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"The work of Homer is throughout inspired by a comprehensive philosophy of human nature and of the eternal laws of the world-process, a philosophy which has seen and judged every essential factor in man's life. He contemplates every event and every character in the light of his universal knowledge of the underlying and eternal truth. The love of Greek poetry for gnomic utterances, its tendency to measure each event by a general standard and to reason from the general to the particular, and its frequent use of traditional examples as universal types and ideals--all these tendencies originate with Homer. The finest expression of the epic view of human life is the pictures on the shield of Achilles, which are fully described in Book XVIII (478 ff.) of the Iliad.

"On the shield Hephaestus wrought the earth, and heaven, and the sea, and the tireless sun, and the moon at its full, and all the signs which crown the sky. And he made two cities of men, beautiful to see. In one, there were marriage-rites and feasting: a bridal procession was marching through the city by the light of torches, while many a marriage-song rose up, and dancing-boys whirled among them to the music of flute and lyre; and the women stood at their doors admiring it all. The citizens were assembled in the market-place, where a quarrel was afoot between two men, about the blood-price to be paid for a man who had been killed. The elders were sitting upon polished stone seats in a sacred circle, each holding a herald's staff of office: and they stood up in turn to give their verdicts.

"The other city was besieged by two armies, gleaming in armour. They were in two minds whether to destroy the city or to plunder it. But the citizens had not yet submitted, but marched out to an ambush, leaving their wives and their children, along with the old men, to guard the city wall. And when they came to the place for the ambushade--it was by a river, at the watering-place of cattle--they took their posts,