

The Trojan War

The Apple of Discord

The Trojan War has its roots in the marriage between Peleus and Thetis, a sea-goddess. Peleus and Thetis had not invited Eris, the goddess of discord, to their marriage and the outraged goddess stormed into the wedding banquet and threw a golden apple onto the table. The apple belonged to, Eris said, whomever was the fairest. Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite each reached for the apple. Zeus proclaimed that Paris, prince of Troy and thought to be the most beautiful man alive, would act as the judge.

Hermes went to Paris, and Paris agreed to act as the judge. Hera promised him power, Athena promised him wealth, and Aphrodite promised the most beautiful woman in the world.

Paris chose Aphrodite, and she promised him that Helen, wife of Menelaus, would be his wife. Paris then prepared to set off for Sparta to capture Helen. Twin prophets Cassandra and Helenus tried to persuade him against such action, as did his mother, Hecuba. But Paris would not listen and he set off for Sparta.

In Sparta, Menelaus, husband of Helen, treated Paris as a royal guest. However, when Menelaus left Sparta to go to a funeral, Paris abducted Helen (who perhaps went willingly) and also carried off much of Menelaus' wealth. In Troy, Helen and Paris were married. This occurred around 1200 B.C.

Greek Armament

Menelaus, however, was outraged to find that Paris had taken Helen. Menelaus then called upon all of Helen's old suitors, as all of the suitors had made an oath long ago that they would all back Helen's husband to defend her honor.

Many of the suitors did not wish to go to war. Odysseus pretended to be insane but this trick was uncovered by Palamedes. Achilles, though not one of the previous suitors, was sought after because the seer Calchas had stated that Troy would not be taken unless Achilles would fight.

One of the most interesting stories is of Cinyras, king of Paphos, in Cyprus, who had been a suitor of Helen. He did not wish to go to war, but promised Agamemnon fifty ships for the Greek fleet. True to his word, Cinyras did send fifty ships. The first ship was commanded by his son. The other forty-nine, however, were toy clay ships, with tiny clay sailors. They dissembled

soon after being placed in the ocean (Tripp, 584-584).

The Greek fleet assembled, under Agamemnon's inspection, in Aulis. However, Agamemnon either killed one of Diana's sacred stags or made a careless boast. Either way, Diana was outraged and she calmed the seas so that the fleet could not take off. The seer Calchas proclaimed that Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, must be sacrificed before the fleet could set sail. This was done, and the Greek ships set off in search of Troy.

Finding Troy

Finding Troy proved difficult, however, and the Greek fleet at first landed in Mysia. According to Herodotus, the Greeks were under the impression that Helen had been taken by the Teuthranians (Teucrians), and though the Teuthranians denied such allegations, the Greeks laid siege to the city (Herodotus, Bk. II.118). The Greeks ultimately prevailed, but suffered heavy casualties at the hands of Telephus, king of the Teuthranians, and, at the end, were still without Helen. Telephus, in the course of the war, was wounded by Achilles. With no where else to turn, the Greeks returned home. The Trojan War might not have happened had not Telephus gone to Greece in the hopes of having his wound cured. Telephus had been told by an oracle that only the person who wounded him (in this case, Achilles) could cure him. Achilles assented and Telephus told the Greeks how to get to Troy.

Embassy to Priam

Odysseus, known for his eloquence, and Menelaus were sent as ambassadors to Priam. They demanded Helen and the stolen treasure be returned. Priam refused, and Odysseus and Menelaus returned to the Greek ships with the announcement that war was inevitable.

The War

The first nine years of the war consisted of both war in Troy and war against the neighboring regions. The Greeks realized that Troy was being supplied by its neighboring kingdoms, so Greeks were sent to defeat these areas.

As well as destroying Trojan economy, these battles let the Greeks gather a large amount of resources and other spoils of war, including women (e.g., Briseis, Tecmessa and Chryseis). The Greeks won many important battles and the Trojan hero Hector fell, as did the Trojan ally Penthesilea. However, the Greeks could not break down the walls of Troy. Patroclus was killed and, soon after, Achilles was felled by Paris.

Helenus, son of Priam, had been captured by Odysseus. A prophet, Helenus told the Greeks that Troy would not fall unless:

- a) Pyrrhus, Achilles' son, fought in the war,
- b) The bow and arrows of Hercules were used by the Greeks against the Trojans,
- c) The remains of Pelops, the famous Eleian hero, were brought to Troy, and
- d) The Palladium, a statue of Athena, was stolen from Troy (Tripp, 587). Phoenix persuaded Pyrrhus to join the war. Philoctetes had the bow and arrows of Hercules, but had been left by the Greek fleet in Lemnos because he had been bitten by a snake and his wound had a horrendous smell. Philoctetes was bitter, but was finally persuaded to join the Greeks. The remains of Pelops were gotten, and Odysseus infiltrated Trojan defenses and stole the Palladium.

The Trojan Horse

Still seeking to gain entrance into Troy, clever Odysseus (some say with the aid of Athena) ordered a large wooden horse to be built. Its insides were to be hollow so that soldiers could hide within it. Once the statue had been built by the artist Epeius, a number of the Greek warriors, along with Odysseus, climbed inside. The rest of the Greek fleet sailed away, so as to deceive the Trojans.

