

THE ODYSSEY

HOMER

The Odyssey

Homer

Translated by William Cullen Bryant

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Preface

The kind reception which my translation of the Iliad has met with from my countrymen has encouraged me to attempt a translation of the Odyssey in the same form of verse. I have found this a not unpleasing employment for a period of life which admonishes me that I cannot many times more appear before the public in this or any other manner. The task of translating verse is not, it is true, merely mechanical, since it requires that the translator should catch from his author somewhat of the glow with which he wrote, just as a good reader is himself moved by the words which he delivers, and communicates the emotion to his hearers; yet is the translator spared the labor of invention—the task of producing the ideas which it is his business to express, as well as that of bringing them into their proper relations with each other. A great part of the fatigue which attends original composition, long pursued, is therefore avoided, and this gentler exercise of the intellectual faculties agrees better with that stage of life when the brain begins to be haunted by a presentiment that the time of its final repose is not far off.

Some of the observations which I have made, in my Preface to the Iliad, on that work and the translation which I have made of it, apply also to the Odyssey and to the version which I now lay before the reader. The

differences between the two poems have been so well pointed out by critics, that I shall have occasion to speak of but two or three of them. In executing my task, I have certainly missed in the Odyssey the fire and vehemence of which I was so often sensible in the Iliad, and the effect of which naturally was to kindle the mind of the translator. I hope that the version which I have made will not on that account be found lacking in a sufficient degree of spirit and appearance of freedom to make it readable. Another peculiarity of the Iliad, of a less agreeable nature, consists in the frequent recurrence of hand-to-hand combats, in which the more eminent warriors despatch, by the most summary butchery, and with a fierce delight in their own prowess, their weaker adversaries. These incidents so often occur in the narrative, being thrown together in clusters, and described with an unsparing minuteness, that I have known persons, soon sated with these horrors, to pass over the pages in which they are described, and take up the narrative further on. There is nothing of this kind in the Odyssey, at least until near the close, where Ulysses takes a bloody vengeance on the suitors who have plundered his estate, and conspired to take the life of his son, and in that part of the poem the horror which so enormous a slaughter would naturally awaken is mitigated by the recollection of their guilt. The gods of the Odyssey are not so often moved by brutal impulses as those of the Iliad, nor do they seem to dwell in a sphere so far removed from the recognition of those

rules of right and wrong which are respected in human society. In the composition of the two poems, one of the most remarkable differences is the abundance of similes in the Iliad, and their comparatively rare appearance in the Odyssey. In the Iliad the desire of illustrating his subject by a similitude sometimes seizes the poet in the midst of one of the most interesting parts of his narrative, and immediately there follows a striking picture of some incident bearing a certain resemblance to the one which he is relating. Sometimes, after one simile is minutely given, a second suggests itself, and is given with equal minuteness, and there is one instance at least of a third. It is curious to mark what a fascination the picturesque resemblance of objects and incidents has for the poet, and how one set of these images draws after it another, passing in magnificent procession across the mirror of his imagination. In the Odyssey are comparatively few examples of this mode of illustration; the poet is too much occupied with his narrative to think of them. How far this point of difference between the two poems tends to support the view of those who maintain that they could not have proceeded from the same author, is a question on which it is not my purpose to enter.

In the Preface to my version of the Iliad, I gave very briefly my reason for preserving the names derived from the Latin, by which the deities of the Grecian mythology have hitherto been known to English readers—that is to say, Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, Pluto,

Mars, Venus, and the rest, instead of Zeus, Herè, and the other names which are properly Greek. As the propriety of doing this is questioned by some persons of exact scholarship, I will state the argument a little more at large. The names I have employed have been given to the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece from the very beginnings of our language. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest, down to Proctor and Keats—a list whose chronology extends through six hundred years—have followed this usage, and we may even trace it back for centuries before either of them wrote. Our prose writers have done the same thing; the names of Latin derivation have been adopted by the earliest and latest translators of the New Testament. To each of the deities known by these names there is annexed in the mind of the English reader—and it is for the English reader that I have made this translation—a peculiar set of attributes. Speak of Juno and Diana, and the mere English reader understands you at once; but when he reads the names of Herè and Artemis, he looks into his classical dictionary. The names of Latin origin are naturalized; the others are aliens and strangers. The conjunction and itself, which has been handed down to us unchanged from our Saxon ancestors, holds not its place in our language by a firmer and more incontestable title than the names which we have hitherto given to the deities of ancient Greece. We derive this usage from the Latin authors—from Virgil, and Horace, and Ovid, and the prose writers of ancient

Rome. Art as well as poetry knows these deities by the same names. We talk of the Venus de Medicis, the Venus of Milo, the Jupiter of Phidias, and never think of calling a statue of Mars a statue of Ares.

For my part, I am satisfied with the English language as it has been handed down to us. If the lines of my translation had bristled with the names of Zeus and Herè, and Poseidon and Ares, and Artemis and Demeter, I should feel that I had departed from the immemorial usage of the English tongue, that I had introduced obscurity where the meaning should have been plain, and that I had given just cause of complaint to the readers for whom I wrote.

W. C. Bryant

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Book I

Visit of Pallas to Telemachus

A council of the gods—Deliberations concerning Ulysses—Mercury despatched to Calypso, to bid her send Ulysses to Ithaca—Visit of Pallas, in the shape of Mentor, to Telemachus, advising him to repair to Pylos and Sparta in quest of his father, Ulysses—Revels of the suitors of Penelope—Phemius, the minstrel, and his song of the return of the Grecians—The suitors rebuked by Telemachus.

Tell me, O Muse, of that sagacious man

Who, having overthrown the sacred town

Of Ilium, wandered far and visited

The capitals of many nations, learned

The customs of their dwellers, and endured

Great suffering on the deep: his life was oft

In peril, as he labored to bring back

His comrades to their homes. He saved them not,

Though earnestly he strove; they perished all,

Through their own folly; for they banqueted,

Madmen! upon the oxen of the Sun—

The all-o’erlooking Sun, who cut them off

From their return. O goddess, virgin-child

Of Jove, relate some part of this to me.
Now all the rest, as many as escaped

The cruel doom of death, were at their homes

Safe from the perils of the war and sea,

While him alone, who pined to see his home

And wife again, Calypso, queenly nymph,

Great among goddesses, detained within

Her spacious grot, in hope that he might yet

Become her husband. Even when the years

Brought round the time in which the gods decreed

That he should reach again his dwelling-place

In Ithaca, though he was with his friends,

His toils were not yet ended. Of the gods

All pitied him save Neptune, who pursued

With wrath implacable the godlike chief,

Ulysses, even to his native land.
Among the Ethiopians was the god

Far off—the Ethiopians most remote

Of men. Two tribes there are; one dwells beneath

The rising, one beneath the setting sun.

He went to grace a hecatomb of beeves

And lambs, and sat delighted at the feast;

While in the palace of Olympian Jove

The other gods assembled, and to them

The father of immortals and of men

Was speaking. To his mind arose the thought

Of that Aegisthus whom the famous son

Of Agamemnon, Prince Orestes, slew.

Of him he thought and thus bespake the gods:—
“How strange it is that mortals blame the gods

And say that we inflict the ills they bear,

When they, by their own folly and against

The will of fate, bring sorrow on themselves!

As late Aegisthus, unconstrained by fate,

Married the queen of Atreus’ son and slew

The husband just returned from war. Yet well

He knew the bitter penalty, for we

Warned him. We sent the herald Argicide,

Bidding him neither slay the chief nor woo

His queen, for that Orestes, when he came

To manhood and might claim his heritage,

Would take due vengeance for Atrides slain.

So Hermes said; his prudent words moved not

The purpose of Aegisthus who now pays

The forfeit of his many crimes at once.”
Pallas, the blue-eyed goddess, thus replied:—

“O father, son of Saturn, king of kings!

Well he deserved his death. So perish all

Guilty of deeds like his! But I am grieved

For sage Ulysses, that most wretched man,

So long detained, repining, and afar

From those he loves, upon a distant isle

Girt by the waters of the central deep—

A forest isle, where dwells a deity

The daughter of wise Atlas, him who knows

The ocean to its utmost depths, and holds

Upright the lofty columns which divide

The earth from heaven. The daughter there detains

The unhappy chieftain, and with flattering words

Would win him to forget his Ithaca.

Meanwhile, impatient to behold the smokes

That rise from hearths in his own land, he pines

And willingly would die. Is not thy heart,

Olympics, touched by this? And did he not

Pay grateful sacrifice to thee beside

The Argive fleet in the broad realm of Troy?

Why then, O Jove, art thou so wroth with him?”
Then answered cloud-compelling Jove: “My child,

What words have passed thy lips? Can I forget

Godlike Ulysses, who in gifts of mind

Excels all other men, and who has brought

Large offerings to the gods that dwell in heaven?

Yet he who holds the earth in his embrace,

Neptune, pursues him with perpetual hate

Because of Polypheme, the Cyclops, strong

Beyond all others of his giant race,

Whose eye Ulysses had put out. The nymph

Thoosa brought him forth—a daughter she

Of Phorcys, ruling in the barren deep—

And in the covert of o’erhanging rocks

She met with Neptune. For this cause the god

Who shakes the shores, although he slay him not,

Sends forth Ulysses wandering far away

From his own country. Let us now consult

Together and provide for his return,

And Neptune will lay by his wrath, for vain

It were for one like him to strive alone

Against the might of all the immortal gods.”
And then the blue-eyed Pallas spake again:—

“O father! son of Saturn, king of kings!

If such the pleasure of the blessed gods

That now the wise Ulysses shall return

To his own land, let us at once despatch

Hermes, the Argicide, our messenger,

Down to Ogygia, to the bright-haired nymph,

And make our steadfast purpose known to bring

The sufferer Ulysses to his home,

And I will haste to Ithaca, and move

His son, that with a resolute heart he call

The long-haired Greeks together and forbid

The excesses of the suitor train, who slay

His flocks and slow-paced beeves with crooked horns.

To Sparta I will send him and the sands

Of Pylos, to inquire for the return

Of his dear father. So a glorious fame

Shall gather round him in the eyes of men.”
She spake, and fastened underneath her feet

The fair, ambrosial golden sandals worn

To bear her over ocean like the wind,

And o’er the boundless land. In hand she took,

Well tipped with trenchant brass, the mighty spear,

Heavy and huge and strong, with which she bears

Whole phalanxes of heroes to the earth,

When she, the daughter of a mighty sire,

Is angered. From the Olympian heights she plunged,

And stood among the men of Ithaca,

Just at the porch and threshold of their chief,

Ulysses. In her hand she bore the spear,

And seemed the stranger Mentes, he who led

The Taphians. There before the gate she found

The haughty suitors. Some beguiled the time

With draughts, while sitting on the hides of beeves

Which they had slaughtered. Heralds were with them,

And busy menials: some who in the bowls

Tempered the wine with water, some who cleansed

The tables with light sponges, and who set

The banquet forth and carved the meats for all.
Telemachus the godlike was the first

To see the goddess as he sat among

The crowd of suitors, sad at heart, and thought

Of his illustrious father, who might come

And scatter those who filled his palace halls,

And win new honor, and regain the rule

Over his own. As thus he sat and mused

Among the suitors, he beheld where stood

Pallas, and forth he sprang; he could not bear

To keep a stranger waiting at his door.

He came, and taking her right hand received

The brazen spear, and spake these winged words:—
"Hail, stranger! thou art truly welcome here,

First come and share our feast and be refreshed,

Then say what thou requirest at our hands."
He spake and led the way, and in his steps

Pallas Athenè followed. Entering then

The lofty halls, he set the spear upright

By a tall column, in the armory

With polished walls, where rested many a lance

Of the large-souled Ulysses. Then he placed

His guest upon a throne, o’er which he spread

A covering many-hued and beautiful,

And gave her feet a footstool. Near to her

He drew his parti-colored seat, aloof

From where the suitors sat; that so his guest

Might not amid those haughty revellers

Be wearied with the tumult and enjoy

His meal the less, and that himself might ask

News of his absent father. In a bowl

Of silver, from a shapely ewer of gold,

A maid poured water for the hands, and set

A polished table near them. Then approached

A venerable matron bringing bread

And delicacies gathered from the board;

And he who served the feast before them placed

Chargers with various meats, and cups of gold;

While round the board a herald moved, and poured

Wine for the guests. The haughty suitors now

Came in, and took their places on the thrones

And couches; heralds poured upon their hands

The water; maidens heaped the canisters

With bread, and all put forth their hands to share

The banquet on the board, while to the brim

Boys filled the beakers. When the calls of thirst

And hunger were appeased, the suitors thought

Of other things that well become a feast—

Song and the dance. And then a herald brought

A shapely harp, and gave it to the hands

Of Phemius, who had only by constraint

Sung to the suitors. On the chords he struck

A prelude to his lay, while, as he played,

Telemachus, that others might not hear,

Leaned forward, and to blue-eyed Pallas spake:—
“My friend and guest, wilt thou take no offence

At what I say? These revellers enjoy

The harp and song, for at no cost of theirs

They waste the substance of another man,

Whose white bones now are mouldering in the rain

Upon some mainland, or are tossed about

By ocean billows. Should they see him once

In Ithaca, their prayers would rather rise

For swifter feet than richer stores of gold

And raiment. But an evil fate is his,

And he has perished. Even should we hear

From any of the dwellers upon earth

That he is near at hand, we could not hope.

For him is no return. But now, I pray,

Tell me, and frankly tell me, who thou art,

And of what race of men, and where thy home,

And who thy parents; how the mariners

Brought thee to Ithaca, and who they claim

To be, for well I deem thou couldst not come

Hither on foot. All this, I pray, relate

Truly, that I may know the whole. Art thou

For the first time arrived, or hast thou been

My father’s guest? for many a stranger once

Resorted to our palace, and he knew

The way to win the kind regard of men.”
Pallas, the blue-eyed goddess, answered thus:—

“I will tell all and truly. I am named

Mentes; my father was the great in war

Anchialus. I rule a people skilled

To wield the oar, the Taphians, and I come

With ship and crew across the dark blue deep

To Temesè, and to a race whose speech

Is different from my own, in quest of brass,

And bringing bright steel with me. I have left

Moored at the field behind the town my barque,

Within the bay of Reithrus, and beneath

The woods of Neius. We claim to be

Guests by descent, and from our fathers’ time,

As thou wilt learn if thou shouldst meet and ask

Laertes, the old hero. It is said

He comes no more within the city walls,

But in the fields dwells sadly by himself,

Where an old handmaid sets upon his board

His food and drink when weariness unnerves

His limbs in creeping o’er the fertile soil

Of his rich vineyard. I am come because

I heard thy father had at last returned,

And now am certain that the gods delay

His journey hither; for the illustrious man

Cannot have died, but is detained alone

Somewhere upon the ocean, in some spot

Girt by the waters. There do cruel men

And savage keep him, pining to depart.

Now let me speak of what the gods reveal,

And what I deem will surely come to pass,

Although I am no seer and have no skill

In omens drawn from birds. Not long the chief

Will be an exile from his own dear land,

Though fettered to his place by links of steel;

For he has large invention, and will plan

A way for his escape. Now tell me this,

And truly; tall in stature as thou art,

Art thou in fact Ulysses' son? In face

And glorious eyes thou dost resemble him

Exceedingly; for he and I of yore

Were oftentimes companions, ere he sailed

For Ilium, whither also went the best

Among the Argives in their roomy ships,

Nor have we seen each other since that day.”
Telemachus, the prudent, spake: “O guest,

True answer shalt thou have. My mother says

I am his son; I know not; never man

Knew his own father. Would I were the son

Of one whose happier lot it was to meet

Amidst his own estates the approach of age.

Now the most wretched of the sons of men

Is he to whom they say I owe my birth.

Thus is thy question answered.” Then again

Spake blue-eyed Pallas: “Of a truth, the gods

Ordain not that thy race, in years to come,

Should be inglorious, since Penelope

Hath borne thee such as I behold thee now.

But frankly answer me—what feast is here,

And what is this assembly? What may be

The occasion? is a banquet given? is this

A wedding? A collation, where the guests

Furnish the meats, I think it cannot be,

So riotously goes the revel on

Throughout the palace. A well-judging man,

If he should come among them, would be moved

With anger at the shameful things they do.”
Again Telemachus, the prudent, spake:—

“Since thou dost ask me, stranger, know that once

Rich and illustrious might this house be called

While yet the chief was here. But now the gods

Have grown unkind and willed it otherwise,

They make his fate a mystery beyond

The fate of other men. I should not grieve

So deeply for his loss if he had fallen

With his companions on the field of Troy,

Or midst his kindred when the war was o’er.

Then all the Greeks had built his monument,

And he had left his son a heritage

Of glory. Now has he become the prey

Of Harpies, perishing ingloriously,

Unseen, his fate unheard of, and has left

Mourning and grief, my portion. Not for him

Alone I grieve; the gods have cast on me

Yet other hardships. All the chiefs who rule

The isles, Dulichium, Samos, and the groves

That shade Zacynthus, and who bear the sway

In rugged Ithaca, have come to woo

My mother, and from day to day consume

My substance. She rejects not utterly

Their hateful suit, and yet she cannot bear

To end it by a marriage. Thus they waste

My heritage, and soon will seek my life.”
Again in grief and anger Pallas spake:—

“Yea, greatly dost thou need the absent chief

Ulysses here, that he might lay his hands

Upon these shameless suitors. Were he now

To come and stand before the palace gate

With helm and buckler and two spears, as first

I saw him in our house, when drinking wine

And feasting, just returned from Ephyrè

Where Ilus dwelt, the son of Mermerus—

For thither went Ulysses in a barque,

To seek a deadly drug with which to taint

His brazen arrows; Ilus gave it not;

He feared the immortal gods; my father gave

The poison, for exceedingly he loved

His guest—could now Ulysses, in such guise,

Once meet the suitors, short would be their lives

And bitter would the marriage banquet be.

Yet whether he return or not to take

Vengeance, in his own palace, on this crew

Of wassailers, rests only with the gods.

Now let me counsel thee to think betimes

How thou shalt thrust them from thy palace gates.

Observe me, and attend to what I say:

Tomorrow thou shalt call the Achaian chiefs

To an assembly; speak before them all,

And be the gods thy witnesses. Command

The suitors all to separate for their homes;

And if thy mother’s mind be bent to wed,

Let her return to where her father dwells,

A mighty prince, and there they will appoint

Magnificent nuptials, and an ample dower

Such as should honor a beloved child.

And now, if thou wilt heed me, I will give

A counsel for thy good. Man thy best ship

With twenty rowers, and go forth to seek

News of thy absent father. Thou shalt hear

Haply of him from someone of the sons

Of men, or else some word of rumor sent

By Jove, revealing what mankind should know.

First shape thy course for Pylos, and inquire

Of noble Nestor; then, at Sparta, ask

Of fair-haired Menelaus, for he came

Last of the mailed Achaians to his home.

And shouldst thou learn that yet thy father lives,

And will return, have patience yet a year,

However hard it seem. But shouldst thou find

That he is now no more, return forthwith

To thy own native land, and pile on high

His monument, and let the funeral rites

Be sumptuously performed as may become

The dead, and let thy mother wed again.

And when all this is fully brought to pass,

Take counsel with thy spirit and thy heart

How to destroy the suitor crew that haunt

Thy palace, whether by a secret snare

Or open force. No longer shouldst thou act

As if thou wert a boy; thou hast outgrown

The age of childish sports. Hast thou not heard

What honor the divine Orestes gained

With all men, when he slew the murderer,

The crafty wretch Aegisthus, by whose hand

The illustrious father of Orestes died?

And then, my friend—for I perceive that thou

Art of a manly and a stately growth—

Be also bold, that men hereafter born

May give thee praise. And now must I depart

To my good ship, and to my friends who wait,

Too anxiously perhaps, for my return.

Act wisely now, and bear my words in mind.”
The prudent youth Telemachus rejoined:—

“Well hast thou spoken, and with kind intent,

O stranger! like a father to a son;

And ne’er shall I forget what thou hast said.

Yet stay, I pray thee, though in haste, and bathe

And be refreshed, and take to thy good ship

Some gift with thee, such as may please thee well,

Precious and rare, which thou mayst ever keep

In memory of me—a gift like those

Which friendly hosts bestow upon their guests.”
Then spake the blue-eyed Pallas: “Stay me not,

For now would I depart. Whatever gift

Thy heart may prompt thee to bestow, reserve

Till I come back, that I may bear it home,

And thou shalt take some precious thing in turn.”
So spake the blue-eyed Pallas, and withdrew,

Ascending like a bird. She filled his heart

With strength and courage, waking vividly

His father’s memory. Then the noble youth

Went forth among the suitors. Silent all

They sat and listened to the illustrious bard,

Who sang of the calamitous return

Of the Greek host from Troy, at the command

Of Pallas. From her chamber o’er the hall

The daughter of Icarius, the sage queen

Penelope, had heard the heavenly strain,

And knew its theme. Down by the lofty stairs

She came, but not alone; there followed her

Two maidens. When the glorious lady reached

The threshold of the strong-built hall, where sat

The suitors, holding up a delicate veil

Before her face, and with a gush of tears,

The queen bespake the sacred minstrel thus:—
"Phemius! thou knowest many a pleasing theme—

The deeds of gods and heroes, such as bards

Are wont to celebrate. Take then thy place

And sing of one of these, and let the guests

In silence drink the wine; but cease this strain;

It is too sad; it cuts me to the heart,

And wakes a sorrow without bounds—such grief

I bear for him, my lord, of whom I think

Continually; whose glory is abroad

Through Hellas and through Argos, everywhere."
And then Telemachus, the prudent, spake:—

“Why, O my mother! canst thou not endure

That thus the well-graced poet should delight

His hearers with a theme to which his mind

Is inly moved? The bards deserve no blame;

Jove is the cause, for he at will inspires

The lay that each must sing. Reprove not, then,

The minstrel who relates the unhappy fate

Of the Greek warriors. All men most applaud

The song that has the newest theme; and thou—

Strengthen thy heart to hear it. Keep in mind

That not alone Ulysses is cut off

From his return, but that with him at Troy

Have many others perished. Now withdraw

Into thy chamber; ply thy household tasks,

The loom, the spindle; bid thy maidens speed

Their work. To say what words beseem a feast

Belongs to man, and most to me; for here

Within these walls the authority is mine.”
    The matron, wondering at his words, withdrew

To her own place, but in her heart laid up

Her son’s wise sayings. When she now had reached,

With her attendant maids, the upper rooms,

She mourned Ulysses, her beloved spouse,

And wept, till blue-eyed Pallas closed her lids

In gentle slumbers. Noisily, meanwhile,

The suitors revelled in the shadowy halls;

And thus Telemachus, the prudent, spake:—
    “Ye suitors of my mother, insolent

And overbearing; cheerful be our feast,

Not riotous. It would become us well

To listen to the lay of such a bard,

So like the gods in voice. I bid you all

Meet in full council with the morrow morn,

That I may give you warning to depart

From out my palace, and to seek your feasts

Elsewhere at your own charge—haply to hold

Your daily banquets at each other’s homes.

But if it seem to you the better way

To plunder one man’s goods, go on to waste

My substance; I will call the immortal gods

To aid me, and if Jupiter allow

Fit retribution for your deeds, ye die,

Within this very palace, unavenged.”
He spake; the suitors bit their close-pressed lips,

Astonished at the youth’s courageous words.

And thus Antinoüs, Eupeithes' son,

Made answer: "Most assuredly the gods,

Telemachus, have taught thee how to frame

Grand sentences and gallantly harangue.

Ne'er may the son of Saturn make thee king

Over the seagirt Ithaca, whose isle

Is thy inheritance by claim of birth."
Telemachus, the prudent, thus rejoined:—

"Wilt thou be angry at the word I speak,

Antinoüs? I would willingly accept

The kingly station if conferred by Jove.

Dost thou indeed regard it as the worst

Of all conditions of mankind? Not so

For him who reigns; his house grows opulent,

And he the more is honored. Many kings

Within the bounds of seagirt Ithaca

There are, both young and old, let anyone

Bear rule, since great Ulysses is no more;

But I will be the lord of mine own house,

And o’er my servants whom the godlike chief,

Ulysses, brought from war, his share of spoil.”
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,

Addressed the youth in turn: “Assuredly,

What man hereafter, of the Achaian race,

Shall bear the rule o’er seagirt Ithaca

Rests with the gods. But thou shalt keep thy wealth,

And may no son of violence come to make

A spoil of thy possessions while men dwell

In Ithaca. And now, my friend, I ask

Who was thy guest; whence came he, of what land

Claims he to be, where do his kindred dwell,

And where his patrimonial acres lie?

With tidings of thy father’s near return

Came he, or to receive a debt? How swift

Was his departure, waiting not for us

To know him! yet in aspect and in air

He seemed to be no man of vulgar note.”
Telemachus, the prudent, answered thus:—

“My father’s coming, O Eurymachus,

Is to be hoped no more; nor can I trust

Tidings from whatsoever part they come,

Nor pay regard to oracles, although

My mother send to bring a soothsayer

Within the palace, and inquire of him.

But this man was my father’s guest; he comes

From Taphos; Mentes is his name, a son

Of the brave chief Anchialus; he reigns

Over the Taphians, men who love the sea.”
He spake, but in his secret heart he knew

The immortal goddess. Then the suitors turned,

Delighted, to the dance and cheerful song,

And waited for the evening. On their sports

The evening with its shadowy blackness came;

Then each to his own home withdrew to sleep,

While to his lofty chamber, in full view,

Built high in that magnificent palace home,

Telemachus went up, and sought his couch,

Intent on many thoughts. The chaste and sage

Dame Eurycleia by his side went up

With lighted torches—she a child of Ops,

Pisenor’s son. Her, in her early bloom,

Laertes purchased for a hundred beeves,

And in his palace honored equally

With his chaste wife; yet never sought her bed.

He would not wrong his queen. ’Twas she who bore

The torches with Telemachus. She loved

Her young lord more than all the other maids,

And she had nursed him in his tender years.

He opened now the chamber door and sat

Upon the couch, put his soft tunic off

And placed it in the prudent matron’s hands.

She folded it and smoothed it, hung it near

To that fair bed, and, going quickly forth,

Pulled at the silver ring to close the door,

And drew the thong that moved the fastening bolt.

He, lapped in the soft fleeces, all night long.

Thought of the voyage Pallas had ordained.

Book II

Departure of Telemachus from Ithaca

The chief men of Ithaca assembled by Telemachus—His complaint of the suitors—Their attempt to justify themselves—Prophecy of the return of Ulysses by the seer, Halitherses—Request of Telemachus for a vessel to visit Pylos and Sparta, in quest of his father, granted by the assembly—Preparations for his departure.

Now when the Morning, child of Dawn, appeared,

The dear son of Ulysses left his bed

And put his garments on. His trenchant sword

He hung upon his shoulders, and made fast

His shapely sandals to his shining feet,

And issued from his chamber like a god.

