

英文泰西文學

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WESTERN LITERATURE

VOLUME I

GREECE AND ROME

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Troy, whose destruction is the burden of the first great epic of Western literature, was one of the oldest monuments of civilization along the Mediterranean. It was situated at the northwest corner of Asia Minor, just south of the Dardanelles and opposite the island of Tenedos, in a very favorable position to control the profitable trade from Asia to Europe. About 2500 B. C. its rulers surrounded it with a massive wall of sun-baked bricks and thus made it into the first fortress in the *Ægean* world. Its civilization—the same that was found at the time in Greece and on the islands of the *Ægean*—was strongly influenced by the older civilizations of Babylonia and Egypt.

Between the years 2000 to 1000 B. C. these older inhabitants of Greece and the surrounding islands and coasts were conquered and assimilated by shepherd tribes who gradually descended into the peninsula of Greece, driving their herds before them and carrying their families with them in rough carts drawn by horses. These Indo-European conquerors are the people known in history as the Greeks. In mingling with the people whose lands they seized, they took over much of the culture which these nations already possessed, and it is for this reason that we find the Greeks and Trojans of Homer's epic not so very dissimilar in culture and religion. But even though they adopted much of the civilization that had existed in Greece before them and developed it through their genius into the very foundation of the culture of present-day Europe and America, yet in the course of their conquest they destroyed the cities and their monuments. This was the "heroic age" of Greece, the age of the heroes of Homer.

The first city of Troy was only one of a long line of cities built on that very favorable site. The city of Homer was the sixth, and it was destroyed about 1200 B. C. The expedition sent out against Troy was organized probably in revenge for piracy committed on Greek cities by the Trojans. As it was the habit of pirates to carry off women as prisoners, and preferably the most beautiful ones, this would be an explanation of the myth of the rape of Helen. In 1868 the German archæologist Schliemann (1822-1890) began his famous excavations on the site of the former city of Troy. By digging down into the mound to a depth of fifty feet, he uncovered the ruins of nine cities, the earliest one on the top of the mound dating back to about 3000 B. C. Of the sixth city he still found some of the walls, the "topless towers of Ilium," laid low by the wiles of Odysseus. The echoes of this expedition sounded down the ages and were worked over by the poets into the songs which formed the basis of the *Iliad* of Homer.

The tribes of the Greek invaders were governed by councils of old men (cf. the word "senate") who would settle disputes, while questions of policy were sometimes decided by the assembly of all arms-bearing men. Such an assembly is described in the first book of Homer's *Iliad*. In this their democratic spirit, the Greeks formed a sharp contrast to the Oriental despotism of Persia and other Eastern countries. The deliberative bodies of the Greeks are the germs of the political institutions of Western nations, such as the upper and lower houses in the legislative departments of England, America, France, and now also of China. The tribes or small nations also had chiefs or kings, of whom we find many representatives among Homer's heroes. Later on (between 1000-600 B. C.) came the most important development in Greek political life: the villages forming the nucleus of a tribe merged into a city. King and council sat in the market place and ruled the people. This is the highest political organization the Greeks ever knew. Each city had its own laws, its own army and gods, and each citizen felt a patriotic duty toward his own city and no other. The failure of the Greeks to unite into a great nation and the many wars between the different

city states were the weakness that later led to the downfall of Greek civilization. It is true that they had a cultural unity in language, customs, religion, and the common tradition of the Homeric songs which pictured the Greeks united against Asiatic "barbarians"—a term which they applied to all non-Greek peoples. The original meaning of "barbarian" is simply "foreign," but it is easy to understand how it soon came to mean "crude," "uncivilized," and "cruel."

