

those beings of the forest and the river, of the hills and the sea.

It was in this region that legend placed the last deeds of Heracles, and his death, or rather his passage from earth to Olympus. After taking Oechalia in Euboea, he was sacrificing on Cape Ceneae when the fatal robe did its work. He was carried to his home at Trachis; and then he commanded that he should be borne to the top of Mount Oeta, sacred to Zeus, and burnt alive. He was obeyed; as the flames arose on the mountain, they were answered from heaven by the blaze of lightning and the roll of thunder; and by that sign his companions knew that the spirit of the great warrior had been welcomed to the home of his immortal father. Somewhere in the wilds of those lonely summits tradition showed the sacred spot known as 'the Pyre'; and once, at least, in later days a Roman Consul, turning aside from a victorious progress, went up to visit the solemn place where the most Roman of Greek heroes had received the supreme reward of fortitude¹.

§ 2. Heracles had constrained his son Hyllus to aid in preparing the funeral-pile, but could not prevail upon him to kindle it. That office was performed, at his urgent prayer, by the youthful Philoctetes, son of Poeas, king of Malis². In token of gratitude, Heracles bequeathed to Philoctetes the bow and arrows which he himself had received from Apollo.

The legend
in epic
poetry.

In the myths relating to the Trojan war a most important part belonged to the man who had thus inherited the invincible weapons. Homer, indeed, does not say much about him; but the *Iliad* contains only an episode in the tenth year of the war: the part played by Philoctetes came before and after that moment. The allusion in the Second Book of the *Iliad* is,

¹ Manius Acilius Glabrio, after taking Heracleia near Trachis, in the war with Antiochus (191 B.C.). Livy 36. 30: ipse Oetam ascendit, Herculi que sacrificium fecit in eo loco quem Pyram, quod ibi mortale corpus eius dei sit crematum, appellant. Cp. Silius Italicus 6. 452: Vixdum clara dies summa lustrabat in Oeta | Herculei monumenta rogi.—The name Pyra seems to have been usually associated with a height about eight miles W.N.W. of Trachis.

² With regard to the other version, according to which Poeas was the kindler, see on v. 802.