At once he bade the clear-voiced heralds call

The long-haired Greeks to council. They obeyed,

Quickly the chiefs assembled, and when all

Were at the appointed place, Telemachus

Went to the council, bearing in his hand

A brazen spear, yet went he not alone.

Two swift dogs followed him, while Pallas shed

A heavenly beauty over him, and all

Admired him as he came. He took the seat

Of his great father, and the aged men

Made way for him. And then Aegyptius spake—

A hero bowed with age, who much had seen

And known. His son, the warlike Antiphus,

Went with the great Ulysses in his fleet

To courser-breeding Troy, and afterward

The cruel Cyclops, in the vaulted cave,

Slew him for his last meal. Three other sons

There were, and one of these, Eurynomus,

Was of the suitor train; the others took

Charge of their father’s acres. Never yet

Had he forgotten his lost son or ceased

To grieve for him, and as he spoke he wept
“Hear, men of Ithaca, what I shall say.

No council, no assembly, have we held

Since great Ulysses in his roomy ships

Departed from our isle. Who now is he

That summons us? On which of our young men

Or elders presses this necessity?

Is it belike that one of you has heard

Of an approaching foe, and can declare

The tidings clearly? Or would he propose

And urge some other matter which concerns

The public weal? A just and generous mind

I deem is his, and ’tis my hope that Jove

Will bring to pass the good at which he aims.”
    As thus he spake Ulysses’ son rejoiced

In his auspicious words, nor longer kept

His seat, but, yielding to an inward force,

Rose midst them all to speak, while in his hand

Pisenor, the sagacious counsellor

And herald, placed the sceptre. Then he turned

To the old man, Aegyptius, speaking thus:—
    “O aged man, not far from thee is he

Who called this council, as thou soon shalt know

Mine chiefly is the trouble; I have brought

No news of an approaching foe, which I

Was first to hear, and would declare to all,

Nor urge I other matters which concern

The public weal; my own necessity—

The evil that has fallen on my house—

Constrains me; it is twofold. First, that I

Have lost an excellent father, who was king

Among you, and ruled o’er you with a sway

As gentle as a father’s. Greater yet

Is the next evil, and will soon o’erthrow

My house and waste my substance utterly.

Suitors, the sons of those who, in our isle,

Hold the chief rank, importunately press

Round my unwilling mother. They disdain

To ask her of Icarius, that the king

Her father may endow her, and bestow

His daughter on the man who best may gain

His favor, but with every day they come

Into our palace, sacrificing here

Oxen and sheep and fatling goats, and hold

High festival, and drink the purple wine

Unstinted, with unbounded waste; for here

Is no man like Ulysses to repel

The mischief from my house. Not such are we

As he was, to resist the wrong. We pass

For weaklings, immature in valor, yet

If I had but the power, assuredly

I would resist, for by these men are done

Insufferable things, nor does my house

Perish with honor. Ye yourselves should feel

Shame at these doings; ye should dread reproach

From those who dwell around us, and should fear

The offended gods, lest they repay these crimes

With vengeance. I beseech you, O my friends,

Both by Olympian Jove, and her by whom

Councils of men are summoned and dissolved—

The goddess Themis—that ye all refrain,

And leave me to my grief alone, unless

Ulysses, my great father, may have done

Wrong in his anger to the gallant Greeks,

Which ye, by prompting men to acts like these,

Seek to avenge on me. Far better ’twere,

Should ye yourselves destroy our goods and slay

Our herds, since, were it so, there might in time

Be some requital. We, from street to street,

Would plead continually for recompense,

Till all should be restored. But now ye heap

Upon me wrongs for which is no redress.”
Thus angrily he spake, and clashed to earth

The sceptre, shedding tears. The people felt

Compassion; all were silent for a space,

And there was none who dared with railing words

Answer Telemachus, save one alone,

Antinoüs, who arose and thus replied:—
“Telemachus, thou youth of braggart speech

And boundless in abuse, what hast thou said

To our dishonor? Thou wouldst fix on us

A brand of shame. The blame is not with us,

The Achaian suitors; ’tis thy mother’s fault,

Skilled as she is in crafty shifts. ’Tis now

Already the third year, and soon will be

The fourth, since she began to cozen us.

She gives us all to hope, and sends fair words

To each by message, yet in her own mind

Has other purposes. This shrewd device

She planned; she laid upon the loom a web,

Delicate, wide, and vast in length, and said

Thus to us all: ‘Young princes, who are come

To woo me, since Ulysses is no more—

My noble husband—urge me not, I pray,

To marriage, till I finish in the loom—

That so my threads may not be spun in vain—

A funeral vesture for the hero-chief

Laertes, when his fatal hour shall come

With death’s long sleep. Else some Achaian dame

Might blame me, should I leave without a shroud

Him who in life possessed such ample wealth!’

Such were her words, and easily they wrought

Upon our generous minds. So went she on,

Weaving that ample web, and every night

Unravelled it by torchlight. Three full years

She practised thus, and by the fraud deceived

The Grecian youths; but when the hours had brought

The fourth year round, a woman who knew all

Revealed the mystery, and we ourselves

Saw her unravelling the ample web.

Thenceforth, constrained, and with unwilling hands,

She finished it. Now let the suitors make

Their answer to thy words, that thou mayst know

Our purpose fully, and the Achaians all

May know it likewise. Send thy mother hence,

Requiring that she wed the suitor whom

Her father chooses and herself prefers.

But if she still go on to treat the sons

Of Greece with such despite, too confident

In gifts which Pallas has bestowed on her

So richly, noble arts, and faculties

Of mind, and crafty shifts, beyond all those

Of whom we ever heard that lived of yore,

The bright-haired ladies of the Achaian race,

Tyro, Alcmena, and Mycenè, famed

For glossy tresses, none of them endowed

As is Penelope, though this last shift

Be ill devised—so long will we consume

Thy substance and estate as she shall hold

Her present mood, the purpose which the gods

Have planted in her breast. She to herself

Gains great renown, but surely brings on thee

Loss of much goods. And now we go not hence

To our affairs nor elsewhere, till she wed

Whichever of the Greeks may please her most."
And then rejoined discreet Telemachus:—

"Antinoüs, grievous wrong it were to send

Unwilling from this palace her who bore

And nursed me. Whether he be living yet

Or dead, my father is in distant lands;

And should I, of my own accord and will,

Dismiss my mother, I must make perforce

Icarius large amends, and that were hard.

And he would do me mischief, and the gods

Would send yet other evils on my head.

For then my mother, going forth, would call

On the grim Furies, and the general curse

Of all men would be on me. Think not I

Will ever speak that word. But if ye bear

A sense of injury for what is past,

Go from these halls; provide for other feasts,

Consuming what is yours, and visiting

Each other’s homes in turn. But if it seem

To you the wiser and the better way

To plunder one man’s goods, go on to waste

My substance. I shall call the eternal gods

To aid me, and, if Jupiter allow

Fit retribution for your crimes, ye die

Within this very palace unavenged.”

So spake Telemachus. The Thunderer, Jove,

Sent flying from a lofty mountaintop

Two eagles. First they floated on the wind

Close to each other, and with wings outspread;

But as they came to where the murmuring crowd

Was gathered just beneath their flight, they turned

And clapped their heavy pinions, looking down

With deadly omen on the heads below,

And with their talons tore each other’s cheeks

And necks, and then they darted to the right

Away through Ithaca among its roofs.

All who beheld the eagles were amazed,

And wondered what event was near at hand.

Among the rest an aged hero spake,

Named Halitherses, Mastor’s son. He knew

More truly than the others of his age,

To augur from the flight of birds, and read

The will of fate—and wisely thus he spake:—
“Hear, men of Ithaca, what I shall say.

I speak of what most narrowly concerns

The suitors, over whom already hangs

Great peril, for Ulysses will not be

Long at a distance from his home and friends.

Even now he is not far, and meditates

Slaughter and death to all the suitor train;

And evil will ensue to many more

Of us, who dwell in sunny Ithaca.

Now let us think what measures may restrain

These men—or let them of their own accord

Desist—the soonest were for them the best.

For not as one untaught do I foretell

Events to come, but speak of what I know.

All things that I predicted to our chief,

What time the Argive troops embarked for Troy,

And sage Ulysses with them, are fulfilled;

I said that after many hardships borne,

And all his comrades lost, the twentieth year

Would bring him back, a stranger to us all—

And all that then I spake of comes to pass.”
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,

Answered the seer: “Go to thy house, old man,

And to thy boys, and prophesy to them,

Lest evil come upon them. I can act,

In matters such as these, a prophet’s part

Better than thou. True, there are many birds

That fly about in sunshine, but not all

Are ominous. Ulysses far away

Has perished; well it would have been if thou

Hadst perished with him; then thou wouldst not prate

Idly of things to come, nor wouldst thou stir

Telemachus to anger, in the hope

Of bearing to thy house some gift from him.

Now let me say, and be assured my words

Will be fulfilled: experienced as thou art,

If thou by treacherous speeches shalt inflame

A younger man than thou to violent deeds,

The sharper punishment shall first be his,

But we will lay on thee a penalty,

Old man, which thou shalt find it hard to bear,

And bitterly wilt thou repent. And now

Let me persuade Telemachus to send

His mother to her father. They will make

A marriage for her there, and give with her

A liberal dowry, such as may become

A favorite daughter on her wedding-day,

Else never will the sons of Greece renounce,

I think, the difficult suit. We do not fear

Telemachus himself, though glib of speech,

Nor care we for the empty oracle

Which thou, old man, dost utter, making thee

Only more hated. Still will his estate

Be wasted, nor will order e’er return

While she defers her marriage with some prince

Of the Achaians. We shall urge our suit

For that most excellent of womankind

As rivals, nor withdraw to seek the hand

Of others, whom we fitly might espouse.”
To this discreet Telemachus replied:—

“Eurymachus, and ye, the illustrious train

Of suitors, I have nothing more to ask—

No more to say—for now the gods and all

The Achaians know the truth. But let me have

A gallant barque, and twenty men to make

From coast to coast a voyage, visiting

Sparta and sandy Pylos, to inquire

For my long-absent father, and the chance

Of his return, if any of mankind

Can tell me aught, or if some rumor come

From Jove, since thus are tidings often brought

To human knowledge. Should I learn that yet

He lives and may return, I then would wait

A twelvemonth, though impatient. Should I hear

That he no longer lives, I shall return

Homeward, and pile his monument on high

With funeral honors that become the dead,

And give my mother to a second spouse.”
He spake and took his seat, and then arose

Mentor, once comrade of the excellent chief

Ulysses, who, departing with his fleet,

Consigned his household to the aged man,

That they should all obey him, and that he

Should safely keep his charge. He rose amid

The assembly, and addressed them wisely thus:—
“Hear and attend, ye men of Ithaca,

To what I say. Let never sceptred king

Henceforth be gracious, mild, and merciful,

And righteous; rather be he deaf to prayer

And prone to deeds of wrong, since no one now

Remembers the divine Ulysses more,

Among the people over whom he ruled

Benignly like a father. Yet I bear

No envy to the haughty suitors here,

Moved as they are to deeds of violence

By evil counsels, since, in pillaging

The substance of Ulysses, who they say

Will nevermore return, they risk their lives.

But I am angry with the rest, with all

Of you who sit here mute, nor even with words

Of stern reproof restrain their violence,

Though ye so many are and they so few.”
Leiocritus, Evenor’s son, rejoined:—

“Malicious Mentor, foolish man! what talk

Is this of holding us in check? ’Twere hard

For numbers even greater than our own

To drive us from a feast. And should the prince

Of Ithaca, Ulysses, come himself,

Thinking to thrust the illustrious suitors forth

That banquet in these palace halls, his queen

Would have no cause for joy at his return,

Greatly as she desired it. He would draw

Sure death upon himself in strife with us

Who are so many. Thou hast spoken ill.

Now let the people who are gathered here

Disperse to their employments. We will leave

Mentor and Halitherses, who were both

His father’s early comrades, to provide

For the youth’s voyage. He will yet remain

A long time here, I think, to ask for news

In Ithaca, and never will set sail.”
Thus having said, he instantly dismissed

The people; they departed to their homes;

The suitors sought the palace of the prince.
Then to the ocean-side, apart from all,

Went forth Telemachus, and washed his hands

In the gray surf, and prayed to Pallas thus:—
“Hear me, thou deity who yesterday,

In visiting our palace, didst command

That I should traverse the black deep to learn

News of my absent father, and the chance

Of his return! The Greeks themselves withstand,

My purpose; the proud suitors most of all.”
Such was his prayer, and straightway Pallas stood,

In form and voice like Mentor, by his side,

And thus accosted him with winged words:—
“Telemachus, thou henceforth shalt not lack

Valor or wisdom. If with thee abides

Thy father’s gallant spirit, as he was

In deed and word, thou wilt not vainly make

This voyage. But if thou be not in truth

The son of him and of Penelope,

Then I rely not on thee to perform

What thou dost meditate. Few sons are like

Their fathers: most are worse, a very few

Excel their parents. Since thou wilt not lack

Valor and wisdom in the coming time,

Nor is thy father’s shrewdness wanting quite

In thee, great hope there is that happily

This plan will be fulfilled. Regard not then

The suitor train, their purposes and plots.

Senseless are they, as little wise as just,

And have no thought of the black doom of death

Now drawing near to sweep them in a day

To their destruction. But thy enterprise

Must suffer no delay. So much am I

Thy father’s friend and thine, that I will cause

A swift barque to be fitted out for sea,

And will myself attend thee. Go now hence

Among the suitors, and make ready there

The needful stores, and let them all be put

In vessels—wine in jars, and meal, the strength

Of man, in close thick skins—while I engage,

Among the people here, a willing crew.

Ships are there in our seagirt Ithaca

Full many, new and old, and I will choose

The best of these, and see it well equipped.

Then will we drag it down to the broad sea."
Thus Pallas spake, the child of Jupiter.

Telemachus obeyed the heavenly voice,

And stayed not; home he hastened, where he saw

Sadly the arrogant suitors in the hall,

Busily flaying goats and roasting swine.

Antinoüs, laughing, came to meet the youth.

And fastened on his hand, and thus he spake:—
"Telemachus, thou youth of lofty speech

And boundless in abuse, let neither word

Nor deed that may displease thee vex thy heart,

But gayly eat and drink as thou wert wont.

The Achaians generously will provide

Whatever thou requirest, ship and men—

All chosen rowers—that thou mayst arrive

Sooner at sacred Pylos, there to learn

Tidings of thy illustrious father’s fate.”
Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn:—

“Antinoüs, never could I sit with you,

Arrogant ones! in silence nor enjoy

The feast in quiet. Is it not enough,

O suitors, that while I was yet a child

Ye wasted on your revelries my large

And rich possessions? Now that I am grown,

And, when I hear the words of other men,

Discern their meaning, now that every day

Strengthens my spirit, I will make the attempt

To bring the evil fates upon your heads,

Whether I go to Pylos or remain

Among this people. I shall surely make

This voyage, and it will not be in vain.

Although I go a passenger on board

Another's ship—since neither ship have I

Nor rowers—ye have judged that so were best."
He spake, and quickly from the suitor's hand

Withdrew his own. The others who prepared

Their banquet in the palace scoffed at him,

And flung at him their bitter taunts, and one

Among the insolent youths reviled him thus:—
"Telemachus is certainly resolved

To butcher us. He goes to bring allies

From sandy Pylos or the Spartan coast,

He is so bent on slaughter. Or perhaps

He visits the rich land of Ephyrè

In search of deadly poisons to be thrown

Into a cup and end us all at once."
Then said another of the haughty youths:—

"Who knows but, wandering in his hollow barque,

He too may perish, far from all his friends,

Just as Ulysses perished? This would bring

Increase of labor; it would cast on us

The trouble to divide his goods, and give

His palace to his mother, and to him

Who takes the woman as his wedded wife."
So spake they, but Telemachus went down

To that high-vaulted room, his father's, where

Lay heaps of gold and brass, and garments store

In chests, and fragrant oils. And there stood casks

Of delicate old wine and pure, a drink

For gods, in rows against the wall, to wait

If ever, after many hardships borne,

Ulysses should return. Upon that room

Close-fitting double doors were shut, and there

Was one who night and day kept diligent watch,

A woman, Eurycleia, child of Ops,

Peisenor’s son. Telemachus went in

And called her to him, and bespake her thus:—
“Nurse, let sweet wine be drawn into my jars,

The finest next to that which thou dost keep

Expecting our unhappy lord, if yet

The nobly born Ulysses shall escape

The doom of death and come to us again.

Fill twelve, and fit the covers close, and pour

Meal into well-sewn skins, and let the tale

Be twenty measures of the flour of wheat.

This none but thou must know. Let all these things

Be brought together; then, as night shuts in,

When to her upper chamber, seeking rest,

My mother shall withdraw, I come and take

What thou providest for me. I am bound

For Sparta and for Pylos in the sands,

To gather news concerning the return

Of my dear father, if I haply may.”
So spake the youth, and his beloved nurse

Sobbed, wept aloud, and spake these winged words:—
“Why should there come, dear child, a thought like this

Into thy heart. Why wouldst thou wander forth

To distant regions—thou an only son

And dearly loved? Ulysses, nobly born,

Has perished, from his native land afar,

’Mid a strange race. These men, when thou art gone,

At once will lay their plots to take thy life,

And share thy wealth among them. Stay thou here

Among thy people; need is none that thou

Shouldst suffer, roaming o’er the barren deep.”
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:—

“Be of good cheer, O nurse, for my design

Is not without the sanction of a god;

But swear thou not to let my mother know

Of my intent until the eleventh day

Or twelfth shall pass, or till, in missing me,

She learn of my departure, lest she weep

And stain with tears the beauty of her face.”
He spake; the ancient woman solemnly

Swore by the gods, and when the rite was o’er

Drew wine into the jars, and poured the meal

Into the well-sewn skins. Telemachus

Entered the hall and joined the suitor train.
Then did the blue-eyed goddess turn her thoughts

To other plans, and taking on herself

The semblance of Telemachus, she ranged

The city, speaking to each man in turn,

And bidding him at nightfall to repair

To where the good ship lay. That gallant ship

She begged of the renowned Noëmon, son

Of Phronius, who with cheerful grace complied.
The sun went down, the city streets lay all

In shadow. Then she drew the good ship down

Into the sea, and brought and put on board

The appointments every well-built galley needs,

And moored her at the bottom of the port,

Where, in a throng, obedient to the word

Of Pallas, round her came her gallant crew.
With yet a new device the blue-eyed maid

Went to the palace of the godlike chief

Ulysses, where she poured a gentle sleep

Over the suitors. As they drank she made

Their senses wander, and their hands let fall

The goblets. Now no longer at the board

They sat, but sallied forth, and through the town

Went to their slumbers, for the power of sleep

Had fallen heavily upon their lids.

Then blue-eyed Pallas from those sumptuous halls

Summoned Telemachus. She took the form

And voice of Mentor, and bespake him thus:—
“Telemachus, already at their oars

Sit thy well-armed companions and await

Thy coming; let us go without delay.”
Thus having spoken, Pallas led the way

With rapid footsteps which he followed fast;

Till having reached the galley and the sea

They found their long-haired comrades at the beach,

And thus the gallant prince Telemachus

Bespake them: “Hither, comrades, let us bring

The sea-stores from the dwelling where they lie;

My mother knows not of it, nor her maids;

The secret has been told to one alone.”
He spake, and went before them. In his steps

They followed. To the gallant barque they brought

The stores, and, as the well-beloved son

Of King Ulysses bade, they laid them down

Within the hull. Telemachus went up

The vessel’s side, but Pallas first embarked,

And at the stern sat down, while next to her

Telemachus was seated. Then the crew

Cast loose the fastenings and went all on board,

And took their places on the rowers’ seats,

While blue-eyed Pallas sent a favoring breeze,

A fresh wind from the west, that murmuring swept

The dark-blue main. Telemachus gave forth

The word to wield the tackle; they obeyed,

And raised the fir-tree mast, and, fitting it

Into its socket, bound it fast with cords,

And drew and spread with firmly twisted ropes

The shining sails on high. The steady wind

Swelled out the canvas in the midst; the ship

Moved on, the dark sea roaring round her keel,

As swiftly through the waves she cleft her way.

And when the rigging of that swift black ship

Was firmly in its place, they filled their cups

With wine, and to the ever-living gods

Poured out libations, most of all to one,

Jove’s blue-eyed daughter. Thus through all that night

And all the ensuing morn they held their way.

Book III

Interview of Telemachus with Nestor

Arrival of Telemachus, with Pallas in the shape of Mentor, at Pylos—His interview with Nestor—Nestor's narrative of his return from Troy—History of the death of Agamemnon and the revenge of Orestes—Departure of Pallas to heaven—Telemachus sent by Nestor with his son Peisistratus to Menelaus at Sparta.

Now from the fair broad bosom of the sea

Into the brazen vault of heaven the sun

Rose shining for the immortals and for men

Upon the foodful earth. The voyagers

Arrived at Pylos, nobly built, the town

Of Neleus. There, upon the ocean-side,

They found the people offering coal-black steers

To dark-haired Neptune. On nine seats they sat,

Five hundred on each seat; nine steers were slain

For each five hundred there. While they performed

The rite, and, tasting first the entrails, burned

The thighs to ocean’s god, the Ithacans

Touched land, and, lifting up the good ship’s sail,

Furled it and moored the keel, and then stepped out

Upon the shore. Forth from the galley came

Telemachus, the goddess guiding him,

And thus to him the blue-eyed Pallas said:—
“Telemachus, there now is no excuse,

Not even the least, for shamefaced backwardness.

Thou hast come hither o’er the deep to ask

For tidings of thy father—what far land

Conceals him, what the fate that he has met.

Go then at once to Nestor, the renowned

In horsemanship, and we shall see what plan

He hath in mind for thee. Entreat him there

That frankly he declare it. He will speak

No word of falsehood; he is truly wise.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:—

“O Mentor, how shall I approach the chief,

And with what salutation? Little skill

Have I in courtly phrase, and shame becomes

A youth in questioning an aged man.”
Pallas, the blue-eyed goddess, spake again:—

“In part thy mind will prompt thy speech; in part

A god will put the words into thy mouth—

For well I deem that thou wert neither born

Nor trained without the favor of the gods.”
Thus having said, the blue-eyed Pallas moved

With hasty pace before, and in her steps

He followed close, until they reached the seats

Of those assembled Pylians. Nestor there

Sat with his sons, while his companions stood

Around him and prepared the feast, and some

Roasted the flesh at fires, and some transfixed

The parts with spits. As they beheld the approach

Of strangers they advanced, and took their hands,

And bade them sit. Peisistratus, a son

Of Nestor, came the first of all, and took

A hand of each, and placed them at the feast

On the soft hides that o’er the ocean sand

Were spread beside his brother Thrasymedes

And his own father; brought for their repast

Parts of the entrails, poured for them the wine

Into a golden goblet, held it forth

In his right hand, and with these words bespake

Pallas, the child of aegis-bearing Jove:—
“Pray, stranger, to King Neptune. Ye have chanced

Upon his feast in coming to our coast.

And after thy libation poured, and prayer

Made to the god, give over to thy friend

The goblet of choice wine that he may make

Libation also; he, I question not,

Prays to the gods; we all have need of them.

A younger man is he than thou, and seems

In age to be my equal; therefore I

Will give the golden goblet first to thee.”
He spake, and in the hands of Pallas placed

The goblet of choice wine. Well pleased was she

With one so just and so discreet—well pleased

That first to her he reached the cup of gold,

And thus she prayed to Neptune fervently:—
“Hear, Neptune, thou who dost embrace the earth,

And of thy grace disdain not to bestow

These blessings on thy suppliants. First of all

Vouchsafe to Nestor and his sons increase

Of glory; on the Pylian people next

Bestow, for this most sumptuous hecatomb,

Large recompense; and, lastly, grant to us—

Telemachus and me—a safe return

To our own country with the end attained

Which brought us hither in our gallant barque.”
Thus did she pray, while she fulfilled the prayer;

And then she handed to Telemachus

The fair round goblet, and in words like hers

The dear son of Ulysses prayed. Meanwhile

The Pylians, having roasted well the flesh

And drawn it from the spits, distributing

To each his portion, held high festival.

And when the calls of hunger and of thirst

Were silenced, Nestor, the Gerenian knight,

Began discourse, and thus bespake his guests:—
“The fitting time is come to ask our guests

Who they may be, since now their feast is o’er.

Say then, O strangers, who ye are, and whence

Ye come along the pathway of the deep.

Have ye an errand here, or do ye roam

The seas at large, like pirates, braving death,

And visiting with ravage foreign states?”
And then discreet Telemachus replied

Boldly—for Pallas strengthened in that hour

His heart that he might confidently ask

News of his absent father, and so win

A worthy fame among the sons of men:—
“O Nestor, son of Neleus, pride of Greece!

Thou bid’st us tell thee whence we came, and I

Will faithfully declare it. We are come

From Ithaca, beneath the Neritus,

And private, and not general, is the cause

Of which I am to speak. I came to ask

Concerning my great father, the large-souled

And nobly-born Ulysses, who ’tis said

With thee, his friend in arms, laid waste the town

Of Ilium. We have heard where all the rest

Who warred against the Trojans were cut off,

And died sad deaths; his fate alone the son

Of Saturn hath not chosen to reveal—

Whether he fell on land by hostile hands,

Or while at sea was whelmed beneath the waves

Of Amphitritè. Wherefore to thy knees

I come, to ask that thou—if so thou wilt—

Relate the manner of his mournful death,

As thou didst see it with thine eyes, or else

As thou from other wanderers hast heard

Its history; for she who brought him forth

Bore him to be unhappy. Think thou not

To soften aught, through tenderness to me,

In thy recital, but in faithful words

Tell me the whole, whatever thou hast seen.

And I conjure thee, that if, in his life,

My father, great Ulysses, ever gave

Promise of word or deed for thee, and kept

His promise, in the realm of Troy, where ye

Achaians bore such hardships, that thou now

Remember it and speak without disguise.”
And Nestor the Gerenian knight replied:—

“My friend, since thou recallest to my mind

The sufferings borne by us the sons of Greece,

Although of peerless valor, in that land,

Both when we ranged in ships the darkling sea

For booty wheresoe’er Achilles led,

And when around King Priam’s populous town

We fought, where fell our bravest, know thou then

That there the valiant Ajax lies, and there

Achilles; there Patroclus, like the gods

In council; there my well-beloved son

Blameless and brave, Antilochus the swift

Of foot and warlike—many woes beside

We bore, and who of mortal birth could give

Their history? Nay, though thou shouldst remain

Five years or six, and ask of all the griefs

Endured by the brave Greeks, thou wouldst depart

Outwearied to thy home, ere thou hadst heard

The whole. Nine years in harassing the foe

We passed, beleaguering them and planning wiles

Innumerable. Saturn’s son at last

With difficulty seemed to close the war.

Then was there none who might presume to vie

In wisdom with Ulysses; that great man

Excelled in every kind of stratagem—

Thy father—if indeed thou be his son.

