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The Language

p. 154 From such different sources is the Greek of Homer composed. The intermingling of the different elements is very great, and it is impossible to separate different sections by tests of dialect or artificial forms.

The Historical Background

p. 158 The conclusion follows that we must be careful before we believe that Homer's heroes all belonged to the same generation. They may have, but it may equally be doubted.

p. 158 In the absence of independent records, we cannot say whether the rape of Helen is history, or folk-tale like the rape of Europa by Zeus, or whether the quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon is not another version of an old story like the wrath of Meleager or the quarrel of Roland and Ganelon. Nor can we say if or when Agamemnon existed, until his name appears in some ancient and independent record.

p. 159 There was a real Troy: there can be no doubt of it. . . The excavations of Schliemann and Dorpfeld have put it beyond question that here stood Troy. And the Sixth City agrees in some respects with Homer's account of Troy and the Trojan War. It existed in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C., and the most popular date for the Trojan War is that given by Eratosthenes as 1194 to 1184. . . .

a Troy

The landscape too agrees with Homer's account. . .

p. 160 All this is very circumstantial and would seem to point to the poet knowing his Troy; or at least knowing some correct account of it. But there are other passages which show that the poet either did not know the landscape, or else he exerted his poetical prerogative and altered it. He describes features which no longer exist, such as the hot and cold springs under the walls . . .

p. 161 There was a real Troy, and the poet knew something about it, either from personal observation or hearsay or tradition. In some points, too, he was wrong, but he was a poet and he had the right to invent. There was indubitably a real Troy, and at the right date, but is this sufficient warrant for a Trojan War, and does it mean that this Troy was sacked by a great Achaean Confederacy?

The Sixth City certainly existed and came to an end in the Late Mycenaean period. The question is whether it was the Achaeans who destroyed it. The answer to this question must depend on very general considerations. We have Homer's word that the Achaeans burned Troy, and we have the evidence of archaeology that the Sixth City was effectually obliterated. Homer, being a Greek, is perhaps more accurate on historical facts than the writers of the early German or French epics, and perhaps he is more to be trusted. But that is only a possibility. What if, like the author of the Nibelungenlied, he has confused the dates and made into one story two very distant events? Thus the Second City was actually burned about 2000; it was rich in gold, as the 'treasure of Piram' shows. What if Homer combined the story of this with that of a quite different power of some nine hundred years later? The answer to such doubts cannot at present be final, but if we survey what is known of the history of the time we shall find that an important Achaean power existed, and that it may well have sacked Troy.