

or whether he only fed the appetite of his hearers with what he found agreeable to them, is little material to the question I have particularly in view the great multitude of genealogies; their extraordinary consistency with each other, and with the other historical indications of the poems; their extension to a very large number, especially in the catalogue of secondary persons; the Catalogue itself, that most remarkable production, as a whole; the accuracy with which the names of the various races are handled and bestowed throughout the poems; the particularity of the demand regularly made upon strangers for information concerning themselves, and especially the constant inquiry who were their parents, what was, for each person, as he appears, his relation to the past?—and again the numerous narratives of prior occurrences with which the poems, and particularly the more historic ‘*Iliad*,’ are so thickly studded. Now this appetite for commemoration on the part of those for whom Homer wrote, does not fix itself upon what is imaginary. It tolerates fiction by way of accessory and embellishment: but, in the main, it relies upon what it takes to be solid food. But there is, I think, another argument to the same effect, of the highest degree of strength which the nature of the case admits. It is to be found in the fact that Homer has not scrupled to make some sacrifices of poetical beauty and propriety to these historic aims. For, if any judicious critic were called upon to specify the chief poetical element of the ‘*Iliad*,’ would he not reply by pointing to the multitude of stories from the past, having no connection or, at best a very feeble one, with the war, which are found in it?”—*Essay on Homer*, by Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone, M.P.