I look on thee amazed; all thy discourse

Is just like his, and one would ne’er believe

A younger man could speak so much like him.

While we were there, Ulysses and myself

In council or assembly never spake

On different sides, but with a like intent

We thoughtfully consulted how to guide

The Achaians in the way we deemed the best;

But after we had overthrown and spoiled

King Priam’s lofty city, and set sail

For home, and by some heavenly power the Greeks

Were scattered, Jupiter ordained for them

A sad return. For all were neither wise

Nor just, and many drew upon themselves

An evil doom—the fatal wrath of her,

The blue-eyed maid, who claims her birth from Jove.

’Twas she who kindled strife between the sons

Of Atreus. They had called the Achaians all

To an assembly, not with due regard

To order, at the setting of the sun,

And thither came the warriors overpowered

With wine. The brother kings set forth the cause

Of that assembly. Menelaus first

Bade all the Greeks prepare for their return

O’er the great deep. That counsel little pleased

King Agamemnon, who desired to keep

The people longer there, that he might soothe

By sacred hecatombs the fiery wrath

Of Pallas. Fool! who could not see how vain

Were such persuasion, for the eternal gods

Are not soon won to change their purposes.

They stood disputing thus, with bitter words,

Till wrangling noisily on different sides

Rose up the well-armed Greeks. The ensuing night

We rested, but we cherished in our breasts

A mutual hate; so for our punishment

Had Jove ordained. With early morn we drew

Our ships to the great deep, and put our goods

And our deep-bosomed women all on board.

Yet half the host went not, but on the shore

Remained with Agamemnon, Atreus' son,

And shepherd of the people. All the rest

Embarked, weighed anchor, and sailed swiftly thence;

A deity made smooth the mighty deep,

And when we came to Tenedos we paid

Our offerings to the gods and longed for home—

Vainly; it pleased not unpropitious Jove

To favor our return, and once again

He sent among us strife. A part of us

Led by Ulysses, that sagacious prince,

To please Atrides Agamemnon turned

Their well-oared galleys back. But I, with all

The vessels of the fleet that followed me,

Fled on my way, perceiving that some god

Was meditating evil. With us fled,

Encouraging his men, the warlike son

Of Tydeus. Fair-haired Menelaus came

Later to us in Lesbos, where we planned

For a long voyage, whether we should sail

Around the rugged Chios, toward the isle

Of Psyria, keeping that upon the left,

Or under Chios pass beside the steeps

Of windy Mimas. We besought the god

That he would show a sign, and he complied,

And bade us to Euboea cross the deep

Right in the midst, the sooner to escape

All danger. Then the wind blew strong and shrill,

And swiftly o’er the fishy gulfs our fleet

Flew on, and reached Geraestus in the night.

There, having passed the mighty deep, we made

To Neptune offerings of many a thigh

Of beeves. The fourth day dawned, and now the men

Of Diomed, the mighty horseman, son

Of Tydeus, stopped at Argos with their fleet,

While I went on to Pylos with the wind,

Which never, from the moment that the god

First sent it o’er the waters, ceased to blow.
“So, my dear child, I reached my home, nor knew

Nor heard from others who among the Greeks

Was saved, or who had perished on the way.

Yet what I since have heard while here I sit

Within my palace thou shalt duly learn.

Nor is it what I ought to keep from thee.
“ ’Tis said the Myrmidonian spearmen, led

By great Achilles’ famous son, returned

Happily home; as happily the son

Of Paeas, Philoctetes the renowned.

Idomeneus brought also back to Crete

All his companions who survived the war;

The sea took none of them. But ye have heard,

Though far away, the fate of Atreus' son—

How he came home, and how Aegisthus laid

A plot to slay him, yet on his own head

Drew heavy punishment—so fortunate

It is when he who falls by murder leaves

A son; for 'twas the monarch's son who took

Vengeance upon the crafty murderer

Aegisthus, by whose hand Atrides died.

Thou too, my friend, for thou art large of frame,

And of a noble presence, be thou brave,

That men in time to come may give thee praise."
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:—

"O Nestor, son of Neleus, pride of Greece,

Ample was his revenge, and far and wide

The Greeks will spread his fame to be the song

Of future times. O might the gods confer

On me an equal power to avenge myself

On that importunate, overbearing crew

Of suitors, who insult me, and devise

Evil against me! But the gods deny

Such fortune to my father and to me,

And all that now is left me is to bear."
Again spake Nestor the Gerenian knight:—

"Since thou, my friend, hast spoken words which bring

What I have heard to mind—the rumor goes

That in thy palace many suitors wait

About thy mother, and in spite of thee

Do grievous wrong. Now tell me; dost thou yield

Willingly, or because the people, swayed

By oracles, regard thee as their foe?

Thy father yet may come again—who knows?—

Alone, or with the other Greeks, to take

The vengeance which these violent deeds deserve.

Should blue-eyed Pallas deign to favor thee,

As once she watched to guard the glorious chief

Ulysses in the realm of Troy, where we,

The Achaians, bore such hardships—for I ne’er

Have seen the gods so openly befriend

A man as Pallas there befriended him—

Should she thus deign to favor thee and keep

Watch over thee, then haply some of these

Will never think of marriage rites again.”

Then spake discreet Telemachus again:—

“O aged man! I cannot think thy words

Will be fulfilled! for they import too much

And they amaze me. What thou sayst I wish

May come to pass, but know it cannot be,

Not even though the gods should will it so.”

Then thus the blue-eyed goddess, Pallas, spake:—

“Telemachus, what words have passed thy lips?

Easily can a god, whene’er he will,

In the most distant regions safely keep

A man; and I would rather reach my home

Securely, after many hardships borne,

Than perish suddenly on my return

As Agamemnon perished by the guile

Of base Aegisthus and the queen. And yet

The gods themselves have not the power to save

Whom most they cherish from the common doom

When cruel fate brings on the last long sleep.”
Discreet Telemachus made answer thus:—

“Let us, O Mentor, talk no more of this,

Though much we grieve; he never will return,

For his is the black doom of death ordained

By the great gods. Now suffer me to ask

Of Nestor further, since to him are known,

Beyond all other men, the rules of right

And prudence. He has governed, so men say,

Three generations, and to me he seems

In aspect like the ever-living gods.

O Nestor, son of Neleus, truly say

How died the monarch over mighty realms,

Atrides Agamemnon? Where was then

His brother Menelaus? By what arts

Did treacherous Aegisthus plan his death,

And slay a braver warrior than himself?

Was not the brother in the Achaian town

Of Argos? or was he a wanderer

In other lands, which made the murderer bold?”
The knight, Gerenian Nestor, answered thus:—

“I will tell all and truly. Thou hast guessed

Rightly and as it happened. Had the son

Of Atreus, fair-haired Menelaus, come

From Troy, and found Aegisthus yet alive

Within the palace, he had never flung

The loose earth on his corpse, but dogs and birds

Had preyed upon it, lying in the fields

Far from the city, and no woman’s voice

Of all the Greeks had raised the wail for him.

Great was the crime he plotted. We were yet

Afar, enduring the hard toils of war,

While he, securely couched in his retreat

At Argos, famed for steeds, with flattering words

Corrupted Agamemnon’s queen. At first

The noble Clytemnestra turned away

With horror from the crime; for yet her heart

Was right, and by her side there stood a bard

With whom Atrides, when he went to Troy,

Had left his wife with many an earnest charge.

But when the gods and fate had spread a net

For his destruction, then Aegisthus bore

The minstrel to a desert isle, and there

Left him to be devoured by birds of prey,

And led the queen, as willing as himself,

To his own palace. Many a victim’s thigh

Upon the hallowed altars of the gods

He offered, many a gift of ornaments

Woven or wrought in gold he hung within

Their temples, since at length the mighty end

For which he hardly dared to hope was gained.

We sailed together from the coast of Troy,

Atrides, Menelaus, and myself,

Friends to each other. When the headland height

Of Athens, hallowed Sunium, met our eyes,

Apollo smote with his still shafts, and slew

Phrontis, Onetor’s son, who steered the barque

Of Menelaus, holding in his hands

The rudder as the galley scudded on—

And skilled was he beyond all other men

To guide a vessel when the storm was high.

So there did Menelaus stay his course,

Though eager to go on, that he might lay

His friend in earth and pay the funeral rites.

But setting sail again with all his fleet

Upon the dark-blue sea, all-seeing Jove

Decreed a perilous voyage. He sent forth

His shrill-voiced hurricane, and heaped on high

The mountain waves. There, scattering the barques

Far from each other, part he drove to Crete,

Where the Cydonians dwell, beside the stream

Of Jardanus. A smooth and pointed rock

Just on the bounds of Gortys stands amidst

The dark-blue deep. The south wind thitherward

Sweeps a great sea towards Phoestus, and against

The headland on the left, where that small rock

Meets and withstands the mighty wave. The ships

Were driven on this, and scarce the crews escaped

With life; the ships were dashed against the crags

And wrecked, save five, and these, with their black prows,

Were swept toward Egypt by the winds and waves.
“Thus adding to his wealth and gathering gold

He roamed the ocean in his ships among

Men of strange speech. Aegisthus meantime planned

His guilty deeds at home; he slew the king

Atrides, and the people took his yoke.

Seven years in rich Mycenae he bore rule,

And on the eighth, to his destruction, came

The nobly-born Orestes, just returned

From Athens, and cut off that man of blood,

The crafty wretch Aegisthus, by whose hand

Fell his illustrious father. Then he bade

The Argives to the solemn burial-feast

Of his bad mother and the craven wretch

Aegisthus. Menelaus, that same day,

The great in war, arrived, and brought large wealth—

So large his galleys could contain no more.

“And thou, my friend, be thou not long away,

Wandering from home, thy rich possessions left,

And in thy palace-halls a lawless crew,

Lest they devour thy substance, and divide

Thy goods, and thou have crossed the sea in vain.

Yet must I counsel and enjoin on thee

To visit Menelaus, who has come

Just now from lands and nations of strange men,

Whence one could hardly hope for a return;

Whom once the tempest’s violence had driven

Into that great wide sea o’er which the birds

Of heaven could scarce fly hither in a year,

Such is its fearful vastness. Go thou now,

Thou with thy ship and friends; or if thou choose

The way by land, a car and steeds are here,

And here my sons to guide thee to the town

Of hallowed Lacedaemon, there to find

The fair-haired Menelaus. Earnestly

Beseech of him that he declare the truth.

Falsely he will not speak, for he is wise.”
He spake; the sun went down; the darkness crept

Over the earth, and blue-eyed Pallas said:—

“Most wisely hast thou spoken, ancient man.

Now cut ye out the tongues, and mingle wine,

That we to Neptune and the other gods

May pour libations, and then think of rest;

For now the hour is come; the light is gone,

Nor at a feast in honor of the gods

Should we long sit, but in good time withdraw.”
Jove’s daughter spake; they hearkened to her words;

The heralds came to them, and on their hands

Poured water; boys began to fill the bowls

To the hard brim, and ministered to each

From left to right. Then threw they to the flames

The victims’ tongues, and, rising, poured on earth

Wine to the gods; and when that rite was paid,

And when their thirst was satiate, Pallas rose

With nobly-born Telemachus to go

To their good ship, but Nestor still detained

The twain, and chidingly bespake them thus:—
“Now Jove and all the other gods forbid

That ye should go from me to your good ship,

As from some half-clad wretch, too poor to own

Mantles and blankets in whose soft warm folds

He and his guests might sleep; but I have both—

Mantles and blankets—beautifully wrought,

And never shall the son of that great man

Ulysses lie upon a galley’s deck

While I am living. After me I hope

My sons, who dwell within my palace-halls,

Will duly welcome all who enter here.”
And thus again the blue-eyed Pallas spake:—

“Well hast thou said, my aged friend, and well

Doth it become Telemachus to heed

Thy words, for that were best. Let him remain

With thee and sleep in thine abode, while I

Repair to our black ship, encouraging

The crew, and setting them their proper tasks,

For I am eldest of them all; the rest

Are young men yet, and moved by friendship joined

Our enterprise; the peers in age are they

Of the large-souled Telemachus. Tonight

I sleep within the hull of our black ship,

And sail with early morning for the land

Of the Cauconians, large of soul, from whom

A debt is due me, neither new nor small.

Send meantime from thy palace in a car,

And with thy son, this youth, and be the steeds

The fleetest and the strongest in thy stalls.”
The blue-eyed Pallas, having spoken thus,

Passed like an eagle out of sight, and all

Were seized with deep amazement as they saw.

The aged monarch, wondering at the sight,

Took by the hand Telemachus, and said:—
“Of craven temper, and unapt for war,

O friend, thou canst not be, since thus the gods

Attend and guide thee in thy youth. And this,

Of all the gods whose dwelling is in heaven,

Can be no other than the spoiler-queen

Pallas, the child of Jove, who also held

Thy father in such eminent esteem

Among the Grecians. Deign to favor us,

O queen! bestow on me and on my sons

And on my venerable spouse the meed

Of special glory. I will bring to thee

A sacrifice, a broad-horned yearling steer,

Which never man hath tamed or led beneath

The yoke. Her will I bring with gilded horns,

And lay an offering on thine altar-fires.”
Such were his words, and Pallas heard the prayer,

And then Gerenian Nestor led the way,

And with his sons and sons-in-law approached

His glorious palace. When they came within

The monarch’s sumptuous halls, each took his place

In order on the couches and the thrones.

The old man mingled for them as they came

A bowl of delicate wine, eleven years old,

Drawn by the damsel cupbearer, who took

Its cover from the jar. The aged chief

Mingled it in the bowl, and, pouring out

A part to Pallas, offered earnest prayer

To her, who sprang from aegis-bearing Jove.
When due libations had been made, and all

Drank till they wished no more, most went away,

Each to his home to sleep; but Nestor made

Telemachus, the son of the great chief

Ulysses, rest upon a sumptuous couch

Within the echoing hall, and near to him

The chief of squadrons, skilled to wield the spear,

Peisistratus, who only of his sons

Abode in Nestor’s halls unwedded yet;

While in an inner room of that tall pile

The monarch slumbered on a bed of state,

Decked for him by the labors of his queen.
Soon as the daughter of the dawn appeared,

The rosy-fingered Morning, Nestor left

His bed and went abroad, and took his seat

On smooth white stones before his lofty doors,

That glistened as with oil, on which before

Sat Neleus, wise in council as the gods.

But he had yielded to the will of fate,

And passed into the Underworld. Now sat

Gerenian Nestor in his father’s place,

The guardian of the Greeks. Around his seat,

Just from the chambers of their rest, his sons

Echephron, Stratius, and Aretus came,

Perseus, and Thrasymedes; after these

Came brave Peisistratus, the sixth and last.

They led Telemachus, the godlike youth,

And placed him near them. The Gerenian knight

Nestor began, and thus bespake his sons:—
“Do quickly what I ask, dear sons, and aid

To render Pallas, first of all the gods,

Propitious—Pallas, who has deigned to come,

And at a solemn feast to manifest

Herself to me. Let one of you go forth

Among the fields, and bring a heifer thence,

Led by the herdsman. To the dark-hulled ship

Of the large-souled Telemachus I bid

Another son repair, and bring the crew

Save only two; and let another call

Laërceus hither, skilled to work in gold,

That he may plate with gold the heifer’s horns.

Let all the rest remain to bid the maids

Within prepare a sumptuous feast, and bring

Seats, wood, and limpid water from the fount.”
He spake, and all were busy. From the field

The bullock came; from the swift-sailing barque

Came the companions of the gallant youth

Telemachus; with all his implements—

Hammer and anvil, and well-jointed tongs—

With which he wrought, the goldsmith also came,

And to be present at the sacred rites

Pallas came likewise. Nestor, aged knight,

Brought forth the gold; the artisan prepared

The metal, and about the bullock’s horns

Wound it, that Pallas might with pleasure see

The victim so adorned. Then Stratius grasped

The horns, and, aided by Echephron, led

The bullock. From his room Aretus brought

A laver filled with water in one hand,

And in the other hand a canister

Of cakes, while Thrasymedes, great in war,

Stood near with a sharp axe, about to smite

The victim. Perseus held a vase to catch

The blood, while Nestor, aged horseman, took

Water and cakes, and offering first a part,

And flinging the shorn forelock to the flames,

Prayed to the goddess Pallas fervently.

And now, when they had prayed, and flung the cakes,

The large-souled Thrasymedes, Nestor’s son,

Struck, where he stood, the blow; the bullock’s strength

Gave way. At once the daughters of the king,

And his sons’ wives, and queen Eurydicè—

Nestor’s chaste wife, and daughter eldest born

Of Clymenus, broke forth in shrilly cries.

From the great earth the sons then lifted up

And held the victim’s head. Peisistratus,

The chief of squadrons, slew it. When the blood

Had ceased to flow, and life had left its limbs,

They quickly severed joint from joint; they hewed

The thighs away, and duly covered them

With caul, a double fold, on which they laid

Raw strips of flesh. The aged monarch burned

These over the cleft wood, and poured dark wine

Upon them, while beside him stood the youths

With five-pronged spits; and when the thighs were burned

And entrails tasted, all the rest they carved

Into small portions and transfixed with spits,

And roasted, holding the sharp spits in hand.

Meantime, fair Polycastè, youngest born

Of Nestor’s daughters, gave Telemachus

The bath; and after he had bathed she shed

A rich oil over him, and in a cloak

Of noble texture and a tunic robed

The prince, who, like a god in presence, left

The bath, and took his place where Nestor sat,

The shepherd of the people. When the youths

Had roasted well and from the spits withdrawn

The flesh, they took their places at the feast.

Then rose up chosen men, and poured the wine

Into the cups of gold; and when at length

The thirst and appetite were both allayed,

The knight, Gerenian Nestor, thus began:—
“Rise now, my sons; join to the bright-haired steeds

My car, and let Telemachus depart.”
He spake; they hearkened and obeyed, and straight

Yoked the swift horses to the car. Then came

The matron of the household, laying bread

And wine within the car, and dainties such

As make a prince’s fare. Telemachus

Then climbed into the sumptuous seat. The son

Of Nestor and the chief of armed bands,

Peisistratus, climbed also, took his place

Beside him, grasped the reins, and with the lash

Urged on the coursers. Not unwillingly

They darted toward the plain, and left behind

The lofty Pylos. All that day they shook

The yoke on both their necks. The sun went down;

The highways lay in darkness when they came

To Pherae and the abode of Diocles,

Son of Orsilochus, who claimed to be

The offspring of Alpheius. They with him

Found welcome there, and there that night they slept.
And when the rosy-fingered Morn appeared,

They yoked the horses, climbed the shining car,

And issued from the palace gate beneath

The sounding portico. Peisistratus

Wielded the lash to urge the coursers on,

And not unwillingly they flew and reached

A land of harvests. Here the travellers found

Their journey’s end, so swiftly those fleet steeds

Had borne them on. And now the sun went down,

And darkness gathered over all the ways.

Book IV

Conference of Telemachus and Menelaus

Arrival of Telemachus and his companion at Sparta—A wedding; the marriage of the daughter of Menelaus—Helen in Sparta—Entertainment of the guests—Helen's account of her return to her husband—The Trojan horse—Narrative of the visit of Menelaus to Egypt, in order to consult the sea-god, Proteus—Menelaus informed by him that Ulysses is detained by Calypso in her island—Plot of the suitors to lie in wait for Telemachus on his voyage and destroy him—Penelope visited and consoled by Pallas in a dream.

They came to Lacedaemon's valley, seamed

With dells, and to the palace of its king,

The glorious Menelaus, whom they found

Within, and at a wedding banquet, made

Both for his blameless daughter and his son,

And many guests. Her he must send away,

Bride of the son of that invincible chief,

Achilles. He betrothed her while in Troy,

And gave his kingly word, and now the gods

Fulfilled it by the marriage. He was now

Sending her forth, with steeds and cars, to reach

The noble city of the Myrmidons,

Where ruled her consort. From the Spartan coast

He brought Alector’s daughter for his son,

The gallant Megapenthes, borne to him

By a handmaiden in his later years.

For not to Helen had the gods vouchsafed

Yet other offspring, after she had brought

A lovely daughter forth, Hermione,

Like golden Venus both in face and form.
So banqueting the neighbors and the friends

Of glorious Menelaus sat beneath

The lofty ceiling of those spacious halls,

Delighted with the feast. A sacred bard

Amidst them touched the harp and sang to them

While, as the song began, two dancers sprang

Into the midst and trod the measure there
But they—the hero-youth Telemachus

And Nestor’s eminent son—were at the gate,

And standing in the entrance with their steeds.

The worthy Eteoneus, coming forth—

The trusty servant of the glorious son

Of Atreus—saw, and hastening thence to tell

The shepherd of the people, through the hall

He came to him, and spake these winged words:—
“O Menelaus, foster-child of Jove,

Two strangers have arrived, two men who seem

Descended from almighty Jupiter.

Shall we then loose the harness from their steeds,

Or bid them elsewhere seek a friendly host?”
The fair-haired king indignantly replied:—

“Nay, Eteoneus, thou hast not been wont.

Son of Boëthus, thus to play the fool.

Thou pratest idly, like a child. Ourselves

Have sat, as guests, at generous banquets given

By other men, when journeying hitherward

In hope that Jove might grant a respite here

From our disasters. Hasten, then, to loose

The steeds, and bring the strangers to the feast.”
He spake; the attendant hastened forth and called

The other trusty servitors, with charge

To follow. They unyoked the sweaty steeds,

And bound them to the stalls, and gave them oats,

With which they mingled the white barley-grains,

And close against the shining wall they placed

The car, and then they led the guests within

The sumptuous palace. Entering, these admired

The palace of the foster-child of Jove,

For like the splendor of the sun and moon

Its glory was. They with delighted eyes

Gazed, and, descending to the polished baths,

They bathed. The attendant maids who at the bath

Had ministered, anointing them with oil,

Arrayed the stranger guests in fleecy cloaks

And tunics. Each sat down upon a throne

Near to Atrides. Now a handmaid brought

A beautiful ewer of gold, and laver wrought

Of silver, and poured water for their hands,

And spread a polished table near their seat;

The reverend matron of the household came

With bread, and set before them many a dish

Gathered from all the feast. The carver next

Brought chargers lifted high, and in them meats

Of every flavor, and before them placed

Beakers of gold. The fair-haired monarch gave

His hand to each, and then bespake them thus:—
“Now taste our banquet and rejoice, and when

Ye are refreshed with food we will inquire

Who ye may be; for ye are not of those

Whose race degenerates, ye are surely born

Of sceptred kings, the favorites of Jove.

Ignoble men have never sons like you.”
Thus having said, and taking in his hands

A fatling bullock’s chine, which menials brought

Roasted, and placed beside the king in sign

Of honor, this he laid before his guests.

And they put forth their hands and banqueted;

And when the calls of hunger and of thirst

At length were stilled, Telemachus inclined

His head toward Nestor’s son, that no one else

Might listen to his words, and thus he said:—
“See, son of Nestor, my beloved friend,

In all these echoing rooms the sheen of brass,

Of gold, of amber, and of ivory;

Such is the palace of Olympian Jove

Within its walls. How many things are here

Of priceless worth! I wonder as I gaze.”
The fair-haired Menelaus heard him speak,

And thus accosted both with winged words:—

“Dear sons, no mortal man may vie with Jove,

Whose palace and possessions never know

Decay, but other men may vie or not

In wealth with me. ’Twas after suffering

And wandering long that in my fleet I brought

My wealth with me, and landed on this coast

In the eighth year. For I had roamed afar

To Cyprus and to Phoenicè, and where

The Egyptians dwell, and Ethiopia’s sons,

And the Sidonians, and the Erembian race,

And to the coast of Lybia, where the lambs

Are yeaned with budding horns. There do the ewes

Thrice in the circle of the year bring forth

Their young. There both the master of the herd

And herdsman know no lack of cheese, or flesh,

Or of sweet milk; for there the herds yield milk

The whole year round. While I was roaming thus,

And gathering store of wealth, another slew

My brother, unforewarned, and through the fraud

Of his own guilty consort. Therefore small

Is the content I find in bearing rule

O’er these possessions. Ye have doubtless heard

This from your parents, be they who they may;

For much have I endured, and I have lost

A palace, a most noble dwelling-place,

Full of things rare and precious. Even now

Would I possessed within my palace here

But the third part of these; and would that they

Were yet alive who perished on the plain

Of Troy afar from Argos and its steeds!

Yet while I grieve and while I mourn them all,

Here, sitting in my palace, I by turns

Indulge my heart in weeping, and by turns

I pause, for with continual sorrow comes

A weariness of spirit. Yet, in truth,

For none of all those warriors, though their fate

Afflicts me sorely, do I so much grieve

As for one hero. When I think of him,

The feast and couch are joyless, since, of all

The Achaian chiefs, none brought so much to pass

As did Ulysses, both in what he wrought

And what he suffered. Great calamities

Fell to his lot in life, and to my own

Grief for his sake that cannot be consoled.

Long has he been divided from his friends,

And whether he be living now or dead

We know not. Old Laertes, the sage queen

Penelope, and young Telemachus,

Whom, when he went to war he left newborn

At home, are sorrowing somewhere for his sake.”
He spake, and woke anew the young man’s grief

For his lost father. From his eyelids fell

Tears at the hearing of his father’s name,

And with both hands he held before his eyes

The purple mantle. Menelaus saw

His tears, and pondered, doubting which were best—

To let the stranger of his own accord

Speak of his father, or to question him

At first, and then to tell him all he knew.

As thus he pondered, Helen, like in form

To Dian of the golden distaff, left

Her high-roofed chamber, where the air was sweet

With perfumes, and approached. Adrasta placed

A seat for her of costly workmanship;

Alcippè brought a mat of soft light wool,

And Phylo with a silver basket came,

Given by Alcandra, wife of Polybus,

Who dwelt at Thebes, in Egypt, and whose house

Was rich in things of price. Two silver baths

He gave to Menelaus, tripods two,

And talents ten of gold. His wife bestowed

Beautiful gifts on Helen—one of gold,

A distaff; one a silver basket edged

With gold and round in form. This Phylo brought

Heaped with spun yarn and placed before the queen;

Upon it lay the distaff, wrapped in wool

Of color like the violet. Helen there

Sat down, a footstool at her feet, and straight

Questioned with earnest words her husband thus:—
“Say, Menelaus, foster-child of Jove,

Is it yet known what lineage these men claim—

These visitants? And what I now shall say,

Will it be false or true? Yet must I speak.

Woman or man I think I never saw

So like another as this youth, on whom

I look with deep astonishment, is like

Telemachus, the son whom our great chief

Ulysses left at home a tender babe

When ye Achaians for my guilty sake

Went forth to wage the bloody war with Troy.”
And fair-haired Menelaus answered her:—

“Yea, wife, so deem I as it seems to thee.