In this later development the Greeks were by far the most civilized among all their neighbors, the teachers of Rome and all later European nations, but in the early days of their history they learned and adopted freely from their neighbors. From the Phœnicians they received the alphabet, which enabled them to write and to keep records. About 600 B. C. writing became common among the merchants in Greece, but it was not until a long time afterward that it was used for recording works of literature. The poems of Homer, for example, were remembered by bards, and writing was at first far too slow and clumsy a process for this purpose; even the early philosophy is composed in verse-form to enable the disciples of the sages to memorize it more easily. Egyptian paper imported into Greece was called "papyrus," from which is derived our word "paper," or "byblos," after the name of a Phœnician city from which it came. This latter word gave to the Greeks their word for "book," which we have preserved in "Bible," meaning literally "the book." The cleverness of the Greek people, which led them to improve everything they adopted from other nations, is shown, for example, in the manner in which they adapted the alphabet for their purposes; the Phœnicians had an alphabet without vowels that the Greeks took over, but made much more useful and simple by the addition of vowels.

In the matter of religion also, the Greeks adopted the gods of the tribes whom they found inhabiting the country, and added them to their own to form the large number of different deities of whom we shall hear frequently in reading Homer and the dramatists. As one would expect of wandering shepherd tribes, the Greeks at first

worshiped their gods at altars erected under the open sky, but as life settled down and the Greeks became an agricultural and even an industrial people, permanent shrines were set up. Often these temples were buildings of wonderful beauty, as for example those on the Acropolis of Athens, generally accounted the most perfect buildings ever erected anywhere in the world. Another wonderful shrine was the temple at Delphi, which is memorable because of its oracle sacred to Apollo. An oracle was a place at which the gods were thought to reveal the future through priests who were believed to be inspired. Oracles played a rôle in Greek life, public and private, comparable to that of "fêng-shui" in China. Important matters of state were submitted to oracles, and even Socrates spoke of them with respect.

The wandering shepherd tribes who invaded Greece looked on with a feeling of awe when they found the peoples whom they were conquering unafraid to sail on the open sea in boats; and throughout antiquity it was felt that man in sailing the seas was defying the gods to destroy him. But soon the courageous Greeks followed the example of their neighbors and, as we shall see in the introduction to the *Odyssey*,* the hazard of the open sea became their keenest passion. The Greeks were the greatest colonizers of antiquity; they settled the islands and the coasts of the Ægean Sea, and later also Italy, which became known as "Great Greece." The civilized history of Italy begins with the Greeks, who brought in writing, literature, architecture, and art. The cultural dependence of Rome on Greece is very satisfactorily illustrated by a comparison of the Roman with the Greek works of literature published in this volume.

Practically all the contributions of Greece to Western culture came from Athens. It is necessary, however, to mention Athens' chief rival, Sparta, for one tradition: stern, military efficiency developed to the highest possible degree. Sparta was organized as an oligarchy, inasmuch as a small number of citizens ruled over

* Cf. p. 80.

a large hostile population to whom they gave no rights and on whose labor they lived. Some time in the ninth century B. C. Lycurgus is said to have given to Sparta the laws which have made "Spartan" a synonym for "hardy" and "courageous." Men and women were trained in various kinds of athletic and military exercises to develop the greatest possible hardihood and courage. Production of children was regulated by the state in order to secure the best possible offspring; weak children were exposed* and only the healthy were reared. At the age of seven the children were taken from their parents and put under the care of the state, where they were trained in all manner of hardships. The intellectual training that they received was very slight, but everything was done to train them for the endurance of severe campaigns. They were given only one garment for winter and summer, they wore no shoes, they ate the simplest kind of food, and they were encouraged to fight among themselves as much as possible. In order to accustom them to the hardships of warfare they were obliged to steal their food, and if they were caught they were severely beaten for their clumsiness. This discipline was not relaxed when they reached maturity; the family life was obliterated for the sake of public activity. All men, rich and poor alike, dined together on coarse food, the famous Spartan "black soup," and luxury of all kinds was sternly forbidden. To discourage commerce and the amassing of wealth the currency was iron to make it difficult to carry money about. As one can readily imagine, these laws did cripple commerce as well as all intellectual development. In the end this one-sided training had to break down before the demands of human nature, which always craves freedom and a bit of luxury. But while the Spartan state was at the height of its development, it was an embodiment of the Greek ideal of the citizen-soldier supported by an inferior population of slaves. And it must also be said that phenomenal feats of bravery were accomplished by this race of soldiers whose mothers would prefer to see their sons die in battle rather than

*The practice of casting children out to meet almost certain death was legitimate among the Greeks and Romans.

return alive but defeated. The name "Thermopylæ" is proverbial in Western languages for bravery, for it was at this pass that Leonidas, with three hundred Spartans, held back the enormous army of the Persians and fought on to death even in the face of certain defeat.

