

HOMER AND THE ILIAD

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JOHN STUART BLACKIE, F.R.S.E.

PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH



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NOTES TO THE ILIAD.

BOOK I.

VER. 1.—*Peleus' son.*

THROUGH the whole of Homer we have occasion to note the immense force of the paternal and ancestral element in determining the value of the individual. No notable man is sufficiently designated by his own name; the name of his father is always added. The "son of Peleus" is a designation of Achilles as common and constant as "divine" or "swift-footed." And not only the father, but the grandfather also is often named, and a long genealogy paraded, as in the case of Æneas (xx. 215). This might of ancestry is seen everywhere in the Old Testament, and in the whole political arrangements of the ancient Athenians and Romans. The romances of the middle ages recognise the same element in the strongest manner. In King Arthur, no knight ever performs deeds of remarkable prowess without his turning out to be a man of noble birth (so Sir Beaumains, i. 130). The same aristocratic element is visible in the proper names of all languages, a great proportion of which is manifestly patronymic. So with us: *Richardson, Wilson, Tomlinson, Anderson, Dickson, Paterson*, and many others. In Greek, Εἰρυβιάδης, Ἀλκιβιάδης, Διογένης, Θεαγένης, etc., are formed on the same principle. There is a true instinct of nature, and a strong foundation, both of physical reality and social virtue, in this matter, which the conceits of modern democratic individualism will never be able to annihilate.