Such are his feet, his hands, the cast of the eye,

His head, the hair upon his brow. Just now,

In speaking of Ulysses, as I told

How he had toiled and suffered for my sake,

The stranger held the purple cloak before

His eyes, and from the lids dropped bitter tears.”
Peisistratus, the son of Nestor, spake

In answer: “Menelaus, foster-child

Of Jove and son of Atreus! sovereign king!

He is, as thou hast said, that hero’s son;

But he is modest, and he deems that ill

It would become him, on arriving here,

If he should venture in discourse while thou

Art present, in whose voice we take delight

As if it were the utterance of a god.

The knight Gerenian Nestor sent me forth

To guide him hither—for he earnestly

Desired to see thee, that thou mightest give

Counsel in what he yet should say or do.

For bitterly a son, who finds at home

No others to befriend him, must lament

The absence of a father. So it is

With young Telemachus; for far away

His father is, and in the land are none

Who have the power to shelter him from wrong.”
The fair-haired Menelaus answered thus:—

“O wonder! Then the son of one most dear,

Who for my sake so oft has braved and borne

The conflicts of the battlefield, hath come

Beneath my roof. I thought that I should greet

His father with a warmer welcome here

Than any other of the Argive race,

When Jove the Olympian Thunderer should grant

A safe return to us across the deep

In our good ships. I would have founded here

For him a city in Argos, and have built

Dwellings, and would have brought from Ithaca

Him and his son, and all his wealth and all

His people. To this end I would have caused

Some neighboring district where my sway is owned

To be dispeopled. Dwelling here we oft

Should then have met each other, and no cause

Would e’er have parted us, two faithful friends

Delighting in each other, till at last

Came Death’s black cloud to wrap us in its shade.

A god, no doubt, hath seen in this a good

Too great for us, and thus to him alone,

Unhappy man! denied a safe return.”
He spake; his words awoke in every heart

Grief for the absent hero’s sake. Then wept

The Argive Helen, child of Jove; then wept

Telemachus; nor tearless were the eyes

Of Nestor’s son, for to his mind arose

The memory of the good Antilochus,

Slain by the bright Aurora’s eminent son;

Of him he thought, and spake these winged words:—
“O son of Atreus! aged Nestor saith,

When in his palace we discourse of thee

And ask each other’s thought, that thou art wise

Beyond all other men. Now, if thou mayst,

Indulge me, for not willingly I weep

Thus at the evening feast, and soon will Morn,

Child of the Dawn, appear. I do not blame

This sorrow for whoever meets his fate

And dies; the only honors we can pay

To those unhappy mortals is to shred

Our locks away, and wet our cheeks with tears.

I lost a brother, not the least in worth

Among the Argives, whom thou must have seen.

I knew him not: I never saw his face;

Yet is it said Antilochus excelled

The others; swift of foot, and brave in war.”

The fair-haired Menelaus answered him:—

“Since thou my friend hast spoken thus, as one

Discreet in word and deed, of riper years

Than thou, might speak and act—for thou art born

Of such a father, and thy words are wise—

And easy is it to discern the son

Of one on whom Saturnius has bestowed

Both at the birth-hour and in wedded life

His blessing; as he gives to Nestor now

A calm old age that lapses pleasantly,

Within his palace-halls, from day to day,

And sons wise-minded, mighty with the spear—

Then let us lay aside this sudden grief

That has o’ertaken us, and only think

Of banqueting. Let water now be poured

Upon our hands; there will be time enough

Tomorrow for discourse; Telemachus

And I will then engage in mutual talk.”
He spake, Asphalion, who with diligent heed

Served the great Menelaus, on their hands

Poured water, and they shared the meats that lay

Upon the board. But Helen, Jove-born dame,

Had other thoughts, and with the wine they drank

Mingled a drug, an antidote to grief

And anger, bringing quick forgetfulness

Of all life’s evils. Whoso drinks, when once

It is infused and in the cup, that day

Shall never wet his cheeks with tears, although

His father and his mother lie in death,

Nor though his brother or beloved son

Fall butchered by the sword before his eyes.

Such sovereign drugs she had, that child of Jove,

Given her by Polydamna, wife of Thon,

A dame of Egypt, where the bounteous soil

Brings forth abundantly its potent herbs,

Of healing some and some of bane, and where

Dwell the physicians who excel in skill

All other men, for they are of the race

Of Paeon. Now when Helen in the cups

Had placed the drug, and bidden them to pour

The wine upon it, thus she spake again:—
"Atrides Menelaus, reared by Jove,

And ye the sons of heroes!—Jupiter

The sovereign, gives, at pleasure, good and ill

To one or to another, for his power

Is infinite—now sitting in these halls,

Feast and enjoy free converse. I will speak

What suits the occasion. I could not relate,

I could not even name, the many toils

Borne by Ulysses, stout of heart. I speak

Only of what that valiant warrior did

And suffered once in Troy, where ye of Greece

Endured such hardships. He had given himself

Unseemly stripes, and o’er his shoulders flung

Vile garments like a slave’s, and entered thus

The enemy’s town, and walked its spacious streets.

Another man he seemed in that disguise—

A beggar, though when at the Achaian fleet

So different was the semblance that he wore.

He entered Ilium thus transformed, and none

Knew who it was that passed, but I perceived,

And questioned him; he turned my quest aside

With crafty answers. After I had seen

The bath administered, anointed him

And clothed him, and had sworn a solemn oath

Not to reveal his visit to the men

Of Ilium till he reached again the tents

And galleys, then he opened to me all

The plans of the Achaians. Leaving me,

On his return he slew with his long spear

Full many a Trojan, and in safety reached

The Argive camp with tidings for the host.

Then wept aloud the Trojan dames, but I

Was glad at heart, for I already longed

For my old home, and deeply I deplored

The evil fate that Venus brought on me,

Who led me thither from my own dear land,

And from my daughter and my marriage-bower,

And from my lawful spouse, in whom I missed

No noble gift of person or of mind."
Then fair-haired Menelaus said to her:—

"All thou hast spoken, woman, is most true.

Of many a valiant warrior I have known

The counsels and the purposes, and far

Have roamed in many lands, but never yet

My eyes have looked on such another man

As was Ulysses, of a heart so bold

And such endurance. Witness what he did

And bore, the heroic man, what time we sat,

The bravest of the Argives, pent within

The wooden horse, about to bring to Troy

Slaughter and death. Thou earnest to the place,

Moved, as it seemed, by some divinity

Who thought to give the glory of the day

To Troy. Deiphobus, the godlike chief,

Was with thee. Thrice about the hollow frame

That held the ambush thou didst walk and touch

Its sides, and call the Achaian chiefs by name,

And imitate the voices of the wives

Of all the Argives. Diomed and I

Sat with the great Ulysses in the midst,

And with him heard thy call, and rose at once

To sally forth or answer from within;

But he forbade, impatient as we were,

And so restrained us. All the Achaian chiefs

Kept silence save Anticlus, who alone

Began to speak, when, with his powerful hands,

Ulysses pressed together instantly

The opening lips, and saved us all, and thus

Held them till Pallas lured thee from the spot."
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:—

"Atrides Menelaus, reared by Jove,

Ruler of tribes! the harder was his lot,

Since even thus he could not shun the stroke

Of death, not though a heart of steel were his.

But now dismiss us to our beds, that there,

Couched softly, we may welcome balmy sleep."
He spake, and Argive Helen called her maids

To make up couches in the portico,

And throw fair purple blankets over them,

And tapestry above, and cover all

With shaggy cloaks. Forth from the palace halls

They went with torches, and made ready soon

The couches; thither heralds led the guests.

There in the vestibule Telemachus,

The hero, and with him the eminent son

Of Nestor, took their rest. Meanwhile the son

Of Atreus lay within an inner room

Of that magnificent pile, and near to him

The glorious lady, long-robed Helen, slept.

But when at length the daughter of the Dawn,

The rosy-fingered Morning, brought her light,

Then Menelaus, great in battle, rose,

Put on his garments, took his trenchant sword,

And, having hung it on his shoulder, laced

The shapely sandals to his shining feet,

And issued from his chamber like a god

In aspect. Near Telemachus he took

His seat, and calling him by name he spake:—
“What urgent cause, my brave Telemachus,

Brings thee to sacred Lacedaemon o’er

The breast of the great ocean? Frankly say,

Is it a private or a public need?”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:—

“Atrides Menelaus, reared by Jove,

Ruler of nations! I am come to ask

News of my father, if thou knowest aught.

My heritage is wasting; my rich fields

Are made a desolation. Enemies

Swarm in my palace, and from day to day

Slaughter my flocks and slow-paced horned herds;

My mother’s suitors they, and measureless

Their insolence. And therefore am I come

To clasp thy knees, and pray thee to relate

The manner of my father’s sorrowful death

As thou hast seen it with thine eyes, or heard

Its story from some wandering man—for sure

His mother brought him forth to wretchedness

Beyond the common lot. I ask thee not

To soften aught in the sad history

Through tenderness to me, or kind regard,

But tell me plainly all that thou dost know;

And I beseech thee, if at any time

My father, good Ulysses, brought to pass

Aught that he undertook for thee in word

Or act while ye were in the realm of Troy,

Where the Greeks suffered sorely, bear it now

In mind, and let me have the naked truth.”
Then Menelaus of the amber locks

Drew a deep sigh, and thus in answer said:—

“Heavens! they would climb into a brave man’s bed,

These craven weaklings. But as when a hart

Has hid her newborn suckling fawns within

The lair of some fierce lion, and gone forth

Herself to range the mountainsides and feed

Among the grassy lawns, the lion comes

Back to the place and brings them sudden death,

So will Ulysses bring a bloody fate

Upon the suitor crew. O father Jove,

And Pallas, and Apollo! I could wish

That now, with prowess such as once was his

When he, of yore, in Lesbos nobly built,

Rising to strive with Philomela’s son,

In wrestling threw him heavily, and all

The Greeks rejoiced, Ulysses might engage

The suitors. Short were then their term of life,

And bitter would the nuptial banquet be.

Now for the questions thou hast put, and craved

From me a true reply, I will not seek

To pass them by with talk of other things,

Nor yet deceive thee, but of all that once

Was told me by the Ancient of the Deep,

Whose words are truth, I shall keep nothing back.

“In Egypt still, though longing to come home,

The gods detained me; for I had not paid

The sacrifice of chosen hecatombs,

And ever do the gods require of us

Remembrance of their laws. There is an isle

Within the billowy sea before you reach

The coast of Egypt—Pharos is its name—

At such a distance as a ship could pass

In one whole day with a shrill breeze astern.

A sheltered haven lies within that isle,

Whence the good ships go forth with fresh supplies

Of water. There the gods constrained my stay

For twenty days, and never in that time

Blew favoring winds across the waters, such

As bear the galley over the great deep.

Now would our stores of food have been consumed,

Now would the courage of my men have died,

Had not a goddess pitied me, and come

To my relief, by name Eidothea, born

To the great Proteus, Ancient of the Deep.

For she was moved by my distress, and came

To me while I was wandering alone,

Apart from all the rest. They through the isle

Roamed everywhere from place to place, and, pinched

With hunger, threw the hook for fish. She came,

And, standing near, accosted me and said:—
"'Stranger, thou art an idiot, or at least

Of careless mood, or else art willingly

Neglectful, and art pleased with suffering,

That thou dost linger in this isle so long

And find no means to leave it, while the hearts

Of thy companions faint with the delay.’
“She spake, and I replied: ‘Whoe’er thou art,

goddess, let me say, not willingly

I linger here. I surely must have sinned

Against the immortal dwellers of high heaven;

But tell me—for the gods know all things—who

Of all the immortals holds me windbound here,

Hindering my voyage; tell me also how

To reach my home across the fishy deep.’
“I ended, and the glorious goddess said

In answer: ‘Stranger, I will truly speak;

The deathless Ancient of the Deep, whose words

Are ever true, Egyptian Proteus, oft

Here makes his haunt. To him are fully known—

For he is Neptune’s subject—all the depths

Of the great ocean. It is said I owe

To him my birth. If him thou canst insnare

And seize, he will disclose to thee thy way

And all its distances, and tell thee how

To reach thy home across the fishy deep;

And further will reveal, if so he choose,

O foster-child of Jove, whate’er of good

Or ill has in thy palace come to pass,

While thou wert wandering long and wearily.’
“So said the goddess, and I spake again:—

‘Explain by what device to snare and hold

The aged deity, lest he foreknow

Or else suspect our purpose and escape.

’Twere hard for mortals to constrain a god.’

“I ended, and the glorious goddess thus

Made answer: ‘When the climbing sun has reached

The middle heaven, the Ancient of the Deep,

Who ne’er deceives, emerges from the waves,

And, covered with the dark scum of the sea,

Walks forth, and in a cavern vault lies down.

Thither fair Halosydna’s progeny,

The sea-calves from the hoary ocean, throng,

Rank with the bitter odor of the brine,

And slumber near him. With the break of day

I will conduct thee thither and appoint

Thy place, but thou shalt choose to go with thee

Three of the bravest men in thy good ships.

And let me now relate the stratagems

Of the old prophet. He at first will count

The sea-calves, going o’er them all by fives;

And when he has beheld and numbered all,

Amidst them all will he lie down, as lies

A shepherd midst his flock. And then, as soon

As ye behold him stretched at length, exert

Your utmost strength to hold him there, although

He strive and struggle to escape your hands;

For he will try all stratagems, and take

The form of every reptile on the earth,

And turn to water and to raging flame—

Yet hold him firmly still, and all the more

Make fast the bands. When he again shall take

The form in which thou sawest him asleep,

Desist from force, and loose the bands that held

The ancient prophet. Ask of him what god

Afflicts thee thus, and by what means to cross

The fishy deep and find thy home again.’

“Thus having said, the goddess straightway sprang

Into the billowy ocean, while I sought

The galleys, where they rested on the sand,

With an uneasy spirit. When I reached

The ship and shore we made our evening meal.

The hallowed night came down; we lay and slept

Upon the sea-beach. When the Morning came,

The rosy-fingered daughter of the Dawn,

Forth on the border of the mighty main

I went, and prayed the immortals fervently.

I led three comrades, whom I trusted most

In all adventures. Entering the depths

Of the great sea, the goddess brought us thence

Four skins of sea-calves newly flayed, that thus

We might deceive her father. Then she scooped

Beds for us in the sea-sand, and sat down

To wait his coming. We were near to her,

And there she laid us duly down, and threw

A skin o’er each. Now did our ambush seem

Beyond endurance, for the noisome smell

Of those sea-nourished creatures sickened us;

And who could bear to sleep beside a whale?

But she bethought her of an antidote,

A sovereign one, and so relieved us all.

To each she brought ambrosia, placing it

Beneath his nostrils, and the sweets it breathed

O’ercame the animal odor. All the morn

We waited patiently. The sea-calves came

From ocean in a throng, and laid themselves

In rows along the margin of the sea.

At noon emerged the aged seer, and found

His well-fed sea-calves. Going o’er them all

He counted them, ourselves among the rest,

With no misgiving of the fraud, and then

He laid him down to rest. We rushed with shouts

Upon him suddenly, and in our arms

Caught him; nor did the aged seer forget

His stratagems; and first he took the shape

Of a maned lion, of a serpent next,

Then of a panther, then of a huge boar,

Then turned to flowing water, then became

A tall tree full of leaves. With resolute hearts

We held him fast, until the aged seer

Was wearied out, in spite of all his wiles.

And questioned me in speech at last and said:—
“‘O son of Atreus! who of all the gods

Hath taught thee how to take me in this snare,

Unwilling as I am? What wouldst thou have?’
“He spake; I answered: ‘Aged prophet, well

Thou knowest. Why deceitfully inquire?

It is that I am held a prisoner long

Within this isle, and vainly seek the means

Of my escape, and grief consumes my heart.

Now—since the gods know all things—tell me this,

What deity it is, that, hindering thus

My voyage, keeps me here, and tell me how

To cross the fishy deep and reach my home.’
“Such were my words, and he in answer said:—

‘But thou to Jove and to the other gods

Shouldst first have paid acceptable sacrifice,

And shouldst have then embarked to reach with speed

Thy native land across the dark-blue deep.

Now it is not thy fate to see again

Thy friends, thy stately palace, and the land

That saw thy birth, until thou stand once more

Beside the river that through Egypt flows

From Jove, and offer sacred hecatombs

To the ever-living gods inhabiting

The boundless heaven, and they will speed thee forth

Upon the voyage thou dost long to make.’
“He spake. My heart was broken as I heard

His bidding to recross the shadowy sea

To Egypt, for the way was difficult

And long; and yet I answered him and said:—
"'Duly will I perform, O aged seer,

What thou commandest. But I pray thee tell,

And truly, whether all the sons of Greece

Whom Nestor and myself, in setting sail,

Left on the Trojan coast, have since returned

Safe with their galleys, or have any died

Untimely in their ships or in the arms

Of their companions since the war was closed?'
"I spake; again he answered me and said:—

'Why dost thou ask, Atrides, since to know

Thou needest not, nor is it well to explore

The secrets of my mind? Thou canst not, sure,

Refrain from tears when thou shalt know the whole.

Many are dead, and many left in Troy.

Two leaders only of the well-armed Greeks

Were slain returning; in that combat thou

Didst bear a part; one, living yet, is kept,

Far in the mighty main, from his return.
"'Amid his well-oared galleys Ajax died.

For Neptune first had driven him on the rocks

Of Gyrae, yet had saved him from the sea;

And he, though Pallas hated him, had yet

Been rescued, but for uttering boastful words,

Which drew his fate upon him. He had said

That he, in spite of all the gods, would come

Safe from those mountain waves. When Neptune heard

The boaster's challenge, instantly he laid

His strong hand on the trident, smote the rock

And cleft it to the base. Part stood erect,

Part fell into the deep. There Ajax sat,

And felt the shock, and with the falling mass

Was carried headlong to the billowy depths

Below, and drank the brine and perished there.

Thy brother in his roomy ships escaped

The danger, for imperial Juno’s aid

Preserved him. But when near Meleia’s heights

About to land, a tempest seized and swept

The hero thence across the fishy deep,

Lamenting his hard lot, to that far cape

Where once abode Thyestes, and where now

His son Aegisthus dwelt. But when the gods

Sent other winds, and safe at last appeared

The voyage, they returned, and reached their home.

With joy he stepped upon his native soil,

And kissed the earth that bore him, while his tears

At that most welcome sight flowed fast and warm.

Him from a lofty perch a spy beheld,

Whom treacherous Aegisthus planted there,

Bribed by two golden talents. He had watched

The whole year through, lest, coming unobserved,

The king might make his prowess felt. The spy

Flew to the royal palace with the news,

And instantly Aegisthus planned a snare.

He chose among the people twenty men,

The bravest, whom he stationed out of sight,

And gave command that others should prepare

A banquet. Then with chariots and with steeds,

And with a deadly purpose in his heart,

He went, and, meeting Agamemnon, bade

The shepherd of the people to the feast,

And slew him at the board as men might slay

A bullock at the crib. Of all who went

With Agamemnon thither, none survived,

And of the followers of Aegisthus none,

But all were slaughtered in the banquet-hall’
“He spake; my heart was breaking, and I wept,

While sitting on the sand, nor in my heart

Cared I to live, or longer to behold

The sweet light of the sun. But when there came

Respite from tears and writhing on the ground,

The Ancient of the Deep, who ne’er deceives,

Spake yet again: ‘Atrides, lose no time

In tears; they profit nothing. Rather seek

The means by which thou mayst the soonest reach

Thy native land. There thou perchance mayst find

Aegisthus yet alive, or haply first

Orestes may have slain him, and thyself

Arrive to see the funeral rites performed.’
“He spake, and though afflicted still, my heart

Was somewhat comforted; my spirit rose,

And thus I answered him with winged words:—
“ ‘These men I know; name now the third, who still

Is kept from his return afar within

The mighty main—alive, perchance, or dead;

For, though I dread to hear, I long to know.’
“I spake, and Proteus answered me again:—

‘It is Laertes’ son, whose dwelling stands

In Ithaca. I saw him in an isle,

And in the cavern-palace of the nymph

Calypso, weeping bitterly, for she

Constrains his stay. He cannot leave the isle

For his own country; ship arrayed with oars

And seamen has he none to bear him o’er

The breast of the great ocean. But for thee,

’Tis not decreed that thou shalt meet thy fate

And die, most noble Menelaus, where

The steeds of Argos in her pastures graze.

The gods will send thee to the Elysian plain,

And to the end of earth, the dwelling-place

Of fair-haired Rhadamanthus. There do men

Lead easiest lives. No snow, no bitter cold,

No beating rains, are there; the ocean-deeps

With murmuring breezes from the West refresh

The dwellers. Thither shalt thou go; for thou

Art Helen’s spouse, and son-in-law of Jove.’
“He spake, and plunged into the billowy deep.

I to the fleet returned in company

With my brave men, revolving, as I went,

A thousand projects in my thought. I reached

My galley by the sea, and we prepared

Our evening meal. The hallowed night came down,

And there upon the ocean-beach we slept.

But when the rosy-fingered Morn appeared,

The daughter of the Dawn, we drew our ships

To the great deep, and raised the masts and spread

The sails; the crews, all entering, took their seats

Upon the benches, ranged in order due,

And beat the foaming water with their oars.

Again to Egypt’s coast I brought the fleet,

And to the river that descends from Jove,

And there I offered chosen hecatombs;

And having thus appeased the gods, I reared

A tomb to Agamemnon, that his fame

Might never die. When this was done I sailed

For home; the gods bestowed a favoring wind.

But now remain thou till the eleventh day,

Or till the twelfth, beneath my roof, and then

Will I dismiss thee with munificent gifts—

Three steeds, a polished chariot, and a cup

Of price, with which to pour, from day to day,

Wine to the gods in memory of me.”

Then spake discreet Telemachus again:—

“Atrides, seek not to detain me long,

Though I could sit contentedly a year

Beside thee, never longing for my home,

Nor for my parents, such delight I find

In listening to thy words; but even now,

In hallowed Pylos, my companions grow

Weary, while thou delayest my return.

The gifts—whate’er thou choosest to bestow—

Let them be such as I can treasure up.

The steeds to Ithaca I may not take,

I leave them to adorn thy retinue;

For thou art ruler o’er a realm of plains,

Where grows much lotus, and sweet grasses spring,

And wheat and rye, and the luxuriant stalks

Of the white barley. But in Ithaca

Are no broad grounds for coursing, meadows none.

Goats graze amid its fields, a fairer land

Than those where horses feed. No isle that lies

Within the deep has either roads for steeds

Or meadows, least of all has Ithaca.”
He spake; the valiant Menelaus smiled,

And kindly touched him with his hand and said:—
“Dear son, thou comest of a generous stock;

Thy words declare it. I will change my gifts,

As well I may. Of all that in my house

Are treasured up, the choicest I will give,

And the most precious. I will give a cup

Wrought all of silver save its brim of gold.

It is the work of Vulcan. Phaedimus

The hero, King of Sidon, gave it me,

When I was coming home, and underneath

His roof was sheltered. Now it shall be thine.”
So talked they with each other. Meantime came

Those who prepared the banquet to the halls

Of the great monarch. Bringing sheep they came

And strengthening wine. Their wives, who on their brows

Wore showy fillets, brought the bread, and thus

Within the house of Menelaus all

Was bustle, setting forth the evening meal.
But in the well-paved court which lay before

The palace of Ulysses, where of late

Their insolence was shown, the suitor train

Amused themselves with casting quoits and spears,

While by themselves Antinoüs, and the youth

Of godlike mien, Eurymachus, who both

Were eminent above the others, sat.

To them Noëmon, son of Phronius, went,

Drew near, bespake Antinoüs and inquired:—
“Is it among us known, or is it not,

Antinoüs, when Telemachus returns

From sandy Pylos? Thither he is gone

And in my galley, which I need to cross

To spacious Elis. There I have twelve mares

And hardy mule-colts with them yet untamed,

And some I must subdue to take the yoke.”
He spake, and they were both amazed; for they

Had never thought of him as visiting

Neleian Pylos, deeming that the youth

Was somewhere in his fields, among the flocks,

Or haply with the keeper of the swine.
Then did Antinoüs, Eupeithes’ son,

Make answer: “Tell me truly when he sailed,

And what young men of Ithaca he chose

To go with him. Were they his slaves, or hired

To be his followers? Tell, for I would know

The whole. Took he thy ship against thy will?

Or didst thou yield it at his first request?”
Noëmon, son of Phornius, thus replied:—

“Most willingly I gave it, for what else

Would anyone have done when such a man

Desired it in his need? It would have been

Hard to deny it. For the band of youths

Who followed him, they are the bravest here

Of all our people; and I saw embark,

As their commander, Mentor, or some god

Like Mentor altogether. One thing moves

My wonder. Only yesterday, at dawn,

I met with Mentor here, whom I before

Had seen embarking for the Pylian coast.”
Noëmon spake, and to his father’s house

Departed. Both were troubled at his words,

And all the suitors took at once their seats,

And ceased their pastimes. Then Antinoüs spake,

Son of Eupeithes, greatly vexed; his heart

Was darkened with blind rage; his eyes shot fire.
“Strange doings these! a great and proud exploit

Performed—this voyage of Telemachus,

Which we had called impossible! The boy,

In spite of us, has had his will and gone,

And carried off a ship, and for his crew

Chosen the bravest of the people here.

He yet will prove a pest. May Jupiter

Crush him ere he can work us further harm!

Now give me a swift barque and twenty men

That I may lie in ambush and keep watch

For his return within the straits between

This isle and rugged Samos; then, I deem,

He will have sought his father to his cost.”
He spake; they praised his words and bade him act,

And rose and left their places, entering

The palace of Ulysses. Brief the time

That passed before Penelope was warned

Of what the suitors treacherously planned.

The herald Medon told her all. He heard

In the outer court their counsels while within

They plotted, and he hastened through the house

To bring the tidings to Penelope.

Penelope perceived him as he stepped

Across the threshold, and bespake him thus:—
"Why, herald, have the suitor princes sent

Thee hither? comest thou to bid the maids

Of great Ulysses leave their tasks and make

A banquet ready? Would their wooing here

And elsewhere were but ended, and this feast

Were their last feast on earth! Ye who in throngs

Come hither and so wastefully consume

The substance of the brave Telemachus,

Have ye not from your parents, while ye yet

Were children, heard how once Ulysses lived

Among them, never wronging any man

In all the realm by aught he did or said—

As mighty princes often do, through hate

Of some and love of others? Never man

Endured injustice at his hands, but you—

Your vile designs and acts are known; ye bear

No grateful memory of a good man’s deeds.”
And then, in turn, experienced Medon spake:—

“O queen, I would this evil were the worst!

The suitors meditate a greater still,

And a more heinous far. May Jupiter

Never permit the crime! Their purpose is

To meet Telemachus, on his return,

And slay him with the sword; for thou must know

That on a voyage to the Pylian coast

And noble Lacedaemon he has sailed,

To gather tidings of his father’s fate.”
He spake, and her knees failed her and her heart

Sank as she heard. Long time she could not speak;

Her eyes were filled with tears, and her clear voice

Was choked; yet, finding words at length, she said:—
“O herald! wherefore should my son have gone?