Lycurgus gave Sparta laws, and Solon (ca. 639-559 B. C.) gave Athens a constitution. This is typical of the two states, for Athens embodied the ideals of democracy quite as much as Sparta did those of military despotism. In 594 B. C. Solon was elected "archon" (chief magistrate, literally "ruler") of Athens. He improved the lot of the poor by a reform of the land laws; he made all citizens equal before the law and gave them all the vote. He did not become the tyrant of his city; but in order to give his constitution a fair trial, he exiled himself voluntarily from Athens. Nevertheless he was followed by tyrants. (This word originally meant an absolute ruler, and only later on came to mean a severe or cruel one.) The first one, Pisistratus (605-527 B. C.), ruled well and introduced many fine institutions into Athens; for example, it was he who put the Homeric poems into the form in which they were sung at the popular festivals and handed down to posterity. But he was followed by rulers who gave to the word "tyrant" its present-day connotations; and about 500 B. C. two Athenian youths, Harmodius and Aristogiton, made themselves immortal because at the risk of their own lives they freed Athens of the tyrants. In Athens, citizens of every rank and calling took part in the assembly: cobblers, carpenters, smiths, farmers, merchants, and retail dealers met with the landed gentry to debate and act on national policies. It is true that the largest part of the population consisted of slaves who had no rights before the law except that their masters were required to treat them well. To judge from the actions of the Athenian slaves in the comedy *Phormio*,* they did not tremble before their masters as those of Sparta were said to have done.

Just as Greek democracy was rising to its finest heights, the Oriental despotism of Persia threatened to conquer it. Darius,

* Cf. p. 364.

King of Persia, led a huge army into Greece, but he was defeated at Marathon (490 B. C.). The valiant courage of the free Greeks fighting for their homes against the tremendous odds of the Persian army of slaves has always called forth the admiration of the Western world. Not the least famous of the heroes of Marathon is the messenger who ran the twenty miles from the battlefield to Athens and breathed out his life in giving to his beloved city the news of the victory. Ten years later came the much greater danger of an invasion by sea and land under Xerxes, the son of Darius. With great difficulty the Athenian leader Themistocles succeeded in forming a union with Sparta to defend all of Greece from the Persian invasion. The union was achieved only after Athens had made the concession that the entire Greek fleet be under the command of the Spartans. Leonidas fought bravely at Thermopylæ, as has been mentioned, but the Persians swept on and sacked and burned the city of Athens, which had to be abandoned to them. But in the battle of Salamis (480 B. C.) the Greeks, by out-maneuvering the Persian fleet, numbering 2,000 vessels against 380 Greek ships, succeeded in destroying it; and in the following year the land forces of the Persians were defeated at Plataea. Thus the Athenian fleet had saved Greece, but Themistocles, who had urged his compatriots to build it, was exiled with the usual ungratefulness of republics, because many Athenians were jealous of his power. Athens was now the leading power in the Western world.

