
still gave their titles clearly carved, behold!
He saw Achilles' tomb, of lesser breadth
than fame, adorned with verses such as these:
ABACUS SON HECTORS SLAYER I FELL
UNARMED UNWARY IN A HIDDEN SPOT
PIERCED THROUGH THE HEEL BY PARIS STEALTHY DART
The brevity of these words led the king
to vivid recollection of that prince,
and on the barren sands he poured pure wine. [p20]
“He hastened to perfume the place with incense.
“O splendid fortune of this man,” he cried,
“whose praises call to mind Maeonia’s bard!
He dragged Hector, the land’s chief strength and sire,
lifeless around the city’s walls; and yet
this is the highest increase to his honor—
or so I judge— that such a man in death
should merit such a herald of his praise
as Homer. Would that Fame, unenvious,
should sing, when we are dead, such songs of praise!
Indeed, when all the world receives my laws—
when Atlas and the Ganges are subdued,
and Boreas and Ammon feel the strength
of Macedonia— when the broad earth
contents itself with but a single prince,
as with a single sun, one thing alone
I dread will fail my buried dust— lapsed fame,
which I would set before Elysian bliss...”