There was no need that he should trust himself

To the swift ships, those horses of the sea,

With which men traverse its unmeasured waste.

Was it that he might leave no name on earth?”
And then again experienced Medon spake:—

“I know not whether prompted by some god

Or moved by his own heart thy son has sailed

For Pylos, hoping there to hear some news

Of his returning father, or his fate.”
Thus having said, the herald, traversing

The palace of Ulysses, went his way,

While a keen anguish overpowered the queen,

Nor could she longer bear to keep her place

Upon her seat—and many seats were there—

But on the threshold of her gorgeous rooms

Lay piteously lamenting. Round her came

Her maidens wailing—all, both old and young,

Who formed her household. These Penelope,

Sobbing in her great sorrow, thus bespake:—
“Hear me, my friends, the heavens have cast on me

Griefs heavier than on any others born

And reared with me—me, who had lost by death

Already a most gracious husband, one

Who bore a lion heart and who was graced

With every virtue, greatly eminent

Among the Greeks, and widely famed abroad

Through Hellas and all Argos. Now my son,

He whom I loved, is driven before the storms

From home, inglorious, and I was not told

Of his departure. Ye too, worthless crew!

Ye took no thought, not one of you, to call

Me from my sleep, although ye must have known

Full well when he embarked in his black ship.

And if it had been told me that he planned

This voyage, then, impatient as he was

To sail, he would have certainly remained,

Or else have left me in these halls a corpse.

And now let one of my attendants call

The aged Dolius, whom, when first I came

To this abode, my father gave to me

To be my servant, and who has in charge

My orchards. Let him haste and take his place

Beside Laertes, and to him declare

All that has happened, that he may devise

Some fitting remedy, or go among

The people, to deplore the dark designs

Of those who now are plotting to destroy

The heir of great Ulysses and his own.”
Then Eurycleia, the beloved nurse,

Answered: “Dear lady, slay me with the sword,

Or leave me here alive; I will conceal

Nothing that has been done or said. I gave

All that he asked, both bread and delicate wine,

And took a solemn oath, which he required,

To tell thee naught of this till twelve days passed,

Or till thou shouldst thyself inquire and hear

Of his departure, that those lovely cheeks

Might not be stained with tears. Now bathe and put

Fresh garments on, and to the upper rooms

Ascending, with thy handmaids offer prayer

To Pallas, daughter of the god who bears

The aegis. She will then protect thy son,

Even from death. Grieve not the aged man,

Already much afflicted. Sure I am

The lineage of Arcesius has not lost

The favor of the gods, but someone yet

Surviving will possess its lofty halls

And its rich acres, stretching far away."
She spake; the queen repressed her grief, and held

Her eyes from tears. She took the bath and put

Fresh garments on, and, to the upper rooms

Ascending with her maidens, heaped with cakes

A canister, and prayed to Pallas thus:—
“Daughter invincible of Jupiter

The Aegis-bearer, hear me. If within

Thy courts the wise Ulysses ever burned

Fat thighs of beeves or sheep, remember it,

And rescue my dear son, and bring to naught

The wicked plots of the proud suitor-crew.”
She spake, and wept aloud. The goddess heard

Her prayer. Meantime the suitors filled with noise

The shadowy palace-halls, and there were some

Among that throng of arrogant youths who said:—
“Truly the queen, whom we have wooed so long,

Prepares for marriage; little does she know

The bloody death we destine for her son.”
So spake they, unaware of what was done

Elsewhere. Antinoüs then stood forth and said:—

“Good friends, I warn you all that ye refrain

From boasts like these, lest someone should report

Your words within. Now let us silently

Rise up, and all conspire to put in act

The counsel all so heartily approve.”
He spake, and chose a crew of twenty men,

The bravest. To the seaside and the ship

They went, and down to the deep water drew

The ship, and put the mast and sails on board,

And fitted duly to their leathern rings

The oars, and spread the white sail overhead.

Their nimble-handed servants brought them arms,

And there they moored the galley, went on board,

And supped and waited for the evening star.
Now in the upper chamber the chaste queen,

Penelope, lay fasting; food or wine

She had not tasted, and her thoughts were still

Fixed on her blameless son. Would he escape

The threatened death, or perish by the hands

Of the insolent suitors? As a lion’s thoughts,

When, midst a crowd of men, he sees with dread

The hostile circle slowly closing round,

Such were her thoughts, when balmy sleep at length

Came creeping over her as on her couch

She lay reclined, her limbs relaxed in rest.
Now Pallas framed a new device; she called

A phantom up, in aspect like the dame

Iphthime, whom Eumelus had espoused

In Pherae, daughter of the high-souled chief

Icarius. Her she sent into the halls

Of great Ulysses, that she might beguile

The sorrowful Penelope from tears

And lamentations. By the thong that held

The bolt she slid into the royal bower

And standing by her head bespake the queen:—
“Penelope, afflicted as thou art,

Art thou asleep? The ever-blessed gods

Permit thee not to grieve and weep; thy son,

Who has not sinned against them, shall return.”
And then discreet Penelope replied,

Still sweetly slumbering at the Gate of Dreams:—
“Why, sister, art thou here, who ne’er before

Hast come to me? The home is far away

In which thou dwellest. Thou exhortest me

To cease from grieving, and to lay aside

The painful thoughts that crowd into my mind,

And torture me who have already lost

A noble-minded, lionhearted spouse,

One eminent among Achaia’s sons

For every virtue, and whose fame was spread

Through Hellas and through Argos. Now my son,

My best beloved, goes to sea—a boy,

Unused to hardships, and unskilled to deal

With strangers. More I sorrow for his sake

Than for his father’s. I am filled with fear,

And tremble lest he suffer wrong from those

Among whom he has gone, or on the deep,

Where he has enemies who lie in wait

To slay him ere he reach his home again.”
And then the shadowy image spake again:—

“Be of good courage; let not fear o’ercome

Thy spirit, for there goes with him a guide

Such as all others would desire to have

Beside them ever, trusting in her power—

Pallas Athene, and she looks on thee

With pity. From her presence I am sent,

Her messenger, declaring this to thee.”
Again discreet Penelope replied:—

“If then thou be a goddess and hast heard

A goddess speak these words, declare, I pray,

Of that ill-fated one, if yet he live

And look upon the sun, or else have died

And passed to the abodes beneath the earth.”
Once more the shadowy image spake: “Of him

Will I say nothing, whether living yet

Or dead; no time is this for idle words.”
She said, and from the chamber glided forth

Beside the bolt, and mingled with the winds.

Then quickly from her couch of sleep arose

The daughter of Icarius, for her heart

Was glad, so plainly had the dream conveyed

Its message in the stillness of the night.
    Meanwhile the suitors on their ocean-path

Went in their galley, plotting cruelly

To slay Telemachus. A rocky isle

Far in the middle sea, between the coast

Of Ithaca and craggy Samos, lies,

Named Asteris; of narrow bounds, yet there

A sheltered haven is to which two straits

Give entrance. There the Achaians lay in wait.

Book V

Departure of Ulysses from Calypso

Mercury despatched by Jupiter to Calypso with a message commanding her to send away Ulysses—A raft constructed by Ulysses—His departure on the raft—A storm raised by Neptune, and the raft destroyed—Escape of Ulysses from the tempest, and his landing on the isle of Scheria, inhabited by the Phaeacians.

Aurora, rising from her couch beside

The famed Tithonus, brought the light of day

To men and to immortals. Then the gods

Came to their seats in council. With them came

High-thundering Jupiter, amongst them all

The mightiest. Pallas, mindful of the past,

Spake of Ulysses and his many woes,

Grieved that he still was with the island nymph:—

“O father Jove, and all ye blessed ones

Who live forever! let not sceptred king

Henceforth be gracious, mild, and merciful

And righteous; rather be he deaf to prayer

And prone to deeds of wrong, since no one now

Remembers the divine Ulysses more

Among the people over whom he ruled

Benignly, like a father. Still he lies,

Weighed down by many sorrows, in the isle

And dwelling of Calypso, who so long

Constrains his stay. To his dear native land

Depart he cannot; ship arrayed with oars

And seamen has he none, to bear him o’er

The breast of the broad ocean. Nay, even now,

Against his well-beloved son a plot

is laid, to slay him as he journeys home

From Pylos the divine, and from the walls

Of famous Sparta, whither he had gone

To gather tidings of his father's fate."
Then answered her the Ruler of the storms:—

"My child, what words are these that pass thy lips?

Was not thy long-determined counsel this—

That in good time Ulysses should return,

To be avenged? Guide, then, Telemachus

Wisely—for so thou canst—that, all unharmed,

He reach his native land, and, in their barques,

Homeward the suitor-train retrace their way."
He spake, and turned to Hermes, his dear son:—

"Hermes—for thou in this my messenger

Art, as in all things—to the bright-haired nymph

Make known my steadfast purpose—the return

Of suffering Ulysses. Neither gods

Nor men shall guide his voyage. On a raft,

Made firm with bands, he shall depart and reach,

After long hardships, on the twentieth day,

The fertile shore of Scheria, on whose isle

Dwell the Phaeacians, kinsmen of the gods.

They like a god shall honor him, and thence

Send him to his loved country in a ship,

With ample gifts of brass and gold, and store

Of raiment—wealth like which he ne’er had brought

From conquered Ilion, had he reached his home

Safely, with all his portion of the spoil.

So is it preordained that he behold

His friends again, and stand once more within

His high-roofed palace, on his native soil.”

He spake; the herald Argicide obeyed,

And hastily beneath his feet he bound

The fair, ambrosial golden sandals, worn

To bear him over ocean like the wind,

And o’er the boundless land. His wand he took,

Wherewith he softly seals the eyes of men,

And opens them at will from sleep. With this

In hand, the mighty Argus-queller flew,

And, lighting on Pieria, from the sky

Plunged downward to the deep, and skimmed its face

Like hovering seamew, that on the broad gulfs

Of the unfruitful ocean seeks her prey,

And often dips her pinions in the brine;

So Hermes flew along the waste of waves.
But when he reached that island, far away,

Forth from the dark-blue ocean-swell he stepped

Upon the sea-beach, walking till he came

To the vast cave in which the bright-haired nymph

Made her abode. He found the nymph within;

A fire blazed brightly on the hearth, and far

Was wafted o’er the isle the fragrant smoke

Of cloven cedar, burning in the flame,

And cypress-wood. Meanwhile, in her recess,

She sweetly sang, as busily she threw

The golden shuttle through the web she wove.

And all about the grotto alders grew,

And poplars, and sweet-smelling cypresses.

In a green forest, high among whose boughs

Birds of broad wing, wood-owls, and falcons built

Their nests, and crows, with voices sounding far,

All haunting for their food the ocean-side.

A vine, with downy leaves and clustering grapes,

Crept over all the cavern rock. Four springs

Poured forth their glittering waters in a row,

And here and there went wandering side by side.

Around were meadows of soft green, o’ergrown

With violets and parsley. ’Twas a spot

Where even an immortal might awhile

Linger, and gaze with wonder and delight.

The herald Argus-queller stood, and saw,

And marvelled; but as soon as he had viewed

The wonders of the place, he turned his steps,

Entering the broad-roofed cave. Calypso there,

The glorious goddess, saw him as he came,

And knew him; for the ever-living gods

Are to each other known, though one may dwell

Far from the rest. Ulysses, large of heart,

Was not within. Apart, upon the shore,

He sat and sorrowed, where he oft in tears

And sighs and vain repinings passed the hours,

Gazing with wet eyes on the barren deep.

Now, placing Hermes on a shining seat

Of state, Calypso, glorious goddess, said:
"Thou of the golden wand, revered and loved,

What, Hermes, brings thee hither? Passing few

Have been thy visits. Make thy pleasure known.

My heart enjoins me to obey, if aught

That thou commandest be within my power;

But first accept the offerings due a guest."

The goddess, speaking thus, before him placed

A table, where the heaped ambrosia lay,

And mingled the red nectar. Ate and drank

The herald Argus-queller, and, refreshed,

Answered the nymph, and made his message known:—
"Art thou a goddess, and dost ask of me,

A god, why came I hither? Yet, since thou

Requirest, I will truly tell the cause.

I came unwillingly, at Jove's command;

For who of choice would traverse the wide waste

Of the salt ocean, with no city near

Where men adore the gods with solemn rites

And chosen hecatombs. No god has power

To elude or to resist the purposes

Of aegis-bearing Jove. With thee abides,

He bids me say, the most unhappy man

Of all who round the city of Priam waged

The battle through nine years, and, in the tenth,

Laying it waste, departed for their homes.

But in their voyage they provoked the wrath

Of Pallas, who called up the furious winds

And angry waves against them. By his side

Sank all his gallant comrades in the deep.

Him did the winds and waves drive hither. Him

Jove bids thee send away with speed; for here

He must not perish, far from all he loves.

So is it preordained that he behold

His friends again, and stand once more within

His high-roofed palace, on his native soil.”

He spake; Calypso, glorious goddess, heard,

And shuddered, and with winged words replied:—
"Ye are unjust, ye gods, and, envious far

Beyond all other beings, cannot bear

That ever goddess openly should make

A mortal man her consort. Thus it was

When once Aurora, rosy-fingered, took

Orion for her husband; ye were stung,

Amid your blissful lives, with envious hate,

Till chaste Diana, of the golden throne,

Smote him with silent arrows from her bow,

And slew him in Ortygia. Thus, again,

When bright-haired Ceres, swayed by her own heart,

In fields which bore three yearly harvests, met

Iäsion as a lover, this was known

Erelong to Jupiter, who flung from high

A flaming thunderbolt, and laid him dead.

And now ye envy me, that with me dwells

A mortal man. I saved him as he clung

Alone upon his floating keel; for Jove

Had cloven with a bolt of fire from heaven

His galley in the midst of the black sea,

And all his gallant comrades perished there.

Him kindly I received; I cherished him,

And promised him a life that ne’er should know

Decay or death. But since no god has power

To elude or to withstand the purposes

Of aegis-bearing Jove, let him depart—

If so the sovereign moves him and commands—

Over the barren deep. I send him not;

For neither ship arrayed with oars have I,

Nor seamen, o’er the boundless waste of waves

To bear him hence. My counsel I will give,

And nothing will I hide that he should know,

To place him safely on his native shore.”
The herald Argus-queller answered her:—

“Dismiss him thus, and bear in mind the wrath

Of Jove, lest it be kindled against thee.”
Thus having said, the mighty Argicide

Departed; and the nymph, who now had heard

The doom of Jove, sought the greathearted man,

Ulysses. Him she found beside the deep,

Seated alone, with eyes from which the tears

Were never dried; for now no more the nymph

Delighted him; he wasted his sweet life

In yearning for his home. Night after night

He slept constrained within the hollow cave,

The unwilling by the fond; and day by day

He sat upon the rocks that edged the shore,

And in continual weeping and in sighs

And vain repinings wore the hours away,

Gazing through tears upon the barren deep.

The glorious goddess stood by him and spake:—
“Unhappy! sit no longer sorrowing here,

Nor waste life thus. Lo! I most willingly

Dismiss thee hence. Rise, hew down trees, and bind

Their trunks with brazen clamps into a raft,

And fasten planks above, a lofty floor,

That it may bear thee o’er the dark-blue deep.

Bread will I put on board, water, and wine—

Red wine, that cheers the heart—and wrap thee well

In garments, and send after thee the wind,

That safely thou attain thy native shore,

If so the gods permit thee, who abide

In the broad heaven above, and better know

By far than I, and far more wisely judge.”
Ulysses, the great sufferer, as she spake

Shuddered, and thus with winged words replied:—
“Some other purpose than to send me home

Is in thy heart, O goddess, bidding me

To cross this frightful sea upon a raft—

This perilous sea, where never even ships

Pass with their rapid keels, though Jove bestow

The wind that glads the seaman. Nay, I climb

No raft, against thy wish, unless thou swear

The great oath of the gods that thou in this

Dost meditate no other harm to me.”
He spake; Calypso, glorious goddess, smiled,

And smoothed his forehead with her hand, and said:—
“Perverse, and slow to see where guile is not!

How could thy heart permit thee thus to speak?

Now bear me witness, Earth, and ye broad Heavens

Above us, and ye waters of the Styx

That flow beneath us, mightiest oath of all,

And most revered by all the blessed gods,

That I design no other harm to thee,

But that I plan for thee, and counsel thee

What I would do were I in need like thine.

I bear a juster mind; my bosom holds

A pitying heart, and not a heart of steel.”
Thus having said, the glorious goddess moved

Away with hasty steps, and where she trod

He followed, till they reached the vaulted cave—

The goddess and the hero. There he took

The seat whence Hermes had just risen. The nymph

Brought forth whatever mortals eat and drink

To set before him. She right opposite

To that of great Ulysses took her seat.

Ambrosia there her maidens laid, and there

Poured nectar. Both put forth their hands, and took

The ready viands, till at length the calls

Of hunger and of thirst were satisfied;

Calypso, glorious goddess, then began:—
“Son of Laertes, man of many wiles,

Highborn Ulysses! thus wilt thou depart

Home to thy native country? Then farewell;

But, couldst thou know the sufferings Fate ordains

For thee ere yet thou landest on its shore,

Thou wouldst remain to keep this home with me

And be immortal, strong as is thy wish

To see thy wife—a wish that day by day

Possesses thee. I cannot deem myself

In face or form less beautiful than she;

For never with immortals can the race

Of mortal dames in form or face compare.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her:—
“Bear with me, gracious goddess; well I know

All thou couldst say. The sage Penelope

In feature and in stature comes not nigh

To thee, for she is mortal—deathless thou,

And ever young; yet day by day I long

To be at home once more, and pine to see

The hour of my return. Even though some god

Smite me on the black ocean, I shall bear

The stroke, for in my bosom dwells a mind

Patient of suffering; much have I endured,

And much survived, in tempests on the deep,

And in the battle; let this happen too.”
He spake; the sun went down; the night came on;

And now the twain withdrew to a recess

Deep in the vaulted cave, where, side by side,

They took their rest. But when the child of Dawn,

Aurora, rosy-fingered, looked abroad,

Ulysses put his vest and mantle on;

The nymph too, in a robe of silver-white,

Ample, and delicate, and beautiful,

Arrayed herself, and round about her loins

Wound a fair golden girdle, drew a veil

Over her head, and planned to send away

Magnanimous Ulysses. She bestowed

A heavy axe, of steel and double-edged,

Well fitted to the hand, the handle wrought

Of olive-wood, firm set and beautiful.

A polished adze she gave him next, and led

The way to a far corner of the isle,

Where lofty trees, alders and poplars, stood,

And firs that reached the clouds, sapless and dry

Long since, and fitter thus to ride the waves.

Then, having shown where grew the tallest trees,

Calypso, glorious goddess, sought her home.
Trees then he felled, and soon the task was done.

Twenty in all he brought to earth, and squared

Their trunks with the sharp steel, and carefully

He smoothed their sides, and wrought them by a line.

Calypso, gracious goddess, having brought

Wimbles, he bored the beams, and, fitting them

Together, made them fast with nails and clamps.

As when some builder, skilful in his art,

Frames for a ship of burden the broad keel,

Such ample breadth Ulysses gave the raft.

Upon the massy beams he reared a deck,

And floored it with long planks from end to end.

On this a mast he raised, and to the mast

Fitted a yard; he shaped a rudder next,

To guide the raft along her course, and round

With woven work of willow-boughs he fenced

Her sides against the dashings of the sea.

Calypso, gracious goddess, brought him store

Of canvas, which he fitly shaped to sails,

And, rigging her with cords and ropes and stays,

Heaved her with levers into the great deep.
'Twas the fourth day. His labors now were done,

And on the fifth the goddess from her isle

Dismissed him, newly from the bath, arrayed

In garments given by her, that shed perfumes.

A skin of dark red wine she put on board,

A larger one of water, and for food

A basket, stored with viands such as please

The appetite. A friendly wind and soft

She sent before. The great Ulysses spread

His canvas joyfully to catch the breeze,

And sat and guided with nice care the helm,

Gazing with fixed eye on the Pleiades,

Boötes setting late, and the Great Bear,

By others called the Wain, which, wheeling round,

Looks ever toward Orion, and alone

Dips not into the waters of the deep.

For so Calypso, glorious goddess, bade

That on his ocean journey he should keep

That constellation ever on his left.

Now seventeen days were in the voyage past,

And on the eighteenth shadowy heights appeared,

The nearest point of the Phaeacian land,

Lying on the dark ocean like a shield.
But mighty Neptune, coming from among

The Ethiopians, saw him. Far away

He saw, from mountain-heights of Solyma,

The voyager, and burned with fiercer wrath,

And shook his head, and said within himself:—
“Strange! now I see the gods have new designs

For this Ulysses, formed while I was yet

In Ethiopia. He draws near the land

Of the Phaeacians, where it is decreed

He shall o’erpass the boundary of his woes;

But first, I think, he will have much to bear.”
He spake, and round about him called the clouds

And roused the ocean—wielding in his hand

The trident—summoned all the hurricanes

Of all the winds, and covered earth and sky

At once with mists, while from above the night

Fell suddenly. The east wind and the south

Pushed forth at once, with the strong-blowing west,

And the clear north rolled up his mighty waves.

Ulysses trembled in his knees and heart,

And thus to his great soul, lamenting, said:—
“What will become of me? unhappy man!

I fear that all the goddess said was true,

Foretelling what disasters should o’ertake

My voyage ere I reach my native land.

Now are her words fulfilled. How Jupiter

Wraps the great heaven in clouds and stirs the deep

To tumult! Wilder grow the hurricanes

Of all the winds, and now my fate is sure.

Thrice happy, four times happy, they who fell

On Troy’s wide field, warring for Atreus’ sons:

O, had I met my fate and perished there,

That very day on which the Trojan host,

Around the dead Achilles, hurled at me

Their brazen javelins, I had then received

Due burial, and great glory with the Greeks;

Now must I die a miserable death.”
As thus he spake, upon him, from on high,

A huge and frightful billow broke; it whirled

The raft around, and far from it he fell.

His hands let go the rudder; a fierce rush

Of all the winds together snapped in twain

The mast; far off the yard and canvas flew

Into the deep; the billow held him long

Beneath the waters, and he strove in vain

Quickly to rise to air from that huge swell

Of ocean, for the garments weighed him down

Which fair Calypso gave him. But at length

Emerging, he rejected from his throat

The bitter brine that down his forehead streamed.

Even then, though hopeless with dismay, his thought

Was on the raft; and, struggling through the waves,

He seized it, sprang on board, and, seated there,

Escaped the threatened death. Still to and fro

The rolling billows drave it. As the wind

In autumn sweeps the thistles o’er the field,

Clinging together, so the blasts of heaven

Hither and thither drove it o’er the sea.

And now the south wind flung it to the north

To buffet; now the east wind to the west.
Ino Leucothea saw him clinging there—

The delicate-footed child of Cadmus, once

A mortal, speaking with a mortal voice,

Though now within the ocean gulfs she shares

The honors of the gods. With pity she

Beheld Ulysses struggling thus distressed,

And, rising from the abyss below, in form

A cormorant, the sea-nymph took her perch

On the well-banded raft, and thus she said:—
"Ah, luckless man! how hast thou angered thus

Earthshaking Neptune, that he visits thee

With these disasters? Yet he cannot take,

Although he seek it earnestly, thy life.

Now do my bidding, for thou seemest wise.

Laying aside thy garments, let the raft

Drift with the winds, while thou, by strength of arm,

Makest thy way in swimming to the land

Of the Phaeacians, where thy safety lies.

Receive this veil, and bind its heavenly woof

Beneath thy breast, and have no further fear

Of hardship or of danger. But, as soon

As thou shalt touch the island, take it off,

And turn away thy face, and fling it far

From where thou standest into the black deep.”
The goddess gave the veil as thus she spoke,

And to the tossing deep went down, in form

A cormorant; the black wave covered her.

But still Ulysses, mighty sufferer,

Pondered, and thus to his great soul he said:—
“Ah me! perhaps some god is planning here

Some other fraud against me, bidding me

Forsake my raft. I will not yet obey,

For still far off I see the land in which

’Tis said my refuge lies. This will I do,

For this seems wisest. While the fastenings last

That hold these timbers, I will keep my place

And bide the tempest here; but when the waves

Shall dash my raft in pieces, I will swim,

For nothing better will remain to do.”
    As he revolved this purpose in his mind,

Earthshaking Neptune sent a mighty wave,

Horrid and huge and high, and where he sat

It smote him. As a violent wind uplifts

The dry chaff heaped upon a threshing-floor,

And sends it scattered through the air abroad,

So did that wave fling loose the ponderous beams.

To one of these, Ulysses, clinging fast,

Bestrode it, like a horseman on his steed;

And now he took the garments off, bestowed

By fair Calypso, binding round his breast

The veil, and forward plunged into the deep,

With palms outspread, prepared to swim. Meanwhile

Neptune beheld him—Neptune, mighty king—

And shook his head, and said within himself:—
“Go thus, and laden with mischances roam

The waters till thou come among the race

Cherished by Jupiter, but well I deem

Thou wilt not find thy share of suffering light.”
Thus having said he urged his coursers on,

With their fair-flowing manes, until he came

To Aegae, where his glorious palace stands.
But Pallas, child of Jove, had other thoughts.

She stayed the course of every wind beside,

And bade them rest, and lulled them into sleep,

But summoned the swift north to break the waves,

That so Ulysses, the highborn, escaped

From death and from the fates, might be the guest

Of the Phaeacians—men who love the sea.

Two days and nights among the mighty waves

He floated, oft his heart foreboding death.

But when the bright-haired Eos had fulfilled

The third day’s course, and all the winds were laid,

And calm was on the watery waste, he saw

That land was near, as, lifted on the crest

Of a huge swell, he looked with sharpened sight;

And as a father’s life preserved makes glad

His children’s hearts, when long time he has lain

Sick, wrung with pain, and wasting by the power

Of some malignant genius, till at length

The gracious gods bestow a welcome cure,

So welcome to Ulysses was the sight

Of woods and fields. By swimming on he thought

To climb and tread the shore; but when he drew

So near that one who shouted could be heard

From land, the sound of ocean on the rocks

Came to his ear—for there huge breakers roared

And spouted fearfully, and all around

Was covered with the sea-foam. Haven here

Was none for ships, nor sheltering creek, but shores

Beetling from high, and crags and walls of rock.

Ulysses trembled both in knees and heart,

And thus to his great soul, lamenting, said:—
"Now woe is me! as soon as Jove has shown

What I had little hoped to see, the land,

And I through all these waves have ploughed my way,

I find no issue from the hoary deep.

For sharp rocks border it, and all around

Roar the wild surges; slippery cliffs arise

Close to deep gulfs, and footing there is none

Where I might plant my steps and thus escape.

