

Arriving at the Skaian Gates again
And purposing to hurry to the plain
Of battle, Hector met Andromache,
Who brought in marriage ample property,
The daughter of the stout Eëtion
Who under wooded Plakos held the throne
And governed the Cilicians, whose land
Was Thebe. Hector won the lady's hand,
That bronze-clad warrior. She met him there
And with her came her serving-maid, whose care,
Reclining in her arms, was their wee child,
Well-loved of Hector, innocent and mild,
A shining star, whom Hector gave the name
Skamandrios, though others all the same
Called him Astyanax. Troy had no other
But Hector who could keep them from the smother
Of Ares. Now he smiled a quiet smile,
Gazing at him. Andromache the while
Stood by him, weeping. Clutching tight his hand,
She said, "Poor man, your strength will leave you and
You'll have no pity for your little one
Nor me, poor wretch, soon to be widowed – none!
The Achaians all at once will slaughter you;
A widow, there'll be nought for me to do
But leave this earth. No comfort may be found,
Just sorrow, with you underneath the ground.
My father, queenly mother – both are gone:
Godlike Achilles sent my father on
To Hades, sacking the well-populated
Cilician city, Thebes, the Lofty-Gated.
He killed my father but did not despoil
Him of his armour, proving to be loyal
In honouring him; his body he cremated
With his fine armour, too; then he created
A barrow over him, while in the ground
Around that barrow elm-trees may be found,
Planted by mountain-nymphs whom Lord of All,
Zeus, aegis-bearer, fathered. In our hall
I once had seven brothers, in one day
Doomed all to be to Hades swept away.
Godlike and swift Achilles slew them where
The shambling bulls and bright sheep were their care.
My mother, queen of wooded Plakos, he
Brought here with all our other property
But for considerable ransom let her go.
The huntress Artemis dispatched her, though,

In her own father's house. Hector, it's you
Who's now my father, mother, brother, too,
As well as lusty partner of my bed.
Have pity on me, sojourn here instead
Upon the battlements, don't make this tot
An orphan, don't oppress me with the lot
Of widowhood. Assemble now the host
By the wild-fig-tree, where the city's most
Assailable and where the walls may be
Ascended. Three times that vicinity
Was raided by the famed Idomeneus,
Each Ajax, too, the staunch son of Tydeus,
The sons of Atreus, leaders all. It seems
They know some wise interpreter of dreams
Or maybe it's the spur of their own mind."

"My musings, woman, are of the same kind
As yours," he answered – he of the horse-hair
Helmet, great Hector. "But what shame I'd bear
Before the Trojans and their sweeping-gowned
Consorts if I myself should skulk around
Far from the fight, a coward. That's not what
I plan to do for I was always taught
Fearlessness – to fight among the cream
Of all the Trojans, gaining great esteem
For Priam and myself. For well I know
That day will come when holy Troy will go
Beneath the flames, and Priam and the host
Of spearsman Priam. But the pain I most
Feel for the future is not for the men
Of Troy nor Hecuba, nor yet again
Lord Priam, nor my brothers who will fall
Down in the dust, so many, good men all,
Killed by our foe – no, it's for you: some day
A bronze-clad foe will carry you away,
Weeping, deprived of freedom; it may come
About in Argos you will ply the loom
Of another or fetch water, much constrained,
In Messeis or Hypereia, pained
Beyond all measure; somebody then may
See you in tears – 'That's Hector's wife', he'll say –
The leading fighter of the Trojans, men
Who mastered all their horses, that time when
The Trojan War was fought.' That's what he'll say.
New grief will come upon you on that day.
You'll not have me your day of slavery
To intercept. O may earth cover me

Before I hear your cry or see someone
Carry you off." He spoke and to his son
Famed Hector stretched his hand, but the boy wailed
And in his well-girt nurse's arms he quailed,
Alarmed to see his father, full of fear
Of his long horse-hair crest that bobbed so near.
His father and his queenly mother then
Laughed loud and that most glorious of men,
Hector, took off the helm and on the ground
Placed it and there it sparkled all around.
He kissed his dear son, dandling him, and there
To Zeus and all the gods he spoke a prayer:
"Zeus and all other gods, grant that this boy,
My own, prove the best warrior in Troy,
As I am, strong like me; may he hold sway
In strength in Troy, and may some other say
That he's far better than his father when
He has returned from battle; may he then
Bring back blood-spattered spoils, having destroyed
His foe, and make his mother overjoyed."
He gave the child back to his darling one,
Who to her fragrant breast their weeping son
Clasped, smiling. Overcome with tenderness,
Hector addressed her with a fond caress:
"My dear, don't grieve me overmuch; no man
Will send me down to Hell before my span
Of years is done: there's no man's destiny
That's ever been evaded after he
Has left his mother's womb, I tell you true –
The coward or the brave man. Now must you
Go home and look to women's tasks – the loom,
The distaff – and give orders to those whom
You oversee to ply themselves. It's we,
The men who live in Troy, especially
Myself, who'll run the war." That's what he said,
Famed man; his horse-hair helm back on his head
He placed. His dear wife turned for home once more,
Frequently turning round, weeping full sore.