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# In The Tomb of Andromache, Homer's Tragic Heroine

## Tragic Heroine

*Very Ancient Rock Tomb Discovered in Epirus by French Archaeologists Believed to Be That of the Unhappiest Woman of Antiquity.*

was none other than Andromache, the widow of Hector. Upon the fall of Troy, Andromache had become the wife of one of the victorious Grecian chiefs, to whom she bore a son. Her Grecian husband, ruler of Epirus, dying, she became regent of the country as guardian of her son, and had married a fellow-captive, Helenus, of the royal race of Troy.

Helenus and Andromache received Aeneas and his companions with much hospitality and dismissed them loaded with gifts. And here, powerful and contented after all the tragic misfortunes of her young womanhood, Andromache disappears from the pages of Virgil. No later post-historian carried her career beyond the episode of her queenly state in Epirus.

The identification of Andromache's tomb beyond possibility of dispute will have peculiar interest for archaeologists and historians. It will extend the frontier of accredited history further into the regions of myth than has been done by any other discovery of its kind. There will be fewer sceptic scholars to declare that not only Troy and the Trojans but Homer himself belonged to the complicated structure of Grecian mythology, in which the lesser gods

times and worthy queens, and she had borne a sturdy son to follow in Hector's footsteps. The long and hopeless defense of Troy centred about Hector and Andromache. Hector fought the Grecian chiefs like a hero, while Andromache watched the conflict from the city



The Devoted Andromache with Her Little Son, Astyanax.



Ancient Greek Vase Painting Showing Andromache (Third Figure from the Left) and Her Husband, Hector (with Helmet).



Andromache's Child Cruelly Torn from Her by the Conquering Greeks Under the Walls of Troy. Painting by G. Rochegrosse.

**M**ERELY to mention the discovery of the tomb of Homer's most sublime heroine would be enough to excite the imagination of every college undergraduate and high school boy. That Andromache, wife of Hector, the great Trojan hero, was buried somewhere on the shore of Epirus, where she founded a new kingdom after the fall of Troy, has been the natural supposition of all students of the epics of Homer and Virgil. But until very recently, no clue to the precise location of the tomb of Andromache had revealed itself.

Thus far the reports from a party of French archaeologists who claim to have excavated and identified the final resting place of King Priam's courageous and patriotic daughter-in-law are not definite in detail, except that the general character of the tomb, together with inscriptions and sculptured representations of scenes described in the Iliad, leaves no doubt that it once contained the body of Andromache.

Virtually the latest mention of Andromache in the ancient epics is contained in accounts of the wandering adventures of Aeneas after Troy had fallen and the remnant of its conquered people had fled in different directions. Aeneas, next to Hector most renowned of Trojan warrior heroes, made a rendezvous with numerous fugitives of both sexes and spent several months preparing to embark to try their fortunes in some new country. First they landed in Thrace, only to find that the Oracle was not favorable to their making that country their home. The island of Delos was abandoned for the same reason.



Very Ancient Bas-Relief from a Greek Tomb, Showing Andromache, the Ideal Wife of Homer's "Iliad."

Upon landing they found, to their astonishment, that certain other Trojan exiles, carried thither as prisoners long ago, had become rulers of the country. Its use, in fact, "Seek your ancient mother; there the race of Aeneas shall dwell and reduce all other nations to their sway."

Recalling various traditions about the origin of his race, Aeneas sailed to Crete and then to Hesperia, now called Italy. The voyagers landed on the island of the Harpies—those fabulous disgusting birds with long claws and the faces of maidens "pale with hunger." Driven away by those dread creatures, they at length found themselves coasting along the shore of Epirus.

Upon landing they found, to their astonishment, that certain other Trojan exiles, carried thither as prisoners long ago, had become rulers of the country. Its use, in fact, mated with mortal maidens, producing such prodigies of strength and valor as was Achilles, for example, the son of Peleus and Thetis, whose body was invulnerable to wounds excepting his heel.