All effort now were fruitless to resist

The mighty billow hurrying me away

To dash me on the pointed rocks. If yet

I strive, by swimming further, to descry

Some sloping shore or harbor of the isle,

I fear the tempest, lest it hurl me back,

Heavily groaning, to the fishy deep;

Or huge sea-monster, from the multitude

Which sovereign Amphitritè feeds, be sent

Against me by some god—for well I know

The power who shakes the shores is wroth with me.”
While he revolved these doubts within his mind,

A huge wave hurled him toward the rugged coast.

Then had his limbs been flayed, and all his bones

Broken at once, had not the blue-eyed maid,

Minerva, prompted him. Borne toward the rock,

He clutched it instantly with both his hands,

And panting clung till that huge wave rolled by,

And so escaped its fury. Back it came,

And smote him once again, and flung him far

Seaward. As to the claws of Polypus,

Plucked from its bed, the pebbles thickly cling,

So flakes of skin, from off his powerful hands,

Were left upon the rock. The mighty surge

O’erwhelmed him; he had perished ere his time—

Hapless Ulysses!—but the blue-eyed maid,

Pallas, informed his mind with forecast. Straight

Emerging from the wave that shoreward rolled,

He swam along the coast and eyed it well,

In hope of sloping beach or sheltered creek.

But when, in swimming, he had reached the mouth

Of a soft-flowing river, here appeared

The spot he wished for, smooth, without a rock,

And here was shelter from the wind. He felt

The current’s flow, and thus devoutly prayed:—
“Hear me, O sovereign power, whoe’er thou art!

To thee, the long-desired, I come. I seek

Escape from Neptune’s threatenings on the sea.

The deathless gods respect the prayer of him

Who looks to them for help, a fugitive,

As I am now, when to thy stream I come,

And to thy knees, from many a hardship past.

O thou that here art ruler, I declare

Myself thy suppliant; be thou merciful.”
He spoke: the river stayed his current, checked

The billows, smoothed them to a calm, and gave

The swimmer a safe landing at his mouth.

Then dropped his knees and sinewy arms at once,

Unstrung, for faint with struggling was his heart.

His body was all swol’n; the brine gushed forth

From mouth and nostrils; all unnerved he lay,

Breathless and speechless; utter weariness

O’ermastered him. But when he breathed again,

And his flown senses had returned, he loosed

The veil that Ino gave him from his breast,

And to the salt flood cast it. A great wave

Bore it far down the stream; the goddess there

In her own hands received it. He, meanwhile,

Withdrawing from the brink, lay down among

The reeds, and kissed the harvest-bearing earth,

And thus to his great soul, lamenting, said:—
“Ah me! what must I suffer more? what yet

Will happen to me? If by the river’s side

I pass the unfriendly watches of the night,

The cruel cold and dews that steep the bank

May, in this weakness, end me utterly,

For chilly blows this river-air at dawn;

But should I climb this hill, to sleep within

The shadowy wood, among thick shrubs, if cold

And weariness allow me, then I fear,

That, while the pleasant slumbers o’er me steal,

I may become the prey of savage beasts.”
Yet, as he longer pondered, this seemed best.

He rose, and sought the wood, and found it near

The water, on a height, o’erlooking far

The region round. Between two shrubs that sprang

Both from one spot he entered—olive-trees,

One wild, one fruitful. The damp-blowing wind

Ne’er pierced their covert; never blazing sun

Darted his beams within, nor pelting shower

Beat through, so closely intertwined they grew.

Here entering, Ulysses heaped a bed

Of leaves with his own hands; he made it broad

And high, for thick the leaves had fallen around.

Two men and three, in that abundant store,

Might bide the winter storm, though keen the cold.

Ulysses, the great sufferer, on his couch

Looked and rejoiced, and placed himself within,

And heaped the leaves high o’er him and around,

As one who, dwelling in the distant fields,

Without a neighbor near him, hides a brand

In the dark ashes, keeping carefully

The seeds of fire alive, lest he, perforce,

To light his hearth must bring them from afar;

So did Ulysses in that pile of leaves

Bury himself, while Pallas o’er his eyes

Poured sleep, and closed his lids, that he might take,

After his painful toils, the fitting rest.

Book VI

Ulysses Discovered by Nausicaä

Nausicaä, daughter of Alcinoüs, king of the Phaeacians, directed by Pallas to go to the river and wash her marriage robes—Sports of her maidens after the washing is performed—Ulysses awakened by the noise, relieved and clothed by Nausicaä, and bidden to follow her into the city, and there make his suit to the queen, the wife of Alcinoüs.

Thus overcome with toil and weariness,

The noble sufferer Ulysses slept,

While Pallas hastened to the realm and town

Peopled by the Phaeacians, who of yore

Abode in spacious Hypereia, near

The insolent race of Cyclops, and endured

Wrong from their mightier hands. A godlike chief,

Nausithoüs, led them, to a new abode,

And planted them in Scheria, far away

From plotting neighbors. With a wall he fenced

Their city, built them dwellings there, and reared

Fanes to the gods, and changed the plain to fields.

But he had bowed to death, and had gone down

To Hades, and Alcinoüs, whom the gods

Endowed with wisdom, governed in his stead.

Now to his palace, planning the return

Of the magnanimous Ulysses, came

The blue-eyed goddess Pallas, entering

The gorgeous chamber where a damsel slept—

Nausicaä, daughter of the large-souled king

Alcinoüs, beautiful in form and face

As one of the immortals. Near her lay,

And by the portal, one on either side,

Fair as the Graces, two attendant maids.

The shining doors were shut. But Pallas came

As comes a breath of air, and stood beside

The damsel’s head and spake. In look she seemed

The daughter of the famous mariner

Dymas, a maiden whom Nausicaä loved,

The playmate of her girlhood. In her shape

The blue-eyed goddess stood, and thus she said:—
“Nausicaä, has thy mother then brought forth

A careless housewife? Thy magnificent robes

Lie still neglected, though thy marriage day

Is near, when thou art to array thyself

In seemly garments, and bestow the like

On those who lead thee to the bridal rite;

For thus the praise of men is won, and thus

Thy father and thy gracious mother both

Will be rejoiced. Now with the early dawn

Let us all hasten to the washing-place.

I too would go with thee, and help thee there,

That thou mayst sooner end the task, for thou

Not long wilt be unwedded. Thou art wooed

Already by the noblest of the race

Of the Phaeacians, for thy birth, like theirs,

Is of the noblest. Make thy suit at morn

To thy illustrious father, that he bid

His mules and car be harnessed to convey

Thy girdles, robes, and mantles marvellous

In beauty. That were seemlier than to walk,

Since distant from the town the lavers lie."

Thus having said, the blue-eyed Pallas went

Back to Olympus, where the gods have made,

So saith tradition, their eternal seat.

The tempest shakes it not, nor is it drenched

By showers, and there the snow doth never fall.

The calm clear ether is without a cloud;

And in the golden light, that lies on all,

Days after day the blessed gods rejoice.

Thither the blue-eyed goddess, having given

Her message to the sleeping maid, withdrew.
Soon the bright morning came. Nausicaä rose,

Clad royally, as marvelling at her dream

She hastened through the palace to declare

Her purpose to her father and the queen.

She found them both within. Her mother sat

Beside the hearth with her attendant maids,

And turned the distaff loaded with a fleece

Dyed in sea-purple. On the threshold stood

Her father, going forth to meet the chiefs

Of the Phaeacians in a council where

Their noblest asked his presence. Then the maid,

Approaching her beloved father, spake:—
“I pray, dear father, give command to make

A chariot ready for me, with high sides

And sturdy wheels, to bear to the river-brink,

There to be cleansed, the costly robes that now

Lie soiled. Thee likewise it doth well beseem

At councils to appear in vestments fresh

And stainless. Thou hast also in these halls

Five sons, two wedded, three in boyhood’s bloom,

And ever in the dance they need attire

New from the wash. All this must I provide.”
She ended, for she shrank from saying aught

Of her own hopeful marriage. He perceived

Her thought and said: “Mules I deny thee not,

My daughter, nor aught else. Go then; my grooms

Shall make a carriage ready with high sides

And sturdy wheels, and a broad rack above.”
He spake, and gave command. The grooms obeyed,

And, making ready in the outer court

The strong-wheeled chariot, led the harnessed mules

Under the yoke and made them fast; and then

Appeared the maiden, bringing from her bower

The shining garments. In the polished car

She piled them, while with many pleasant meats

And flavoring morsels for the day’s repast

Her mother filled a hamper, and poured wine

Into a goatskin. As her daughter climbed

The car, she gave into her hands a cruse

Of gold with smooth anointing oil for her

And her attendant maids. Nausicaä took

The scourge and showy reins, and struck the mules

To urge them onward. Onward with loud noise

They went, and with a speed that slackened not,

And bore the robes and her—yet not alone,

For with her went the maidens of her train.

Now when they reached the river’s pleasant brink,

Where lavers had been hollowed out to last

Perpetually, and freely through them flowed

Pure water that might cleanse the foulest stains,

They loosed the mules, and drove them from the wain

To browse the sweet grass by the eddying stream;

And took the garments out, and flung them down

In the dark water, and with hasty feet

Trampled them there in frolic rivalry.

And when the task was done, and all the stains

Were cleansed away, they spread the garments out

Along the beach and where the stream had washed

The gravel cleanest. Then they bathed, and gave

Their limbs the delicate oil, and took their meal

Upon the river’s border—while the robes

Beneath the sun’s warm rays were growing dry.

And now, when they were all refreshed by food,

Mistress and maidens laid their veils aside

And played at ball. Nausicaä the white-armed

Began a song. As when the archer-queen

Diana, going forth among the hills—

The sides of high Taÿgetus or slopes

Of Erymanthus—chases joyously

Boars and fleet stags, and round her in a throng

Frolic the rural nymphs, Latona’s heart

Is glad, for over all the rest are seen

Her daughter’s head and brow, and she at once

Is known among them, though they all are fair,

Such was this spotless virgin midst her maids.
Now when they were about to move for home

With harnessed mules and with the shining robes

Carefully folded, then the blue-eyed maid,

Pallas, bethought herself of this—to rouse

Ulysses and to bring him to behold

The bright-eyed maiden, that she might direct

The stranger’s way to the Phaeacian town.

The royal damsel at a handmaid cast

The ball; it missed, and fell into the stream

Where a deep eddy whirled. All shrieked aloud.

The great Ulysses started from his sleep

And sat upright, discoursing to himself:—
“Ah me! upon what region am I thrown?

What men are here—wild, savage, and unjust,

Or hospitable, and who hold the gods

In reverence? There are voices in the air,

Womanly voices, as of nymphs that haunt

The mountain summits, and the river-founts,

And the moist grassy meadows. Or perchance

Am I near men who have the power of speech?

Nay, let me then go forth at once and learn.”
Thus having said, the great Ulysses left

The thicket. From the close-grown wood he rent,

With his strong hand, a branch well set with leaves

And wound it as a covering round his waist.

Then like a mountain lion he went forth,

That walks abroad, confiding in his strength,

In rain and wind; his eyes shoot fire; he falls

On oxen, or on sheep, or forest-deer,

For hunger prompts him even to attack

The flock within its closely guarded fold.

Such seemed Ulysses when about to meet

Those fair-haired maidens, naked as he was,

But forced by strong necessity. To them

His look was frightful, for his limbs were foul

With sea-foam yet. To right and left they fled

Along the jutting riverbanks. Alone

The daughter of Alcinoüs kept her place,

For Pallas gave her courage and forbade

Her limbs to tremble. So she waited there.

Ulysses pondered whether to approach

The bright-eyed damsel and embrace her knees

And supplicate, or, keeping yet aloof,

Pray her with soothing words to show the way

Townward and give him garments. Musing thus,

It seemed the best to keep at distance still,

And use soft words, lest, should he clasp her knees,

The maid might be displeased. With gentle words

Skilfully ordered thus Ulysses spake:—

“O queen, I am thy suppliant, whether thou

Be mortal or a goddess. If perchance

Thou art of that immortal race who dwell

In the broad heaven, thou art, I deem, most like

To Dian, daughter of imperial Jove,

In shape, in stature, and in noble air.

If mortal and a dweller of the earth,

Thrice happy are thy father and his queen,

Thrice happy are thy brothers; and their hearts

Must overflow with gladness for thy sake,

Beholding such a scion of their house

Enter the choral dance. But happiest he

Beyond them all, who, bringing princely gifts,

Shall bear thee to his home a bride; for sure

I never looked on one of mortal race,

Woman or man, like thee, and as I gaze

I wonder. Like to thee I saw of late,

In Delos, a young palm-tree growing up

Beside Apollo’s altar; for I sailed

To Delos, with much people following me,

On a disastrous voyage. Long I gazed

Upon it wonder-struck, as I am now—

For never from the earth so fair a tree

Had sprung. So marvel I, and am amazed

At thee, O lady, and in awe forbear

To clasp thy knees. Yet much have I endured.

It was but yestereve that I escaped

From the black sea, upon the twentieth day,

So long the billows and the rushing gales

Farther and farther from Ogygia’s isle

Had borne me. Now upon this shore some god

Casts me, perchance to meet new sufferings here;

For yet the end is not, and many things

The gods must first accomplish. But do thou,

queen, have pity on me, since to thee

I come the first of all. I do not know

A single dweller of the land beside.

Show me, I pray, thy city; and bestow

Some poor old robe to wrap me—if, indeed,

In coming hither, thou hast brought with thee

Aught poor or coarse. And may the gods vouchsafe

To thee whatever blessing thou canst wish,

Husband and home and wedded harmony.

There is no better, no more blessed state,

Than when the wife and husband in accord

Order their household lovingly. Then those

Repine who hate them, those who wish them well

Rejoice, and they themselves the most of all.”

And then the white-armed maid Nausicaä said:—

“Since then, O stranger, thou art not malign

Of purpose nor weak-minded—yet, in truth,

Olympian Jupiter bestows the goods

Of fortune on the noble and the base

To each one at his pleasure; and thy griefs

Are doubtless sent by him, and it is fit

That thou submit in patience—now that thou

Hast reached our lands, and art within our realm,

Thou shalt not lack for garments nor for aught

Due to a suppliant stranger in his need.

The city I will show thee, and will name

Its dwellers—the Phaeacians—they possess

The city; all the region lying round

Is theirs, and I am daughter of the prince

Alcinoüs, large of soul, to whom are given

The rule of the Phaeacians and their power.”
So spake the damsel, and commanded thus

Her fair-haired maids: “Stay! whither do ye flee,

My handmaids, when a man appears in sight?

Ye think, perhaps, he is some enemy.

Nay, there is no man living now, nor yet

Will live, to enter, bringing war, the land

Of the Phaeacians. Very dear are they

To the great gods. We dwell apart, afar

Within the unmeasured deep, amid its waves

The most remote of men; no other race

Hath commerce with us. This man comes to us

A wanderer and unhappy, and to him

Our cares are due. The stranger and the poor

Are sent by Jove, and slight regards to them

Are grateful. Maidens, give the stranger food

And drink, and take him to the riverside

To bathe where there is shelter from the wind."
So spake the mistress; and they stayed their flight

And bade each other stand, and led the chief

Under a shelter as the royal maid,

Daughter of stout Alcinoüs, gave command,

And laid a cloak and tunic near the spot

To be his raiment, and a golden cruse

Of limpid oil. Then, as they bade him bathe

In the fresh stream, the noble chieftain said:—
“Withdraw, ye maidens, hence, while I prepare

To cleanse my shoulders from the bitter brine,

And to anoint them; long have these my limbs

Been unrefreshed by oil. I will not bathe

Before you. I should be ashamed to stand

Unclothed in presence of these bright-haired maids.”
He spake; they hearkened and withdrew, and told

The damsel what he said. Ulysses then

Washed the salt spray of ocean from his back

And his broad shoulders in the flowing stream,

And wiped away the sea-froth from his brows.

And when the bath was over, and his limbs

Had been anointed, and he had put on

The garments sent him by the spotless maid,

Jove’s daughter, Pallas, caused him to appear

Of statelier size and more majestic mien,

And bade the locks that crowned his head flow down,

Curling like blossoms of the hyacinth.

As when some skilful workman trained and taught

By Vulcan and Minerva in his art

Binds the bright silver with a verge of gold,

And graceful is his handiwork, such grace

Did Pallas shed upon the hero’s brow

And shoulders, as he passed along the beach,

And, glorious in his beauty and the pride

Of noble bearing, sat aloof. The maid

Admired, and to her bright-haired women spake:—
“Listen to me, my maidens, while I speak.

This man comes not among the godlike sons

Of the Phaeacian stock against the will

Of all the gods of heaven. I thought him late

Of an unseemly aspect; now he bears

A likeness to the immortal ones whose home

Is the broad heaven. I would that I might call

A man like him my husband, dwelling here,

And here content to dwell. Now hasten, maids,

And set before the stranger food and wine.”
She spake; they heard and cheerfully obeyed,

And set before Ulysses food and wine.

The patient chief Ulysses ate and drank

Full eagerly, for he had fasted long.
White-armed Nausicaä then had other cares.

She placed the smoothly folded robes within

The sumptuous chariot, yoked the firm-hoofed mules,

And mounted to her place, and from the seat

Spake kindly, counselling Ulysses thus:—
“Now, stranger, rise and follow to the town,

And to my royal father’s palace I

Will be thy guide, where, doubt not, thou wilt meet

The noblest men of our Phaeacian race.

But do as I advise—for not inapt

I deem thee. While we traverse yet the fields

Among the tilth, keep thou among my train

Of maidens, following fast behind the mules

And chariot. I will lead thee in the way.

But when our train goes upward toward the town,

Fenced with its towery wall, and on each side

Embraced by a fair haven, with a strait

Of narrow entrance, where our well-oared barques

Have each a mooring-place along the road,

And there round Neptune’s glorious fane extends

A marketplace, surrounded by huge stones,

Dragged from the quarry hither, where is kept

The rigging of the barques—sailcloth and ropes—

And oars are polished there—for little reck

Phaeacians of the quiver and the bow,

And give most heed to masts and shrouds and ships

Well poised, in which it is their pride to cross

The foamy deep—when there I would not bring

Rude taunts upon myself, for in the crowd

Are brutal men. One of the baser sort

Perchance might say, on meeting us: ‘What man,

Handsome and lusty-limbed, is he who thus

Follows Nausicaä? where was it her luck

To find him? will he be her husband yet?

Perhaps she brings some wanderer from his ship,

A stranger from strange lands, for we have here

No neighbors; or, perhaps, it is a god

Called down by fervent prayer from heaven to dwell

Henceforth with her. ’Tis well if she have found

A husband elsewhere, since at home she meets

Her many noble wooers with disdain;

They are Phaeacians.’ Thus the crowd would say,

And it would bring reproach upon my name.

I too would blame another who should do

The like, and, while her parents were alive,

Without their knowledge should consort with men

Before her marriage. Stranger, now observe

My words, and thou shalt speedily obtain

Safe-conduct from my father, and be sent

Upon thy voyage homeward. We shall reach

A beautiful grove of poplars by the way,

Sacred to Pallas; from it flows a brook,

And round it lies a meadow. In this spot

My father has his country-grounds, and here

His garden flourishes, as far from town

As one could hear a shout. There sit thou down

And wait till we are in the city’s streets

And at my father’s house. When it shall seem

That we are there, arise and onward fare

To the Phaeacian city, and inquire

Where dwells Alcinoüs the large-souled king,

My father; ’tis not hard to find; a child

Might lead thee thither. Of the houses reared

By the Phaeacians there is none like that

In which Alcinoüs the hero dwells.

When thou art once within the court and hall,

Go quickly through the palace till thou find

My mother where she sits beside the hearth,

Leaning against a column in its blaze,

And twisting threads, a marvel to behold,

Of bright sea-purple, while her maidens sit

Behind her. Near her is my father’s throne,

On which he sits at feasts, and drinks the wine

Like one of the immortals. Pass it by

And clasp my mother’s knees; so mayst thou see

Soon and with joy the day of thy return,

Although thy home be far. For if her mood

Be kindly toward thee, thou mayst hope to greet

Thy friends once more, and enter yet again

Thy own fair palace in thy native land.”
Thus having said, she raised the shining scourge

And struck the mules, that quickly left behind

The river. On they went with easy pace

And even steps. The damsel wielded well

The reins, and used the lash with gentle hand,

So that Ulysses and her train of maids

On foot could follow close. And now the sun

Was sinking when they came to that fair grove

Sacred to Pallas. There the noble chief

Ulysses sat him down, and instantly

Prayed to the daughter of imperial Jove:—

“O thou unconquerable child of Jove

The Aegis-bearer! hearken to me now,

Since late thou wouldst not listen to my prayer,

What time the mighty shaker of the shores

Pursued and wrecked me! Grant me to receive

Pity and kindness from Phaeacia’s sons.”
So prayed he, supplicating. Pallas heard

The prayer, but came not to him openly.

Awe of her father’s brother held her back;

For he would still pursue with violent hate

Ulysses, till he reached his native land.

Book VII

Reception of Ulysses by Alcinoüs

Return of Nausicaä to the city, followed by Ulysses—Palace and garden of Alcinoüs—Reception of Ulysses by the queen and her husband—Narrative given by Ulysses of his voyage and shipwreck.

So prayed Ulysses the great sufferer.

The strong mules bore the damsel toward the town,

And when she reached her father’s stately halls

She stopped beneath the porch. Her brothers came

Around her, like in aspect to the gods,

And loosed the mules, and bore the garments in.

She sought her chamber, where an aged dame

Attendant there, an Epirote, and named

Eurymedusa, lighted her a fire.

She by the well-oared galleys had been brought

Beforetime from Epirus, and was given

To king Alcinoüs, ruler over all

Phaeacia’s sons, who hearkened to his voice

As if he were a god. ’Twas she who reared

White-armed Nausicaä in the royal halls,

Tended her hearth, and dressed her evening meal.
Now rose Ulysses up, and townward turned

His steps, while friendly Pallas wrapt his way

In darkness, lest someone among the sons

Of the Phaeacians with unmannerly words

Might call to him or ask him who he was.

And just as he was entering that fair town

The blue-eyed Pallas met him, in the form

Of a young virgin with an urn. She stood

Before him, and Ulysses thus inquired:—

“Wilt thou, my daughter, guide me to the house

Where dwells Alcinoüs, he who rules this land?

I am a stranger, who have come from far

After long hardships, and of all who dwell

Within this realm I know not even one.”

Pallas, the blue-eyed goddess, thus replied:—

“Father and stranger, I will show the house;

The dwelling of my own good father stands

Close by it. Follow silently, I pray,

And I will lead. Look not on any man

Nor ask a question; for the people here

Affect not strangers, nor do oft receive

With kindly welcome him who comes from far.

They trust in their swift barques, which to and fro,

By Neptune’s favor, cross the mighty deep.

Their galleys have the speed of wings or thought.”
Thus Pallas spake, and quickly led the way.

He followed in her steps. They saw him not—

Those trained Phaeacian seamen—for the power

That led him, Pallas of the amber hair,

Forbade the sight, and threw a friendly veil

Of darkness over him. Ulysses saw,

Wondering, the haven and the gallant ships,

The marketplace where heroes thronged, the walls

Long, lofty, and beset with palisades,

A marvel to the sight. But when they came

To the king’s stately palace, thus began

The blue-eyed goddess, speaking to the chief:—
“Father and stranger, here thou seest the house

Which thou hast bid me show thee. Thou wilt find

The princes, nurslings of the gods, within,

Royally feasting. Enter, and fear not;

The bold man ever is the better man,

Although he come from far. Thou first of all

Wilt see the queen. Aretè is the name

The people give her. She is of a stock

The very same from which Alcinoüs

The king derives his lineage. For long since

Nausithoüs, its founder, was brought forth

To Neptune, the great Shaker of the shores,

By Peribaea, fairest of her sex,

And youngest daughter of Eurymedon,

The large of soul, who ruled the arrogant brood

Of giants, and beheld that guilty race

Cut off, and perished by a fate like theirs.

Her Neptune wooed; she bore to him a son,

Large-souled Nausithoüs, whom Phaeacia owned

Its sovereign. To Nausithoüs were born

Rhexenor and Alcinoüs. He who bears

The silver bow, Apollo, smote to death

Rhexenor, newly wedded, in his home.

He left no son, and but one daughter, named

Aretè; her Alcinoüs made his wife,

And honored her as nowhere else on earth

Is any woman honored who bears charge

Over a husband’s household. From their hearts

Her children pay her reverence, and the king

And all the people, for they look on her

As if she were a goddess. When she goes

Abroad into the streets, all welcome her

With acclamations. Never does she fail

In wise discernment, but decides disputes

Kindly and justly between man and man.

And if thou gain her favor, there is hope

That thou mayst see thy friends once more, and stand

In thy tall palace on thy native soil.”
The blue-eyed Pallas, having spoken thus,

Departed o’er the barren deep. She left

The pleasant isle of Scheria, and repaired

To Marathon and to the spacious streets

Of Athens, entering there the massive halls

Where dwelt Erectheus, while Ulysses toward

The gorgeous palace of Alcinoüs turned

His steps, yet stopped and pondered ere he crossed

The threshold. For on every side beneath

The lofty roof of that magnanimous king

A glory shone as of the sun or moon.

There from the threshold, on each side, were walls

Of brass that led towards the inner rooms,

With blue steel cornices. The doors within

The massive building were of gold, and posts

Of silver on the brazen threshold stood,

And silver was the lintel, and above

Its architrave was gold; and on each side

Stood gold and silver mastiffs, the rare work

Of Vulcan’s practised skill, placed there to guard

The house of great Alcinoüs, and endowed

With deathless life, that knows no touch of age.

Along the walls within, on either side,

And from the threshold to the inner rooms,

Were firmly planted thrones on which were laid

Delicate mantles, woven by the hands

Of women. The Phaeacian princes here

Were seated; here they ate and drank, and held

Perpetual banquet. Slender forms of boys

In gold upon the shapely altars stood,

With blazing torches in their hands to light

At eve the palace guests; while fifty maids

Waited within the halls, where some in querns

Ground small the yellow grain; some wove the web

Or twirled the spindle, sitting, with a quick

Light motion, like the aspen’s glancing leaves.

The well-wrought tissues glistened as with oil.

As far as the Phaeacian race excel

In guiding their swift galleys o’er the deep,

So far the women in their woven work

Surpass all others. Pallas gives them skill

In handiwork and beautiful design.

Without the palace-court, and near the gate,

A spacious garden of four acres lay.

A hedge enclosed it round, and lofty trees

Flourished in generous growth within—the pear

And the pomegranate, and the apple-tree

With its fair fruitage, and the luscious fig

And olive always green. The fruit they bear

Falls not, nor ever fails in winter time

Nor summer, but is yielded all the year.

The ever-blowing west-wind causes some

To swell and some to ripen; pear succeeds

To pear; to apple apple, grape to grape,

Fig ripens after fig. A fruitful field

Of vines was planted near; in part it lay

Open and basking in the sun, which dried

The soil, and here men gathered in the grapes,

And there they trod the winepress. Farther on

Were grapes unripened yet, which just had cast

The flower, and others still which just began

To redden. At the garden’s furthest bound

Were beds of many plants that all the year

Bore flowers. There gushed two fountains: one of them

Ran wandering through the field; the other flowed

Beneath the threshold to the palace-court,

And all the people filled their vessels there.

