

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. AMONG the plays of Sophocles there were many, as titles and fragments show, of which the scene was laid at Troy, and of which the action was founded on the epics of the Trojan cycle. This series ranged over the whole course of the ten years' war, from its earliest incidents, as told in the *Cypria*, down to the fall of the city, as told in the *Iliupersis*. The *Philoctetes* is connected with this series, but the *Ajax* is the only remaining piece which actually belongs to it. The story is taken from sources later than the *Iliad*, but the conception of the hero, though modified by that later legend, is fundamentally Homeric.

In the *Iliad*, Ajax, the son of Telamon, comes to Troy from Salamis with twelve ships, and is stationed on the extreme left of the army, at the east end of the camp,—as Achilles holds the corresponding post of honour on the right¹. He is an independent chief,—subject only to the allegiance which all the chiefs owe to the Captain General, Agamemnon. There is no reference to his descent from Aeacus; nor is there anything that connects him especially with Athens². He has

The Ajax
of the
Iliad.

¹ *Il.* 11. 7—9.

² In the Catalogue only two verses are given to Ajax, *Il.* 2. 557 f. :—

Αἴας δ' ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος ἄγειν δυοκαίδεκα νῆας·

[στήσε δ' ἄγων ἔν' Ἀθηναίων ἴσταντο φάλαγγες.]

The second verse is absent from our best MSS., as it was from some of the editions known to Quintilian (5. 11 § 40). Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1. 15 § 13) alludes to it as having been quoted by the Athenians in support of their claim to Salamis, and the interpolation must be at least as old as the date of their controversy with the Megarians (circ. 600—595 B.C.), whether the author was Solon or not. The Alexandrian critics rejected the verse, pointing out that Ajax, on the extreme left, had the Thessalians for