The battle of Marathon stands as one of the decisive battles in history, because it enabled the Greeks to pass down to posterity the torch of civilization which they had set burning with such wonderful brightness. Had the Greeks been conquered, their individuality and all the fine things in the life of the spirit to which we come back with never-ending admiration would have been dissolved in the barbarian flood that swept into Europe. The nearness of this catastrophe is the marvelous fact of Greek history. Gilbert Murray in his *The Greek Epic* draws a vivid picture of this situation in which every Greek city was a rampart of civilization in a barbarian world. Every citizen (even, as we shall see, the artists and

philosophers—Æschylus, Euripides, and Socrates) had to be ready at all times for the call to take up the hated spear and shield for the purpose of killing men, in order that his fine work in poetry, painting, sculpture, and philosophy, as well as the general high level of his civilization might be preserved. Human sacrifice, as can be seen from the horror with which Æschylus speaks of it in his *Agamemnon*, was a barbarity which the Greeks had successfully overcome. In Homer's time it had been quite customary to sacrifice prisoners of war at the funeral pyre of a hero, and the ancient Hebrews at times sacrificed children to Moloch; in Rome, human sacrifices lasted until the year 97 B. C. In other respects also the Greeks were progressive leaders in humanizing life: while all antiquity thought slavery a necessary institution, Christianity did not dream of abolishing it, and the Western nations have done away with it only in 1861 in Russia, and in America in 1863,—the Greeks more than two thousand years ago were the first human beings who felt that slavery was a degrading institution, both for the slaves and for their owners. Just as they felt the indignity of selling and buying human beings as one buys a horse or a dog, so the Greeks revolted also against the idea of holding women in subjection. Ibsen startled Europe in 1879 with the *Doll's House*, a drama in which he demanded the right of woman to her soul; the "Land of Liberty," the United States of America, barely two years ago accorded the women the right to vote; yet in ancient Greece we have in Euripides and other writers as eloquent pleaders for women's rights* as the nineteenth century ever saw. The Greeks, too, were the first to protest against war as an institution. "The main point which distinguishes Greece from other ancient communities, here as elsewhere, is not something actually achieved, but something seen and sought for."† As a recent American writer has observed, man is the only animal that tries to turn his dreams into reality, and it is toward the heights first scaled by the poets that mankind rises upward out of the mud of the jungle.

* Cf. Euripides' *Trojan Women*.

† Gilbert Murray, *The Greek Epic*, p. 39.

After the glorious Wars of Liberation against the barbarians, Athens, in the course of one century, passed through a period of literary and artistic development that stands unique in the history of the world. The city was ruled from 460-429 B. C. by the wise Pericles, who was elected year after year as general and enjoyed almost absolute power. Athens now had a government by an expert, neither tyranny of a selfish autocrat nor mob rule by the ignorant. Pericles, who was a patriot and who knew how to inspire patriotism, made Athens strong and wealthy. From a city of twenty thousand inhabitants before the battle of Marathon, it quickly grew to one of one hundred thousand. For the glories of the reign of Pericles, as well as a great deal of other information that the student ought to have, I must refer to books mentioned in the bibliography. Suffice it to say that most of the masterpieces of Greek literature and the great Greek works of art in architecture, sculpture, and painting were produced during this time; and that this was a period in which all of the Athenian citizens enjoyed an education making for a harmonious development of the mind and body such as no other nation has ever had. When the average citizen had sufficient intelligence and artistic taste to appreciate the great dramas of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, it is not surprising that Athens was able to produce within such a short period so large a number of geniuses in many fields of human endeavor. It has been the sentimental longing of the intellectuals of later ages to revive institutions similar to the Pan-Athenian festivals at the time of Pericles when the theaters produced the masterpieces of tragedy and comedy, when the bards recited the poetry of Homer, when processions displayed the beauty and grace of Greek life, when gems of architecture and immortal marble statues celebrated the gods who protected Athens, and when the youths competed in athletic contests for prizes of no greater material value than wreaths of laurel. Down to the present day, this vision of the beauty and charm of Greek life has dominated the minds of the Western nations. For example, an appeal came to me only the other day from the president of Illinois University for funds for a gymnasium and athletic field "to revive the Greek spirit on the prairies

of the Middle West." The ideal calls for neither healthy savages, nor frail Han-lin scholars, but for keen-minded university-trained men with bodies glowing with health. In recent years, even the Chinese have begun to hold "Olympic games."

