



# The War at Troy: What Homer Didn't Tell

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HOMER'S GREAT EPIC POEMS, THE ILIAD AND THE ODYSSEY, ARE WIDELY READ AND ENJOYED BOTH IN THE ORIGINAL GREEK AND IN TRANSLATION, BUT MANY READERS HAVE FELT, WITH REASON, THAT THE ILIAD IS INCOMPLETE. IT ENDS, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN ACHILLES IS STILL ALIVE AND TROY IS STILL UNCAPTURED; AND THE ODYSSEY BEGINS WITH THE DEPARTURE OF THE GREEK ARMY FROM TROY. THE OMISSION CAUSED NO PROBLEM IN HOMER'S TIME, FOR THE STORY WAS WELL KNOWN; BUT AS THE CENTURIES PASSED AND THE DETAILS FADED FROM MEN'S MINDS, SOMETHING WAS NEEDED TO FILL THE GAP. UNDOUBTEDLY, QUINTUS OF SMYRNA WROTE HIS CHRONICLE FOR THAT VERY PURPOSE. QUINTUS' EPIC, WRITTEN PROBABLY IN THE THIRD CENTURY A.D., IS THE ONLY EXTANT LITERARY WORK FROM ANTIQUITY THAT GIVES A CONNECTED ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS OF THE TROJAN WAR, WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE DEATH OF HECTOR AND THE DEPARTURE OF THE GREEKS. IT TELLS WHAT HAPPENED TO ACHILLES AND TO TROY, AND MANY OTHER THINGS BESIDES-AMONG THEM THE FATAL ENTERPRISES OF THE QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS AND THE KING OF EHTIOPIA, THE FUNERAL GAMES HELD IN ACHILLES' HONOR, THE VICTORY OF ODYSSEUS IN HIS CONTENT WITH AJAX FOR ACHILLES' SPLENDID ARMOR, THE DEATH OF PARIS, THE STRATEGY OF THE WOODEN HORSE, AND THE CAPTURE AND SACK OF TROY. THIS TRANSLATION WAS UNDERTAKEN, SAY MR. COMBALLECK, TO 'PROVIDE A VERSION OF QUINTUS IN ENGLISH PROSE SUITABLE FOR OUR OWN TIME,' FOR THE ONLY VERSION HITHERTO AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH WAS PUBLISHED FOR THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO AND IS WRITTEN IN A 'KIND OF BLANK VERSE, IN A STYLE NO OUT OF FASHION.' MR. COMBELLACK'S ACCURATE, READABLE PROSE TRANSLATION RETAINS THE SPIRIT OF THE ORIGINAL, AND WILL BE WELCOMED NOT ONLY BY SCHOLARS BUT BY ALL WHO HAVE AN INTELLECTUAL INTEREST IN THE HEROIC AGE AND THE EPICS THAT HAVE CELEBRATED IT.

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