One man, Sinon, was left behind. When the Trojans came to marvel at the huge creation, Sinon pretended to be angry with the Greeks, stating that they had deserted him. He assured the Trojans that the wooden horse was safe and would bring luck to the Trojans. Only two people, Laocoon and Cassandra, spoke out against the horse, but they were ignored.

The Trojans celebrated what they thought was their victory, and dragged the wooden horse into Troy. That night, after most of Troy was asleep or in a drunken stupor, Sinon let the Greek warriors out from the horse, and they slaughtered the Trojans. Priam was killed as he huddled by Zeus' altar and Cassandra was pulled from the statue of Athena and raped.

After the War

After the war, Polyxena, daughter of Priam, was sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles and Astyanax, son of Hector, was also sacrificed, signifying the end of the war. Aeneas, a Trojan prince, managed to escape the destruction of Troy, and Virgil's *Aeneid* tells of his flight from Troy. Many sources say that Aeneas was the only Trojan prince to survive, but this statement contradicts the common story that Andromache was married to Helenus, twin of Cassandra, after the war. Menelaus, who had been determined to kill his faithless wife, was soon taken by Helen's beauty and seductiveness that he

allowed her to live.

The surviving Trojan women were divided among the Greek men along with the other plunder. The Greeks then set sail for home, which, for some, proved as difficult and took as much time as the Trojan War itself (e.g., Odysseus and Menelaus).

At the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis all the gods had been invited with the exception of Eris, or Discord. Enraged at her exclusion, the goddess threw a golden apple among the guests, with the inscription, "For the fairest." Thereupon Juno, Venus, and Minerva each claimed the apple. Not willing to decide so delicate a matter, Jupiter sent the goddesses to Mount Ida where Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy, was tending his flocks. Till that moment the shepherd-prince had been happy. He was young and beautiful and beloved--"White-breasted like a star," says the nymph whom he had wedded.

Juno promised him power and riches, Minerva glory and renown in war, Venus the fairest of women for his wife, -- each attempting to bias the judge in her own favor. Paris, forgetting the fair nymph to whom he owed fealty, decided in favor of Venus, thus making the two other goddesses his enemies. Under the protection of the goddess of love, he soon afterwards sailed to Greece. Here he was hospitably received by Menelaus, whose wife, Helen, as fairest of her sex, was unfortunately the prize destined for Paris. This fair queen had in time past been sought by numerous suitors; but before her decision was made known, they all, at the suggestion of Ulysses, son of Laertes, king of Ithaca, had taken an oath that they would sustain her choice and avenge her cause if necessary. She was living happily with Menelaus when Paris, becoming their guest, made love to her, and then, aided by Venus, persuaded her to elope with him, and carried her to Troy. From this cause arose the famous Trojan War, -- the theme of the greatest poems of antiquity, those of Homer and Virgil.

Menelaus called upon the chieftains of Greece to aid him in recovering his wife. They came forward with a few exceptions. Ulysses, for instance, who had married a cousin of Helen's, Penelope, daughter of Icarius, was happy in his wife and child, and loth to embark in the troublesome affair. Palamedes was sent to urge him. But when Palamedes arrived at Ithaca, Ulysses pretended madness. He yoked an ass and an ox together to the plow and began to sow salt. The ambassador, to try him, placed the infant Telemachus before the plow, whereupon the father, turning the plow aside, showed that his insanity was a mere pretense. Being himself gained for the undertaking, Ulysses lent his aid to bring in other reluctant chiefs, especially Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis. Thetis being herself one of the immortals, and knowing that her son was fated to perish before Troy if he went on the expedition,

endeavored to prevent his going. She, accordingly, sent him to the court of King Lycomedes of the island of Scyros, and induced him to conceal himself in the garb of a maiden among the daughters of the king.

Hearing that the young Achilles was there, Ulysses went disguised as a merchant to the palace and offered for sale female ornaments, among which had been placed some arms. Forgetting the part he had assumed, Achilles handled the weapons and thereby betrayed himself to Ulysses, who found no great difficulty in persuading him to disregard his mother's counsels and join his countrymen in the war.

Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and brother of Menelaus, was chosen commander in chief. Preeminent among the warriors was the swift-footed Achilles. After him ranked his cousin Ajax, the son of Telamon, gigantic in size and of great courage, but dull of intellect; Diomede, the son of Tydeus, second only to Achilles in all the qualities of a hero; Ulysses, famous for sagacity; and Nestor, the oldest of the Grecian chiefs, to whom they all looked up for counsel.

But Troy was no feeble enemy. Priam the king, son of Laomedon and brother of Tithonus and Hesione, was now old; but he had been a wise prince and had strengthened his state by good government at home and powerful alliances with his neighbors. By his wife Hecuba he had a numerous family; but the principal stay and support of his throne was his son Hector, one of the noblest figures of antiquity. The principal leaders on the side of the Trojans, beside Hector, were his relative, Aeneas, the son of Venus and Anchises, Deiphobus, Glaucus, and Sarpedon.