The great success of Athens, her commercial prosperity, growth of power, and democracy were causes of jealousy among less wealthy, conservative, and military governments, especially of Sparta. These began a series of wars between Athens and Sparta, which lasted for many decades, until finally, through ravaging plagues, lack of united leadership after the death of Pericles, disastrous military expeditions (especially the Sicilian expedition in 413 B. C., which was betrayed by the Athenian general, Alcibiades*), Sparta conquered Athens, leveled her walls, took away her fleet, and forced her to reorganize Spartan supremacy. Athens as a political power was completely destroyed in 404 B. C., but it remained for almost a thousand years an intellectual center where great schools of philosophy flourished.

As the power of the Greek cities was weakened by internecine warfare, the power of Persia grew again, and in the peace of 387 B. C. Persia acquired domination over the Greek cities in Asia Minor. In spite of the fact that the influence of the Greek language and Greek culture was spreading more and more, there was no Greek city strong or magnanimous enough to assume the leadership and unite Greece, as Athens had done a hundred years before. But a unifying force arose from Macedonia,† a country just north of Greece, which had been steadily acquiring Greek culture and Greek military science. King Philip of Macedonia formed a league of Greek states in 338 B. C. He asked the greatest Greek scholar, Aristotle,‡ to become the tutor of his son Alexander. When the latter became king in 336 B. C. he was a youth of twenty, inspired by Homer's poetry and the splendor of Greek achievements in other fields. He was eager to do great things

*Cf. p. 250.

†It was at the court of the Macedonian king that Euripides found a refuge.

‡Cf. p. 322.

for the nation whose culture he considered superior to any other in the world. He was firmly resolved to make Greece a world power and to spread the civilizing influence of her culture over the globe.

For this purpose he planned at first to free the Greek cities of Asia Minor from the Persian yoke. Before setting out he consulted the oracle of Delphi as to the success of his expedition. When he arrived at the site of Troy, he stopped to camp with his troops on the plain where the Greek heroes under Agamemnon, Achilles, and Odysseus had fought against the Trojans. He placed wreaths on the tomb of Achilles, worshiped at the shrine of Athene, and prayed to the gods for aid against the Persians, such as they had once accorded to the Greeks united against the Asiatic forces. In this manner he managed to throw around his expedition the heroic atmosphere of the Trojan War which was familiar to every Greek from childhood. Later on, when his successful wars of conquest carried him into Egypt, he took the time to march out into the desert to the temple of Amon, who was identified with the Greek god Zeus at Siwa. He entered the temple alone and no one learned what took place while he was inside. But when he came out, he was greeted by the priests as the son of Zeus. It was in this manner that the myth of the divine right of kings was introduced into Europe, a fiction which was still insisted upon by the recent emperor of Germany, William II. With this institution there came also another, that of absolute monarchy, replacing the more democratic institutions which had formerly obtained in Greece. Alexander continued his brilliant conquests, especially in Asia, but owing to his premature death at the age of thirty-three his empire did not last. After his death, it was divided among his generals, and the last hope of Greek unity and world dominion passed away. About 200 B. C. Greece was conquered by the Romans, who made it a province of their great empire to be extorted by taxgatherers and raided by pirates. But Greek culture, mixed with Oriental influences (among others, Jewish and, later, Christian traditions), became dominant in the world about the Mediterranean. As a Roman poet put it, the conquered Greece in her turn conquered Rome by her superior culture, literature, art, and science.

The Greeks had brought the Western world to a much higher level of civilization than men had ever seen before, but they had not been able to unite and organize it. The Romans, a much less gifted but more practical race, now organized and unified it into an enduring world empire. They made their city, Rome, the mistress of the Western world and thereby exerted an influence on European life which has been felt through all the centuries leading up to the present time.