Such were the blessings which the gracious gods

Bestowed on King Alcinoüs and his house.
Ulysses, the great sufferer, standing there,

Admired the sight; and when he had beheld

The whole in silent wonderment, he crossed

The threshold quickly, entering the hall

Where the Phaeacian peers and princes poured

Wine from their goblets to the sleepless one,

The Argus-queller, to whose deity

They made the last libations when they thought

Of slumber. The great sufferer, concealed

In a thick mist, which Pallas raised and cast

Around him, hastened through the hall and came

Close to Aretè and Alcinoüs,

The royal pair. Then did Ulysses clasp

Aretè’s knees, when suddenly the cloud

Raised by the goddess vanished. All within

The palace were struck mute as they beheld

The man before them. Thus Ulysses prayed:—
“Aretè, daughter of the godlike chief

Rhexenor! to thy husband I am come

And to thy knees, from many hardships borne,

And to these guests, to whom may the good gods

Grant to live happily, and to hand down,

Each one to his own children, in his home,

The wealth and honors which the people’s love

Bestowed upon him. Grant me, I entreat,

An escort, that I may behold again

And soon my own dear country. I have passed

Long years in sorrow, far from all I love.”
He ended, and sat down upon the hearth

Among the ashes, near the fire, and all

Were silent utterly. At length outspake

Echeneus, oldest and most eloquent chief

Of the Phaeacians; large his knowledge was

Of things long past. With generous intent,

And speaking to the assembly, he began:—
“Alcinoüs, this is not a seemly sight—

A stranger sitting on the hearth among

The cinders. All the others here await

Thy order, and move not. I pray thee, raise

The stranger up, and seat him on a throne

Studded with silver. Be thy heralds called,

And bid them mingle wine, which we may pour

To Jove, the god of thunders, who attends

And honors every suppliant. Let the dame

Who oversees the palace feast provide

Our guest a banquet from the stores within.”
This when the reverend king Alcinoüs heard,

Forthwith he took Ulysses by the hand—

That man of wise devices—raised him up

And seated him upon a shining throne,

From which he bade Laodamas arise,

His manly son, whose seat was next to his.
“Now mingle wine, Protonoüs, in a vase,

For all within the palace, to be poured

To Jove, the god of thunders, who attends

And honors every suppliant.” As he spake

Protonoüs mingled the delicious wines,

And passed from right to left, distributing

The cups to all; and when they all had poured

A part to Jove, and all had drunk their fill,

Alcinoüs took the word, and thus he said:—
“Princes and chiefs of the Phaeacians, hear,

I speak as my heart bids me. Since the feast

Is over, take your rest within your homes.

Tomorrow shall the Senators be called

In larger concourse. We will pay our guest

Due honor in the palace, worshipping

The gods with solemn sacrifice. And then

Will we bethink us how to send him home,

That with no hindrance and no hardship borne

Under our escort he may come again

Gladly and quickly to his native land,

Though far away it lie, and that no wrong

Or loss may happen to him ere he set

Foot on its soil; and there must he endure

Whatever, when his mother brought him forth,

Fate and the unrelenting Sisters spun

For the newborn. But should he prove to be

One of the immortals who has come from heaven,

Then have the gods a different design.

For hitherto the gods have shown themselves

Visibly at our solemn hecatombs,

And sat with us, and feasted like ourselves,

And when the traveller meets with them alone,

They never hide themselves; for we to them

Are near of kin, as near as is the race

Of Cyclops and the savage giant brood.”

Ulysses the sagacious answered him:—

“Nay, think not so, Alcinoüs. I am not

In form or aspect as the immortals are,

Whose habitation is the ample heaven.

But I am like whomever thou mayst know,

Among mankind, inured to suffering;

To them shouldst thou compare me. I could tell

Of bitterer sorrows yet, which I have borne;

Such was the pleasure of the gods. But now

Leave me, whatever have my hardships been,

To take the meal before me. Naught exceeds

The impatient stomach’s importunity

When even the afflicted and the sorrowful

Are forced to heed its call. So even now,

Midst all the sorrow that is in my heart,

It bids me eat and drink, and put aside

The thought of my misfortunes till itself

Be satiate. But, ye princes, with the dawn

Provide for me, in my calamity,

The means to reach again my native land.

For, after all my hardships, I would die

Willingly, could I look on my estates,

My servants, and my lofty halls once more.”
He ended; they approved his words, and bade

Set forward on his homeward way the guest

Who spake so wisely. When they all had made

Libations and had drunk, they each withdrew

To sleep at home, and left the noble chief

Ulysses in the palace, where with him

Aretè and her godlike husband sat,

While from the feast the maidens bore away

The chargers. The white-armed Aretè then

Began to speak; for when she cast her eyes

On the fair garments which Ulysses wore,

She knew the mantle and the tunic well,

Wrought by herself and her attendant maids,

And thus with winged words bespake the chief:—
“Stranger, I first must ask thee who thou art,

And of what race of men. From whom hast thou

Received those garments? Sure thou dost not say

That thou art come from wandering o’er the sea.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:—

“’Twere hard, O sovereign lady, to relate

In order all my sufferings, for the gods

Of heaven have made them many; yet will I

Tell all thou askest of me, and obey

Thy bidding. Far within the ocean lies

An island named Ogygia, where abides

Calypso, artful goddess, with bright locks,

Daughter of Atlas, and of dreaded power.

No god consorts with her, nor anyone

Of mortal birth. But me in my distress

Some god conveyed alone to her abode,

When, launching his white lightning, Jupiter

Had cloven in the midst of the black sea

My galley. There my gallant comrades all

Perished, but I in both my arms held fast

The keel of my good ship, and floated on

Nine days till, on the tenth, in the dark night,

The gods had brought me to Ogygia’s isle,

Where dwells Calypso of the radiant hair

And dreaded might, who kindly welcomed me,

And cherished me, and would have made my life

Immortal, and beyond the power of age

In all the coming time. And there I wore

Seven years away, still moistening with my tears

The ambrosial raiment which the goddess gave.

But when the eighth year had begun its round

She counselled my departure, whether Jove

Had so required, or she herself had changed

Her purpose. On a raft made strong with clamps

She placed me, sent on board an ample store

Of bread and pleasant wine, and made me put

Ambrosial garments on, and gave a soft

And favorable wind. For seventeen days

I held my steady course across the deep,

And on the eighteenth day the shadowy heights

Of your own isle appeared, and then my heart,

Ill-fated as I was, rejoiced. Yet still

Was I to struggle with calamities

Sent by earthshaking Neptune, who called up

The winds against me, and withstood my way,

And stirred the boundless ocean to its depths.

Nor did the billows surfer me to keep

My place, but swept me, groaning, from the raft,

Whose planks they scattered. Still I labored through

The billowy depth, and swam, till wind and wave

Drove me against your coast. As there I sought

To land, I found the surges hurrying me

Against huge rocks that lined the frightful shore,

But, turning back, I swam again and reached

A river and the landing-place I wished.

Smooth, without rocks, and sheltered from the wind.

I swooned, but soon revived. Ambrosial night

Came on. I left the Jove-descended stream

And slept among the thickets, drawing round

My limbs the withered leaves, while on my lids

A deity poured bounteously the balm

Of slumber. All night long, among the leaves,

I slept, with all that sorrow in my heart,

Till morn, till noon. Then as the sun went down

The balmy slumber left me, and I saw

Thy daughter’s handmaids sporting on the shore,

And her among them, goddess-like. To her

I came a suppliant, nor did she receive

My suit unkindly as a maid so young

Might do, for youth is foolish. She bestowed

Food and red wine abundantly, and gave,

When I had bathed, the garments I have on.

Thus is my tale of suffering truly told."
And then Alcinoüs answered him and said:—

"Stranger, one duty hath my child o'erlooked—

To bid thee follow hither with her maids,

Since thou didst sue to her the first of all."
Ulysses, the sagacious, thus replied:—

"Blame not for that, O hero, I entreat,

Thy faultless daughter. She commanded me

To follow with her maids, but I refrained

For fear and awe of thee, lest, at the sight,

Thou mightest be displeased; for we are prone

To dark misgivings—we, the sons of men.”

Again Alcinoüs spake: “The heart that beats

Within my bosom is not rashly moved

To wrath, and better is the temperate mood.

This must I say, O Father Jupiter,

And Pallas and Apollo! I could wish

That, being as thou art, and of like mind

With me, thou wouldst receive to be thy bride

My daughter, and be called my son-in-law,

And here abide. A palace I would give,

And riches, shouldst thou willingly remain.

Against thy will let no Phaeacian dare

To keep thee here. May Father Jove forbid!

And that thou mayst be sure of my intent,

I name tomorrow for thy voyage home.

Sleep in thy bed till then; and they shall row

O’er the calm sea thy galley, till thou come

To thine own land and home, or wheresoe’er

Thou wilt, though further off the coast should be

Than far Euboea, most remote of lands—

So do the people of our isle declare,

Who saw it when they over sea conveyed

The fair-haired Rhadamanthus, on his way

To visit Tityus, son of Earth. They went

Thither, accomplishing with little toil

Their voyage in the compass of a day,

And brought the hero to our isle again.

Now shalt thou learn, and in thy heart confess,

How much our galleys and our youths excel

With bladed oars to stir the whirling brine.”
So spake the king, and the great sufferer

Ulysses heard with gladness, and preferred

A prayer, and called on Jupiter and said:—
“Grant, Father Jove, that all the king has said

May be fulfilled! so shall his praise go forth

Over the foodful earth, and never die,

And I shall see my native land again.”
So they conferred. White-armed Aretè spake,

And bade her maidens in the portico

Place couches, and upon them lay fair rugs

Of purple dye, and tapestry on these,

And for the outer covering shaggy cloaks.

Forth from the hall they issued, torch in hand;

And when with speed the ample bed was made,

They came and summoned thus the chief to rest:—
“Rise, stranger, go to rest; thy bed is made.”

Thus spake the maidens, and the thought of sleep

Was welcome to Ulysses. So that night

On his deep couch the noble sufferer

Slumbered beneath the sounding portico.

Alcinoüs laid him down in a recess

Within his lofty palace, near to whom

The queen his consort graced the marriage-bed.

Book VIII

Festivals in Honor of Ulysses

A general council of the Phaeacians, in which it is determined to send Ulysses home to Ithaca—A solemn feast—Lay of the Trojan War, sung by Demodocus, the minstrel—Public games—Ulysses conquers in throwing the discus—The amour of Mars and Venus sung by Demodocus—His song of the Trojan horse and the fall of Troy.

When Morn appeared, the rosy-fingered child

Of Dawn, Alcinoüs, mighty and revered,

Rose from his bed. Ulysses, noble chief,

Spoiler of cities, also left his couch.

Alcinoüs, mighty and revered, went forth

Before, and led him to the marketplace

Of the Phaeacians, built beside the fleet,

And there on polished stones they took their seats

Near to each other. Pallas, who now seemed

A herald of the wise Alcinoüs, went

Through all the city, planning how to send

Magnanimous Ulysses to his home,

And came and stood by every chief and said:—
“Leaders and chiefs of the Phaeacians, come

Speedily to the marketplace, and there

Hear of the stranger who from wandering o’er

The deep has come where wise Alcinoüs holds

His court; in aspect he is like the gods.”
She spake, and every mind and heart was moved,

And all the marketplace and all its seats

Were quickly filled with people. Many gazed,

Admiring, on Laertes’ well-graced son;

For on his face and form had Pallas shed

A glory, and had made him seem more tall

And of an ampler bulk, that he might find

Favor with the Phaeacians, and be deemed

Worthy of awe and able to achieve

The many feats which the Phaeacian chiefs,

To try the stranger’s prowess, might propose.
And now when all the summoned had arrived,

Alcinoüs to the full assembly spake:—
“Princes and chiefs of the Phaeacians, hear:

I speak the promptings of my heart. This guest—

I know him not—has come to my abode,

A wanderer—haply from the tribes who dwell

In the far East, or haply from the West—

And asked an escort and safe-conduct home;

And let us make them ready, as our wont

Has ever been. No stranger ever comes

Across my threshold who is suffered long

To pine for his departure. Let us draw

A dark-hulled ship down to the holy sea

On her first voyage. Let us choose her crew

Among the people, two-and-fifty youths

Of our best seamen. Then make fast the oars

Beside the benches, leave them there, and come

Into our palace and partake in haste

A feast which I will liberally spread

For all of you. This I command the youths;

But you, ye sceptred princes, come at once

To my fair palace, that we there may pay

The honors due our guest; let none refuse.

Call also the divine Demodocus,

The bard, on whom a deity bestowed

In ample measure the sweet gift of song,

Delightful when the spirit prompts the lay.”
He spake, and led the way; the sceptred train

Of princes followed him. The herald sought

Meantime the sacred bard. The chosen youths

Fifty-and-two betook them to the marge

Of the unfruitful sea; and when they reached

The ship and beach they drew the dark hull down

To the deep water, put the mast on board

And the ship’s sails, and fitted well the oars

Into the leathern rings, and, having moored

Their barque in the deep water, went with speed

To their wise monarch in his spacious halls.

There portico and court and hall were thronged

With people, young and old in multitude;

And there Alcinoüs sacrificed twelve sheep,

Eight white-toothed swine, and two splayfooted beeves.

And these they flayed, and duly dressed, and made

A noble banquet ready. Then appeared

The herald, leading the sweet singer in,

Him whom the Muse with an exceeding love

Had cherished, and had visited with good

And evil, quenched his eyesight and bestowed

Sweetness of song. Pontonoüs mid the guests

Placed for the bard a silver-studded throne,

Against a lofty column hung his harp

Above his head, and taught him how to find

And take it down. Near him the herald set

A basket and fair table, and a cup

Of wine, that he might drink when he desired;

Then all put forth their hands and shared the feast.
And when their thirst and hunger were allayed,

The Muse inspired the bard to sing the praise

Of heroes; ’twas a song whose fame had reached

To the high heaven, a story of the strife

Between Ulysses and Achilles, son

Of Peleus, wrangling at a solemn feast

Made for the gods. They strove with angry words,

And Agamemnon, king of men, rejoiced

To hear the noblest of the Achaian host

Contending; for all this had been foretold

To him in sacred Pythia by the voice

Of Phoebus, when the monarch to inquire

At the oracle had crossed the rock which formed

Its threshold. Then began the train of woes

Which at the will of sovereign Jupiter

Befell the sons of Ilium and of Greece.
So sang renowned Demodocus. Meanwhile

Ulysses took into his brawny hands

An ample veil of purple, drawing it

Around his head to hide his noble face,

Ashamed that the Phaeacians should behold

The tears that flowed so freely from his lids.

But when the sacred bard had ceased his song,

He wiped the tears away and laid the veil

Aside, and took a double beaker filled

With wine, and poured libations to the gods.

Yet when again the minstrel sang, and all

The chiefs of the Phaeacian people, charmed

To hear his music, bade the strain proceed,

Again Ulysses hid his face and wept.

No other eye beheld the tears he shed.

Alcinoüs only watched him, and perceived

His grief, and heard the sighs he drew, and spake

To the Phaeacians, lovers of the sea:—
"Now that we all, to our content, have shared

The feast and heard the harp, whose notes so well

Suit with a liberal banquet, let us forth

And try our skill in games, that this our guest,

Returning to his country, may relate

How in the boxing and the wrestling match,

In leaping and in running, we excel."
He spake, and went before; they followed him.

Then did the herald hang the clear-toned harp

Again on high, and taking by the hand

Demodocus, he led him from the place,

Guiding him in the way which just before

The princes of Phaeacia trod to see

The public games. Into the marketplace

They went; a vast innumerable crowd

Pressed after. Then did many a valiant youth

Arise—Acroneus and Ocyalus,

Elatreus, Nauteus, Prymneus, after whom

Upstood Anchialus, and by his side

Eretmeus, Ponteus, Proreus, Thoön, rose;

Anabasineüs and Amphialus,

A son of Polyneius, Tecton’s son;

Then rose the son of Naubolus, like Mars

In warlike port, Euryalus by name,

And goodliest both in feature and in form

Of all Phaeacia’s sons save one alone,

Laodamas the faultless. Next three sons

Of King Alcinoüs rose: Laodamas,

Halius, and Clytoneius, like a god

In aspect. Some of these began the games,

Contending in the race. For them a course

Was marked from goal to goal. They darted forth

At once and swiftly, raising, as they ran,

The dust along the plain. The swiftest there

Was Clytoneius in the race. As far

As mules, in furrowing the fallow ground,

Gain on the steers, he ran before the rest,

And reached the crowd, and left them all behind.

Others in wrestling strove laboriously—

And here Euryalus excelled them all;

But in the leap Amphialus was first;

Elatreus flung the quoit with firmest hand;

And in the boxer’s art Laodamas,

The monarch’s valiant son, was conqueror.
This when the admiring multitude had seen,

Thus spake the monarch’s son, Laodamas:—
“And now, my friends, inquire we of our guest

If he has learned and practised feats like these.

For he is not ill-made in legs and thighs

And in both arms, in firmly planted neck

And strong-built frame; nor does he seem to lack

A certain youthful vigor, though impaired

By many hardships—for I know of naught

That more severely tries the strongest man,

And breaks him down, than perils of the sea.”

Euryalus replied: “Laodamas,

Well hast thou said, and rightly: go thou now

And speak to him thyself, and challenge him.”
The son of King Alcinoüs, as he heard,

Came forward, and bespake Ulysses thus:—
“Thou also, guest and father, try these feats,

If thou perchance wert trained to them. I think

Thou must be skilled in games, since there is not

A greater glory for a man while yet

He lives on earth than what he hath wrought out,

By strenuous effort, with his feet and hands.

Try, then, thy skill, and give no place to grief.

Not long will thy departure be delayed;

Thy barque is launched; the crew are ready here.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:—

“Why press me, O Laodamas! to try

These feats, when all my thoughts are of my woes,

And not of games? I, who have borne so much

Of pain and toil, sit pining for my home

In your assembly, supplicating here

Your king and all the people of your land.”
Then spake Euryalus with chiding words:—

“Stranger, I well perceive thou canst not boast,

As many others can, of skill in games;

But thou art one of those who dwell in ships

With many benches, rulers o’er a crew

Of sailors—a mere trader looking out

For freight, and watching o’er the wares that form

The cargo. Thou hast doubtless gathered wealth

By rapine, and art surely no athlete.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, frowned and said:—

“Stranger, thou speakest not becomingly,

But like a man who recks not what he says.

The gods bestow not equally on all

The gifts that men desire—the grace of form,

The mind, the eloquence. One man to sight

Is undistinguished, but on him the gods

Bestow the power of words. All look on him

Gladly; he knows whereof he speaks; his speech

Is mild and modest; he is eminent

In all assemblies, and, whene’er he walks

The city, men regard him as a god.

Another in the form he wears is like

The immortals, yet has he no power to speak

Becoming words. So thou hast comely looks—

A god would not have shaped thee otherwise

Than we behold thee—yet thy wit is small,

And thy unmannerly words have angered me

Even to the heart. Not quite unskilled am I

In games, as thou dost idly talk, and once,

When I could trust my youth and my strong arms,

I think that in these contests I was deemed

Among the first. But I am now pressed down

With toil and sorrow; much have I endured

In wars with heroes and on stormy seas.

Yet even thus, a sufferer as I am,

Will I essay these feats; for sharp have been

Thy words, and they provoke me to the proof.”
He spake, and rising with his mantle on

He seized a broader, thicker, heavier quoit,

By no small odds, than the Phaeacians used,

And swinging it around with vigorous arm

He sent it forth; it sounded as it went;

And the Phaeacians, skilful with the oar

And sail, bent low as o’er them, from his hand,

Flew the swift stone beyond the other marks.

And Pallas, in a human form, set up

A mark where it descended, and exclaimed:—
“Stranger! a blind man, groping here, could find

Thy mark full easily, since it is not

Among the many, but beyond them all.

Then fear thou nothing in this game at least;

For no Phaeacian here can throw the quoit

As far as thou, much less exceed thy cast.”
She spake; Ulysses the great sufferer

Heard, and rejoiced to know he had a friend

In that great circle. With a lighter heart

Thus said the chief to the Phaeacian crowd:—
“Follow that cast, young men, and I will send

Another stone, at once, as far, perchance,

Or further still. If there are others yet

Who feel the wish, let them come forward here—

For much your words have chafed me—let them try

With me the boxing or the wrestling match,

Or footrace; there is naught that I refuse—

Any of the Phaeacians. I except

Laodamas; he is my host, and who

Would enter such a contest with a friend?

A senseless, worthless man is he who seeks

A strife like this with one who shelters him

In a strange land; he mars the welcome given.

As for the rest, there is no rival here

Whom I reject or scorn; for I would know

Their prowess, and would try my own with theirs

Before you all. At any of the games

Practised among mankind I am not ill,

Whatever they may be. The polished bow

I well know how to handle. I should be

The first to strike a foe by arrows sent

Among a hostile squadron, though there stood

A crowd of fellow-warriors by my side

And also aimed their shafts. The only one

Whose skill in archery excelled my own,

When we Achaians drew the bow at Troy,

Was Philoctetes; to all other men

On earth that live by bread I hold myself

Superior. Yet I claim no rivalry

With men of ancient times—with Hercules

And Eurytus the Oechalian, who defied

The immortals to a contest with the bow.

Therefore was mighty Eurytus cut off.

Apollo, angry to be challenged, slew

The hero. I can hurl a spear beyond

Where others send an arrow. All my fear

Is for my feet, so weakened have I been

Among the stormy waves with want of food

At sea, and thus my limbs have lost their strength."
He ended here, and all the assembly sat

In silence; King Alcinoüs only spake:—
"Stranger, since thou dost speak without offence,

And but to assert the prowess of thine arm,

Indignant that amid the public games

This man should rail at thee, and since thy wish

Is only that all others who can speak

Becomingly may not in time to come

Dispraise that prowess, now, then, heed my words,

And speak of them within thy palace halls

To other heroes when thou banquetest

Beside thy wife and children, and dost think

Of things that we excel in—arts which Jove

Gives us, transmitted from our ancestors.

In boxing and in wrestling small renown

Have we, but we are swift of foot; we guide

Our galleys bravely o’er the deep; we take

Delight in feasts; we love the harp, the dance,

And change of raiment, the warm bath and bed.

Rise, then, Phaeacian masters of the dance,

And tread your measures, that our guest may tell

His friends at home how greatly we surpass

All other men in seamanship, the race,

The dance, the art of song. Go, one of you,

And bring Demodocus his clear-toned harp,

That somewhere in our palace has been left."
Thus spake the godlike king. The herald rose

To bring the sweet harp from the royal house.

Then the nine umpires also rose, who ruled

The games; they smoothed the floor, and made the ring

Of gazers wider. Next the herald came,

And brought Demodocus the clear-toned harp.

The minstrel went into the midst, and there

Gathered the graceful dancers; they were youths

In life’s first bloom. With even steps they smote

The sacred floor. Ulysses, gazing, saw

The twinkle of their feet and was amazed.

The minstrel struck the chords and gracefully

Began the lay: he sang the loves of Mars

And Venus of the glittering crown, who first

Had met each other stealthily beneath

The roof of Vulcan. Mars with many gifts

Won her, and wronged her spouse, the King of Fire;

But from the Sun, who saw their guilt, there came

A messenger to Vulcan. When he heard

The unwelcome tidings, planning his revenge,

He hastened to his smithy, where he forged

Chains that no power might loosen or might break,

Made to hold fast forever. When the snare

In all its parts was finished, he repaired,

Angry with Mars, to where the marriage-bed

Stood in his chamber. To the posts he tied

The encircling chains on every side, and made

Fast to the ceiling many, like the threads

Spun by the spider, which no eye could see,

Not even of the gods, so artfully

He wrought them. Then, as soon as he had wrapped

The snare about the bed, he feigned to go

To Lemnos nobly built, most dear to him

Of all the lands. But Mars, the god who holds

The shining reins, had kept no careless watch,

And when he saw the great artificer

Depart he went with speed to Vulcan’s house,

Drawn thither by the love of her who wears

The glittering crown. There Cytherea sat,

Arrived that moment from a visit paid.

Entering, he took her by the hand and said:—
“Come, my beloved, let us to the couch.

Vulcan is here no longer; he is gone,

And is among the Sintians, men who speak

A barbarous tongue, in Lemnos far away.”
He spake, and she approved his words, and both

Lay down upon the bed, when suddenly

The network, wrought by Vulcan’s skilful hand,

Caught them, and clasped them round, nor could they lift

Or move a limb, and saw that no escape

Was possible. And now approached the King

Of Fire, returning ere he reached the isle

Of Lemnos, for the Sun in his behalf

Kept watch and told him all. He hastened home

In bitterness of heart, but when he reached

The threshold stopped. A fury without bounds

Possessed him, and he shouted terribly,

And called aloud on all the gods of heaven:—
    “O Father Jove, and all ye blessed ones,

And deathless! Come, for here is what will move

Your laughter, yet is not to be endured.

Jove’s daughter, Venus, thus dishonors me,

Lame as I am, and loves the butcher Mars;

For he is well to look at, and is sound

Of foot, while I am weakly—but for this

Are none but my two parents to be blamed,

Who never should have given me birth. Behold

Where lie embraced the lovers in my bed—

A hateful sight. Yet they will hardly take

Even a short slumber there, though side by side,

Enamored as they are; nor will they both

Be drowsy very soon. The net and chains

Will hold them till her father shall restore

All the large gifts which, on our marriage-day,

I gave him to possess the impudent minx

His daughter, who is fair, indeed, but false."
He spake, and to the brazen palace flocked

The gods; there Neptune came, who shakes the earth;

There came beneficent Hermes; there too came

Apollo, archer-god; the goddesses,

Through womanly reserve, remained at home.

Meantime the gods, the givers of all good,

Stood in the entrance; and as they beheld

The cunning snare of Vulcan, there arose

Infinite laughter from the blessed ones,

And one of them bespake his neighbor thus:—
“Wrong prospers not; the slow o’ertakes the swift.

Vulcan the slow has trapped the fleetest god

Upon Olympus, Mars; though lame himself,

His net has taken the adulterer,

Who now must pay the forfeit of his crime.”
So talked they with each other. Then the son

Of Jove, Apollo, thus to Hermes said:—
“Hermes, thou son and messenger of Jove,

And bountiful of gifts, couldst thou endure,

Fettered with such strong chains as these, to lie

Upon a couch with Venus at thy side?”
The herald-god, the Argus-queller, thus

Made answer: “Nay, I would that it were so,

O archer-king, Apollo; I could bear

Chains thrice as many, and of infinite strength,

And all the gods and all the goddesses

Might come to look upon me, I would keep

My place with golden Venus at my side."
He spake, and all the immortals laughed to hear.

