

the heights of Olympos armed with his bow and quiver, and as he strode in his anger the arrows rattled on his shoulders, and his aspect was dark as night. Seating himself far from the ships, he sent forth an arrow into their midst with a terrible clanging of his silver bow, and first he took aim at the mules and swift dogs, and then, loosing sharp arrows at the men themselves, struck them down and, the pyres of the dead burned continually." This destruction continued for nine days, whereupon the Council was called together to consider what might be done. Chryses' daughter was sent back, and the pestilence abated.

The nature of this plague can be a subject for conjecture only. The *Iliad* is a poem, not a history, far less a medical history of the Trojan War, and was written at a date long subsequent to the events recorded. Possibly the plague, which affected man and beast, was dysentery, for this disease has been endemic in the Mediterranean basin for thousands of years. It was described by Hippocrates in the fifth century B.C. It existed in Malta when the Apostle Paul was wrecked there in A.D. 62. We read that he was lodged at the house of Publius, the chief man of the island, and healed his father, who "lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux." Last year it destroyed mules and many thousands of our men in Gallipoli, just across the Hellespont from Troy.

Whatever the nature of the pestilence, the description suggests that the ancient Greeks regarded disease as due to the attack of some god or demon. This is borne out by the few references to illness and death that we find in other parts of the Homeric poems. When Odysseus was wrecked from his raft on his homeward way he was thrown into the sea, and, supported by the veil of Ino the sea-goddess, swam for two days and two nights. On the third day he caught sight of the land and woods of Scheria from the top of a wave, and was, so we read, "as glad as are the sons of a man who had been attacked by some demon and afflicted with much pain and wasting, and whom the gods at length had delivered from his illness." And in the happy island home of the childhood of Eumaios "no hateful disease affected mortals, but when the races of men grew old silver-bowed Apollo with Artemis killed them with his painless arrows."

The clear-sighted Homer saw, too, that men might bring evil and death prematurely on themselves, and he puts this remarkable saying in the mouth of Zeus: "Mortals blame the gods and say evils come from us, but they themselves suffer through their own folly beyond that which fate allotted to them" (*huper moron*).

There are two instances of aphasia related. The phrase employed is *amphasia epeon*, a speechlessness of words. Thus Antilochos, on hearing of the death of Patroelos, and Penelope, on learning of the plans of