Some tribes of the same Indo-European stock, which had about 2000 B. C. conquered Greece, a little later descended into the fertile plains of Italy to become the ancestors of the Italic peoples. But although these tribes were of the same blood, yet their dialects differed so widely that it was impossible for them to understand each other; much less could they understand the Greeks, though their language, too, is Aryan and closely related to Latin. (Latin was the dialect of the people of Latium, a small plain in the middle of the west coast of Italy around the mouth of the Tiber.) Roman historians told that their city had been founded 753 B. C. by Romulus, who, together with his brother Remus, had been suckled by a she-wolf. This myth, which Vergil also mentions, is very characteristic, for the warlike, stern, and cruel Romans seem to have something of the wolf about them.

This historical introduction mentions a number of facts from Greek history which are of aid in understanding the specimens of literature printed in the book. Similar necessary historical data are mentioned in the introductions to the two selections from Roman literature, but for an outline of Roman history, I must refer the reader to texts mentioned in the bibliography or to other books of history which deal with the subject much more adequately than I could attempt to do here. I should, however, like to call attention to a few traditions to which there is frequent allusion in Western literature.

About 100 B. C. the Greek author Plutarch wrote his *Lives*, which were translated into English a short time before Shakespeare wrote his plays, and which gave to this dramatist the plots of his

Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus. Plutarch wrote biographies of Greek and Roman generals, statesmen, orators, and other distinguished men in pairs, exemplifying in their conduct the national ideals of their respective countries. From Plutarch chiefly, but also from Livy and other historians, the Westerners have received their conception of the stoically brave and strictly honorable character of the Romans, a tradition which enters into the molding of the character of present-day Europeans and Americans. Children are taught in school the story of Caius Mucius Scaevola who, just to show the enemy king how little Roman youths feared torture or death, placed his hand into a lighted fire and allowed it to burn until the king ordered his attendants to tear him away from the flame. They learn also of Regulus, the Roman general taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, who was sent to Rome with the terms of peace. He was made to promise on his honor that he would return to Carthage if the peace were not accepted, because the Carthaginians thought that by this means they could insure that the war would be ended. But Regulus pleaded with the Roman senate to reject the peace terms; and, when this was accomplished, nothing could dissuade him from returning to Carthage, where a death of torture awaited him. Famous also is the saying of the old senator Cato with which he concluded every one of his speeches, no matter with what subject he was dealing: "Moreover, I am of the opinion that Carthage must be destroyed." He was not satisfied with the humiliating peace which had been forced on Rome's trade rival, he demanded complete annihilation. The Roman senate at last resolved on ruthless destruction of the flourishing city, and in 146 B. C. an army massacred the inhabitants, burned the city, plowed up the ground, and sowed salt in the furrows. The general Scipio was moved by this sad spectacle to recite from Homer's *Iliad* the lines of Hector in which he anticipates the destruction of Troy.

Every Westerner reads, too, of Julius Caesar, the Roman conqueror, whom Plutarch compares to Alexander the Great. Caesar's ambition is proverbial from his words, "I had rather be the first

in a village than the second in Rome." Equally well known are his triumphant reports of his victory, "I came, I saw, I conquered," and his self-confident words to the commander of the vessel that faced a terrible storm, "Go on, my friend, and fear nothing; you carry Caesar and his fortunes in your boat." He showed his daring resolution in crossing the river Rubicon with his army, thus risking the conflict with his rival Pompey, the outcome of which meant either that he must be killed or that he become the ruler of the Western world. He rode into the river at the head of his troops with the words, "The die is cast." Caesar aspired to the crown of Rome, but he did not gain it because of the Roman respect for their democratic institutions and the inveterate prejudice in the Republic against royalty. He received the title "imperator," or general, from which the English and French terms "emperor" and "empereur" are derived; while the German "kaiser" and the Russian "czar" come from his family name "Cæsar." His nephew, Cæsar Augustus, bore these titles as absolute, deified ruler, after the old tradition of the rule by the "Senate and the Roman People" ("S. P. A. R.," a legend that the standards of the Roman armies bore to the ends of the known world) had come to an end.

The elements in Greek life that appealed most strongly to the Romans were the later Greek philosophical systems of the Stoics and the Epicureans.* These philosophies of conduct became practically *religions* in Rome after the belief in the old gods had died out, and they inspired many a noble, self-sacrificing life. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Horatio alludes to the fearlessness of Roman Stoics in the face of death when he announces his decision to die with his friend. Suicide was accounted in Rome and in Greece, just as it is to-day in the Orient, often a courageous act, and it was only through the influence of Christianity that Westerners began to consider it a disgrace. Christianity is here on the side of a healthy instinct, but yet there is about the "Old Roman" attitude a stern nobility that is admired down to the present day.

* Cf. p. 324.

CHAPTER I

HOMER

Tradition says that Homer, a blind singer and poet of ancient Greece, is the author of the two great epics of the Greeks, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B. C., says that Homer lived about 850 B. C. Seven Greek cities claimed the honor of having been the birthplace of the great poet : * in fact, as is true with many other great men of the past, his life is lost in the haze of romantic tradition. The professional reciters of his poems were called rhapsodists or Homeridæ, sons of Homer. Public recitations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were for at least two hundred years an institution in Athens and other Greek cities. Often these recitations were held at popular festivals, such as the Panathenæa at Athens, where took place contests of rhapsodists reciting Homer's poems, with prize competitions of musicians, wrestlers, boxers, discus throwers, chariot racers, and other contestants. Again hundreds of rhapsodists, with their lyres or other stringed instruments, traveled all over Greece reciting the heroic epics at the banquet halls of princes, as well as in the market places, and in this way these two lays of ancient heroes became the common tradition and inspiration of all the Greek peoples.

To the Greeks Homer was *the* poet, and all great epics were, in the early times at least, attributed to him. Even to-day we call

* A modern writer has been inspired by this legend to write the bitter lines :

“Seven wealthy towns contend for Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begged his bread.”

him the father of epic poetry. Aristotle (384-322 B. C.), the greatest Greek critic and one of the keenest minds of all times, in his work *On the Art of Poetry* calls Homer the greatest of all the epic poets. He thinks him great because of his descriptive and dramatic powers, which are such that he makes his personages *live* before us.* He makes his heroes and their lives appear very real to us; even the most irrational and improbable events he renders acceptable, because he conceals the absurdities and lends a rare charm to all he tells by means of excellent descriptions and colorful pictures. Aristotle also praises highly the unity of Homer's plots: the poet does not describe the entire Trojan war, nor all the events that befell Odysseus in the course of his life, but he selects in the one case a sequence of events connected with the wrath of Achilles, and in the other a connected story of the hero's delayed return and his vengeance upon the intruders in his house. Irrelevant details are left out, because they form no part of the organic whole, which every good work of art must be. Aristotle further praises Homer for the manner in

* Homer has made Helen's beauty the admiration of poets from his day to the present time, and we find in all Western poetry hundreds of tributes to her beauty. In what does this beauty consist and how does Homer describe it? About all that he tells us of Helen is contained in the third book. She goes up on the wall to see the duel between Menelaus and Paris: "Forthwith she veiled her face in shining linen, and hastened from her chamber, letting fall a round tear." On the wall sit King Priam and the other elders of the city who to a man hate the war that is to destroy them and their city. Yet when the veiled woman, the cause of it all, walks past them, they say to each other in awed whispers: "Small blame is it that Trojans and well-greaved Achaians should for such a woman long time suffer hardships: marvelously like is she to the immortal goddesses to look upon. Yet even so, though she be so goodly, let her go upon their ships and not stay to vex us and our children after us." Not one word about her eyes, nose, or mouth, or her figure: Homer shows us a veiled woman weeping, that is all. But the tribute that even her enemies pay her in hushed voices, the fact that for ten years armies fight for her, that the noblest heroes die because of her—that stirs our imagination and makes Helen the immortal beauty. A medieval character, Doctor Faustus, has the right to demand from the devil any service whatsoever, and what he asks is to see Helen, whose face had "launched a thousand ships." Cf. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, in Volume III.