Neptune alone laughed not, but earnestly

Prayed Vulcan, the renowned artificer,

To set Mars free, and spake these winged words:—
"Release thy prisoner. What thou dost require

I promise here—that he shall make to thee

Due recompense in presence of the gods."
Illustrious Vulcan answered: "Do not lay,

Earthshaking Neptune, this command on me,

Since little is the worth of pledges given

For worthless debtors. How could I demand

My right from thee among the assembled gods,

If Mars, set free, escape from debt and chains?”
Again the god who shakes the earth replied:—

“Vulcan, though Mars deny the forfeit due,

And take to flight, it shall be paid by me.”
Again illustrious Vulcan said: “Thy word

I ought not and I seek not to decline.”
He spake, and then the might of Vulcan loosed

The net, and, freed from those strong fetters, both

The prisoners sprang away. Mars flew to Thrace,

And laughter-loving Venus to the isle

Of Cyprus, where at Paphos stand her grove

And perfumed altar. Here the Graces gave

The bath, anointed with ambrosial oil

Her limbs—such oil as to the eternal gods

Lends a fresh beauty, and arrayed her last

In graceful robes, a marvel to behold.
So sang the famous bard, while inly pleased

Ulysses heard, and pleased were all the rest,

Phaeacia’s sons, expert with oar and sail.
Alcinoüs called his sons Laodamas

And Halius forth, and bade them dance alone,

For none of all the others equalled them.

Then taking a fair purple ball, the work

Of skilful Polybus, and, bending back,

One flung it toward the shadowy clouds on high,

The other springing upward easily

Grasped it before he touched the ground again.

And when they thus had tossed the ball awhile,

They danced upon the nourishing earth, and oft

Changed places with each other, while the youths,

That stood within the circle filled the air

With their applauses; mighty was the din.

Then great Ulysses to Alcinoüs said:—

“O King Alcinoüs! mightiest of the race

For whom thou hast engaged that they excel

All others in the dance, what thou hast said

Is amply proved. I look and am amazed.”
Well pleased Alcinoüs the mighty heard,

And thus to his seafaring people spake:—
“Leaders and chiefs of the Phaeacians, hear!

Wise seems the stranger. Haste we to bestow

Gifts that may well beseem his liberal hests.

Twelve honored princes in our land bear sway,

The thirteenth prince am I. Let each one bring

A well-bleached cloak, a tunic, and beside

Of precious gold a talent. Let them all

Be brought at once, that, having seen them here,

Our guest may with a cheerful heart partake

The evening meal. And let Euryalus,

Who spake but now so unbecomingly,

Appease him both with words and with a gift.”
He spake; they all approved, and each one sent

His herald with a charge to bring the gifts,

And thus Euryalus addressed the king:—
“O King Alcinoüs, mightiest of our race,

I will obey thee, and will seek to appease

Our guest. This sword of brass will I bestow,

With hilt of silver, and an ivory sheath

New wrought, which he may deem a gift of price.”
He spake, and gave the silver-studded sword

Into his hand, and spake these winged words:—
“Stranger and father, hail! If any word

That hath been uttered gave offence, may storms

Sweep it away forever. May the gods

Give thee to see thy wife again, and reach

Thy native land, where all thy sufferings

And this long absence from thy friends shall end!”
Ulysses, the sagacious, thus replied:—

“Hail also, friend! and may the gods confer

On thee all happiness, and may the time

Never arrive when thou shalt miss the sword

Placed in my hands with reconciling word!”
He spake, and slung the silver-studded sword

Upon his shoulders. Now the sun went down,

And the rich presents were already brought.

The noble heralds came and carried them

Into the palace of Alcinoüs, where

His blameless sons received and ranged them all

In fair array before the queenly dame

Their mother. Meantime had the mighty king

Alcinoüs to his palace led the way,

Where they who followed took the lofty seats,

And thus Alcinoüs to Aretè said:—
“Bring now a coffer hither, fairly shaped,

The best we have, and lay a well-bleached cloak

And tunic in it; set upon the fire

A brazen cauldron for our guest, to warm

The water of his bath, that having bathed

And viewed the gifts which the Phaeacian chiefs

Have brought him, ranged in order, he may sit

Delighted at the banquet and enjoy

The music. I will give this beautiful cup

Of gold, that he, in memory of me,

May daily in his palace pour to Jove

Libations, and to all the other gods.”

He spake; Aretè bade her maidens haste

To place an ample tripod on the fire.

Forthwith upon the blazing fire they set

A laver with three feet, and in it poured

Water, and heaped fresh fuel on the flames.

The flames crept up the vessel’s swelling sides,

And warmed the water. Meantime from her room

Aretè brought a beautiful chest, in which

She laid the presents destined for her guest—

Garments and gold which the Phaeacians gave—

And laid the cloak and tunic with the rest,

And thus in winged words addressed the chief:—

“Look to the lid thyself, and cast a cord

Around it, lest, upon thy voyage home,

Thou suffer loss, when haply thou shalt take

A pleasant slumber in the dark-hulled ship.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, heard, and straight

He fitted to its place the lid, and wound

And knotted artfully around the chest

A cord, as queenly Circè long before

Had taught him. Then to call him to the bath

The housewife of the palace came. He saw

Gladly the steaming laver, for not oft

Had he been cared for thus, since he had left

The dwelling of the nymph with amber hair,

Calypso, though attended while with her

As if he were a god. Now when the maids

Had seen him bathed, and had anointed him

With oil, and put his sumptuous mantle on,

And tunic, forth he issued from the bath,

And came to those who sat before their wine.

Nausicaä, goddess-like in beauty, stood

Beside a pillar of that noble roof,

And looking on Ulysses as he passed,

Admired, and said to him in winged words:—
"Stranger, farewell, and in thy native land

Remember thou hast owed thy life to me."
Ulysses, the sagacious, answering said:—

"Nausicaä, daughter of the large-souled king

Alcinoüs! so may Jove, the Thunderer,

Husband of Juno, grant that I behold

My home, returning safe, as I will make

To thee as to a goddess day by day

My prayer; for, lady, thou hast saved my life.”
He spake, and near Alcinoüs took his place

Upon a throne. And now they served the feast

To each, and mingled wine. A herald led

Thither the gentle bard Demodocus,

Whom all the people honored. Him they placed

Amidst the assembly, where he leaned against

A lofty column. Sage Ulysses then

Carved from the broad loin of a white-tusked boar

A part, where yet a mass of flesh remained

Bordered with fat, and to the herald said:—
“Bear this, O herald, to Demodocus,

That he may eat. Him, even in my grief,

Will I embrace, for worthily the bards

Are honored and revered o’er all the earth

By every race of men. The Muse herself

Hath taught them song; she loves the minstrel tribe.”
He spake; the herald laid the flesh before

Demodocus the hero, who received

The gift well pleased. Then all the guests put forth

Their hands and shared the viands on the board;

And when their thirst and hunger were allayed,

Thus to the minstrel sage Ulysses spake:—
“Demodocus, above all other men

I give thee praise, for either has the Muse,

Jove’s daughter, or Apollo, visited

And taught thee. Truly hast thou sung the fate

Of the Achaian warriors—what they did

And suffered—all their labors as if thou

Hadst been among them, or hadst heard the tale

From an eyewitness. Now, I pray, proceed,

And sing the invention of the wooden horse

Made by Epeius with Minerva’s aid,

And by the chief Ulysses artfully

Conveyed into the Trojan citadel,

With armed warriors in its womb to lay

The city waste. And I, if thou relate

The story rightly, will at once declare

To all that largely hath some bounteous god

Bestowed on thee the holy gift of song.”
He spake; the poet felt the inspiring god,

And sang, beginning where the Argives hurled

Firebrands among their tents, and sailed away

In their good galleys, save the band that sat

Beside renowned Ulysses in the horse,

Concealed from sight, amid the Trojan crowd,

Who now had drawn it to the citadel.

So there it stood, while, sitting round it, talked

The men of Troy, and wist not what to do.

By turns three counsels pleased them—to hew down

The hollow trunk with the remorseless steel;

Or drag it to a height, and cast it thence

Headlong among the rocks; or, lastly, leave

The enormous image standing and unharmed,

An offering to appease the gods. And this

At last was done; for so had fate decreed

That they should be destroyed whene’er their town

Should hold within its walls the horse of wood,

In which the mightiest of the Argives came

Among the sons of Troy to smite and slay.

Then sang the bard how, issuing from the womb

Of that deceitful horse, the sons of Greece

Laid Ilium waste; how each in different ways

Ravaged the town, while, terrible as Mars,

Ulysses, joined with Menelaus, sought

The palace of Deiphobus, and there

Maintained a desperate battle, till the aid

Of mighty Pallas made the victory his.
So sang renowned Demodocus; the strain

Melted to tears Ulysses, from whose lids

They dropped and wet his cheeks. As when a wife

Weeps her beloved husband, slain before

His town and people, fighting to defend

Them and his own dear babes from deadly harm,

She sees him gasp and die, and at the sight

She falls with piercing cries upon his corpse,

Meantime the victors beat her on the back

And shoulders with their spears, and bear her off

To toil and grieve in slavery, where her cheeks

In that long bitter sorrow lose their bloom;

So from the eyelids of Ulysses fell

The tears, yet fell unnoticed by them all

Save that Alcinoüs, sitting at his side,

Saw them, and heard his heavy sighs, and thus

Bespake his people, masters of the oar:—
“Princes and chiefs of the Phaeacian race,

Give ear. Let now Demodocus lay by

His clear-toned harp. The matter of his song

Delights not all alike. Since first we sat

At meat, and since our noble bard began

His lay, our guest has never ceased to grieve;

Some mighty sorrow weighs upon his heart.

Now let the bard refrain, that we may all

Enjoy the banquet, both our guest and we

Who welcome him, for it is fitting thus.

And now are all things for our worthy guest

Made ready, both the escort and these gifts,

The pledges of our kind regard. A guest,

A suppliant, is a brother, even to him

Who bears a heart not easy to be moved.

No longer, then, keep back with studied art

What I shall ask; ’twere better far to speak

With freedom. Tell the name thy mother gave,

Thy father, and all those who dwell within,

And round thy city. For no living man

Is nameless from the time that he is born.

Humble or high in station, at their birth

The parents give them names. Declare thy land,

Thy people, and thy city, that our ships

May learn, and bear thee to the place; for here

In our Phaeacian ships no pilots are,

Nor rudders, as in ships of other lands.

Ours know the thoughts and the intents of men.

To them all cities and all fertile coasts

Inhabited by men are known; they cross

The great sea scudding fast, involved in mist

And darkness, with no fear of perishing

Or meeting harm. I heard Nausithoüs,

My father, say that Neptune was displeased

With us for safely bearing to their homes

So many men, and that he would destroy

In after time some good Phaeacian ship,

Returning from a convoy, in the waves

Of the dark sea, and leave her planted there,

A mountain huge and high, before our town.

So did the aged chieftain prophesy;

The god, as best may please him, will fulfil

My father’s words, or leave them unfulfilled.

Now tell me truly whither thou hast roamed,

And what the tribes of men that thou hast seen;

Tell which of them are savage, rude, unjust,

And which are hospitable and revere

The blessed gods. Declare why thou didst weep

And sigh when hearing what unhappy fate

Befell the Argive and Achaian host

And town of Troy. The gods decreed it; they

Ordain destruction to the sons of men,

A theme of song thereafter. Hadst thou not

Some valiant kinsman who was slain at Troy?

A son-in-law? the father of thy wife?

Nearest of all are they to us, save those

Of our own blood. Or haply might it be

Some bosom-friend, one eminently graced

With all that wins our love; for not less dear

Than if he were a brother should we hold

The wise and gentle man who is our friend.”

Book IX

The Ciconians, Lotus-Eaters, and Cyclops

The adventures of Ulysses after the fall of Troy related by him at the request of Alcinoüs—His attack on the Ciconians and the destruction of their city—Rally and reinforcement of the Ciconians, who slaughter many of the companions of Ulysses—The lotus-eaters, who subsist on flowers—Arrival of Ulysses at the land of the cyclops—Polyphemus and his barbarities—Revenge of Ulysses, who puts out the single eye of Polyphemus and escapes.

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:—

“O King Alcinoüs, most renowned of men!

A pleasant thing it is to hear a bard

Like this, endowed with such a voice, so like

The voices of the gods. Nor can I deem

Aught more delightful than the general joy

Of a whole people when the assembled guests

Seated in order in the royal halls

Are listening to the minstrel, while the board

Is spread with bread and meats, and from the jars

The cupbearer draws wine and fills the cups.

To me there is no more delightful sight.
“But now thy mind is moved to ask of me

The story of the sufferings I have borne,

And that will wake my grief anew. What first,

What next, shall I relate? what last of all?

For manifold are the misfortunes cast

Upon me by the immortals. Let me first

Declare my name, that ye may know, and I

Perchance, before my day of death shall come,

May be your host, though dwelling far away.

I am Ulysses, and my father’s name

Laertes; widely am I known to men

As quick in shrewd devices, and my fame

Hath reached to heaven. In sunny Ithaca

I dwell, where high Neritus, seen afar,

Rustles with woods. Around are many isles,

Well peopled, near each other. Samos there

Lies, with Dulichium, and Zacynthus dark

With forests. Ithaca, with its low shores,

Lies highest toward the setting sun; the rest

Are on the side where first the morning breaks.

A rugged region ’tis, but nourishes

Nobly its youths, nor have I ever seen

A sweeter spot on earth. Calypso late,

That glorious goddess, in her grotto long

Detained me from it, and desired that I

Should be her husband; in her royal home

Aeëan Circè, mistress of strange arts,

Detained me also, and desired that I

Should be her husband—yet they could not move

The purpose of my heart. For there is naught

More sweet and dear than our own native land

And parents, though perchance our lot be cast

In a rich home, yet far from our own kin

And in a foreign land. Now let me speak

Of the calamitous voyage which the will

Of Jove ordained on my return from Troy.
"The wind that blew me from the Trojan shore

Bore me to the Ciconians, who abode

In Ismarus. I laid the city waste

And slew its dwellers, carried off their wives

And all their wealth and parted them among

My men, that none might want an equal share.

And then I warned them with all haste to leave

The region. Madmen! they obeyed me not.
“And there they drank much wine, and on the beach

Slew many sheep and many slow-paced steers

With crumpled horns. Then the Ciconians called

To their Ciconian neighbors, braver men

Than they, and more in number, whose abode

Was on the mainland, trained to fight from steeds,

Or, if need were, on foot. In swarms they came,

Thick as new leaves or morning flowers in spring.

Then fell on our unhappy company

An evil fate from Jove, and many griefs.

They formed their lines, and fought at our good ships,

Where man encountered man with brazen spears.

While yet ’twas morning, and the holy light

Of day waxed brighter, we withstood the assault

And kept our ground, although more numerous they.

But when the sun was sloping toward the west

The enemy prevailed; the Achaian band

Was routed, and was made to flee. That day

There perished from each galley of our fleet

Six valiant men; the rest escaped with life.
“Onward we sailed, lamenting bitterly

Our comrades slain, yet happy to escape

From death ourselves. Nor did we put to sea

In our good ships until we thrice had called

Aloud by name each one of our poor friends

Who fell in battle by Ciconian hands.

The Cloud-compeller, Jove, against us sent

The north-wind in a hurricane, and wrapped

The earth and heaven in clouds, and from the skies

Fell suddenly the night. With stooping masts

Our galleys scudded; the strong tempest split

And tore the sails; we drew and laid them down

Within the ships, in fear of utter wreck,

And toward the mainland eagerly we turned

The rudders. There we lay two days and nights,

Worn out with grief and hardship. When at length

The fair-haired Morning brought the third day round,

We raised the masts, and, spreading the white sails

To take the wind, we sat us down. The wind

Carried us forward with the pilot’s aid;

And then should I have reached my native land

Safely, had not the currents and the waves

Of ocean and the north-wind driven me back,

What time I strove to pass Maleia’s cape,

And swept me to Cytherae from my course.
“Still onward driven before those baleful winds

Across the fishy deep for nine whole days,

On the tenth day we reached the land where dwell

The Lotus-eaters, men whose food is flowers.

We landed on the mainland, and our crews

Near the fleet galleys took their evening meal.

And when we all had eaten and had drunk

I sent explorers forth—two chosen men,

A herald was the third—to learn what race

Of mortals nourished by the fruits of earth

Possessed the land. They went and found themselves

Among the Lotus-eaters soon, who used

No violence against their lives, but gave

Into their hands the lotus plant to taste.

Whoever tasted once of that sweet food

Wished not to see his native country more,

Nor give his friends the knowledge of his fate.

And then my messengers desired to dwell

Among the Lotus-eaters, and to feed

Upon the lotus, never to return.

By force I led them weeping to the fleet,

And bound them in the hollow ships beneath

The benches. Then I ordered all the rest

Of my beloved comrades to embark

In haste, lest, tasting of the lotus, they

Should think no more of home. All straightway went

On board, and on the benches took their place,

And smote the hoary ocean with their oars.
"Onward we sailed with sorrowing hearts, and reached

The country of the Cyclops, an untamed

And lawless race, who, trusting to the gods,

Plant not, nor plough the fields, but all things spring

For them untended—barley, wheat, and vines

Yielding large clusters filled with wine, and nursed

By showers from Jove. No laws have they; they hold

No councils. On the mountain heights they dwell

In vaulted caves, where each one rules his wives

And children as he pleases; none give heed

To what the others do. Before the port

Of that Cyclopean land there is an isle,

Low-lying, neither near nor yet remote—

A woodland region, where the wild goats breed

Innumerable; for the foot of man

Disturbs them not, and huntsmen toiling through

Thick woods, or wandering over mountain heights,

Enter not here. The fields are never grazed

By sheep, nor furrowed by the plough, but lie

Untilled, unsown, and uninhabited

By man, and only feed the bleating goats.

The Cyclops have no barques with crimson prows,

Nor shipwrights skilled to frame a galley’s deck

With benches for the rowers, and equipped

For any service, voyaging by turns

To all the cities, as is often done

By men who cross the deep from place to place,

And make a prosperous region of an isle.

No meagre soil is there; it well might bear

All fruits in their due time. Along the shore

Of the gray deep are meadows smooth and moist.

The vine would flourish long; the ploughman’s task

Is easy, and the husbandman would reap

Large harvests, for the mould is rich below.

And there is a safe haven, where no need

Of cable is; no anchor there is cast,

Nor hawsers fastened to the strand, but they

Who enter there remain until it please

The mariners, with favorable wind,

To put to sea again. A limpid stream

Flows from a fount beneath a hollow rock

Into that harbor at its further end,

And poplars grow around it. Thither went

Our fleet; some deity had guided us

Through the dark night, for nothing had we seen.

Thick was the gloom around our barques; the moon

Shone not in heaven, the clouds had quenched her light.

No eye discerned the isle, nor the long waves

That rolled against the shore, till our good ships

Touched land, and, disembarking there, we gave

Ourselves to sleep upon the waterside

And waited for the holy Morn to rise.

“And when at length the daughter of the Dawn,

The rosy-fingered Morn, appeared, we walked

Around the isle, admiring as we went.

Meanwhile the nymphs, the daughters of the God

Who bears the aegis, roused the mountain goats,

That so our crews might make their morning meal.

And straightway from our ships we took in hand

Our crooked bows and our long-bladed spears.
"'Let all the rest of my beloved friends

Remain, while I, with my own barque and crew,

Go forth to learn what race of men are these,

Whether ill-mannered, savage, and unjust,

Or kind to guests and reverent toward the gods.'

"I spake, and, having ordered all my crew

To go on board and cast the hawsers loose,

Embarked on my own ship. They all obeyed,

And manned the benches, sitting there in rows,

And smote the hoary ocean with their oars.

But when we came upon that neighboring coast,

We saw upon its verge beside the sea

A cave high vaulted, overbrowed with shrubs

Of laurel. There much cattle lay at rest,

Both sheep and goats. Around it was a court,

A high enclosure of hewn stone, and pines

Tall stemmed, and towering oaks. Here dwelt a man

Of giant bulk, who by himself, alone,

Was wont to tend his flocks. He never held

Converse with others, but devised apart

His wicked deeds. A frightful prodigy

Was he, and like no man who lives by bread,

But more like a huge mountain summit, rough

With woods, that towers alone above the rest.

“Then, bidding all the others stay and guard

The ship, I chose among my bravest men

Twelve whom I took with me. I had on board

A goatskin of dark wine—a pleasant sort,

Which Maron late, Evanthes' son, a priest

Of Phoebus, guardian god of Ismarus,

Gave me, when, moved with reverence, we saved

Him and his children and his wife from death.

For his abode was in the thick-grown grove

Of Phoebus. Costly were the gifts he gave—

Seven talents of wrought gold; a chalice all

Of silver; and he drew for me, besides,

Into twelve jars, a choice rich wine, unspoiled

By mixtures, and a beverage for gods.

No one within his dwellings, maids or men,

Knew of it, save the master and his wife,

And matron of the household. Whensoe’er

They drank this rich red wine, he only filled

A single cup with wine, and tempered that

With twenty more of water. From the cup

Arose a fragrance that might please the gods,

And hard it was to put the draught aside.

Of this I took a skin well filled, besides

Food in a hamper—for my thoughtful mind

Misgave me, lest I should encounter one

Of formidable strength and savage mood,

And with no sense of justice or of right.

“Soon were we at the cave, but found not him

Within it; he was in the fertile meads,

Tending his flocks. We entered, wondering much

At all we saw. Around were baskets heaped

With cheeses; pens were thronged with lambs and kids,

Each in a separate fold; the elder ones,

The younger, and the newly yeaned, had each

Their place apart. The vessels swam with whey—

Pails smoothly wrought, and buckets into which

He milked the cattle. My companions then

Begged me with many pressing words to take

Part of the cheeses, and, returning, drive

With speed to our good galley lambs and kids

From where they stabled, and set sail again

On the salt sea. I granted not their wish;

Far better if I had. ’Twas my intent

To see the owner of the flocks and prove

His hospitality. No pleasant sight

Was that to be for those with whom I came.
"And then we lit a fire, and sacrificed,

And ate the cheeses, and within the cave

Sat waiting, till from pasturing his flocks

He came; a heavy load of well-dried wood

He bore, to make a blaze at suppertime.

Without the den he flung his burden down

With such a crash that we in terror slunk

Into a corner of the cave. He drove

His well-fed flock, all those whose milk he drew,

Under that spacious vault of rock, but left

The males, both goats and rams, without the court.

And then he lifted a huge barrier up,

A mighty weight; not two-and-twenty wains,

Four-wheeled and strong, could move it from the

ground:

Such was the enormous rock he raised, and placed

Against the entrance. Then he sat and milked

The ewes and bleating goats each one in turn,

And gave to each its young. Next, half the milk

He caused to curdle, and disposed the curd

In woven baskets; and the other half

He kept in bowls to be his evening drink.

His tasks all ended thus, he lit a fire,

And saw us where we lurked, and questioned us:—
"'Who are ye, strangers? Tell me whence ye came

Across the ocean. Are ye men of trade,

Or wanderers at will, like those who roam

The sea for plunder, and, with their own lives

In peril, carry death to distant shores?'

“He spake, and we who heard with sinking hearts

Trembled at that deep voice and frightful form,

And thus I answered: ‘We are Greeks who come

From Ilium, driven across the mighty deep

By changing winds, and while we sought our home

Have made a different voyage, and been forced

Upon another course; such was the will

Of Jupiter. We boast ourselves to be

Soldiers of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son,

Whose fame is now the greatest under heaven,

So mighty was the city which he sacked,

So many were the warriors whom he slew;

And now we come as suppliants to thy knees,

And ask thee to receive us as thy guests,

Or else bestow the gifts which custom makes

The stranger’s due. Great as thou art, revere

The gods; for suitors to thy grace are we,

And hospitable Jove, whose presence goes

With every worthy stranger, will avenge

Suppliants and strangers when they suffer wrong.’
“I spake, and savagely he answered me:—

‘Thou art a fool, O stranger, or art come

From some far country—thou who biddest me

Fear or regard the gods. We little care—

We Cyclops—for the Aegis-bearer, Jove,

Or any other of the blessed gods;

We are their betters. Think not I would spare

Thee or thy comrades to avoid the wrath

Of Jupiter, unless it were my choice;

But say—for I would know—where hast thou left

Thy gallant barque in landing? was it near,

Or in some distant corner of the isle?’
“He spake to tempt me, but I well perceived

His craft, and answered with dissembling words:—
“‘Neptune, who shakes the shores, hath wrecked my barque

On rocks that edge thine island, hurling it

Against the headland. From the open sea

The tempest swept it hitherward, and I,

With these, escaped the bitter doom of death.’
“I spake; the savage answered not, but sprang,

And, laying hands on my companions, seized

Two, whom he dashed like whelps against the ground.

Their brains flowed out, and weltered where they fell.

He hewed them limb from limb for his repast,

And, like a lion of the mountain wilds,

Devoured them as they were, and left no part—

Entrails nor flesh nor marrowy bones. We wept

To see his cruelties, and raised our hands

To Jove, and hopeless misery filled our hearts.

And when the Cyclops now had filled himself,

Devouring human flesh, and drinking milk

Unmingled, in his cave he laid him down,

Stretched out amid his flocks. The thought arose

In my courageous heart to go to him,

And draw the trenchant sword upon my thigh,

And where the midriff joins the liver deal

A stroke to pierce his breast. A second thought

Restrained me—that a miserable death

Would overtake us, since we had no power

To move the mighty rock which he had laid

At the high opening. So all night we grieved,

Waiting the holy Morn; and when at length

That rosy-fingered daughter of the Dawn

Appeared, the Cyclops lit a fire, and milked

His fair flock one by one, and brought their young

Each to its mother’s side. When he had thus

Performed his household tasks, he seized again

Two of our number for his morning meal.

These he devoured, and then he moved away

With ease the massive rock that closed the cave,

And, driving forth his well-fed flock, he laid

The massive barrier back, as one would fit

The lid upon a quiver. With loud noise

The Cyclops drove that well-fed flock afield,

While I was left to think of many a plan

To do him mischief and avenge our wrongs,

If haply Pallas should confer on me

That glory. To my mind, as I revolved

The plans, this seemed the wisest of them all.
“Beside the stalls there lay a massive club

Of olive-wood, yet green, which from its stock

The Cyclops hewed, that he might carry it

When seasoned. As it lay it seemed to us

The mast of some black galley, broad of beam,

With twenty oarsmen, built to carry freight

Across the mighty deep—such was its length

And thickness. Standing by it, I cut off

A fathom’s length, and gave it to my men,

And bade them smooth its sides, and they obeyed

While I made sharp the smaller end, and brought

The point to hardness in the glowing fire;

And then I hid the weapon in a heap

Of litter, which lay thick about the cave.

I bade my comrades now decide by lot

Which of them all should dare, along with me,

To lift the stake, and with its point bore out

Our enemy’s eye, when softly wrapped in sleep.

The lot was cast, and fell on those whom most

I wished with me—four men, and I the fifth.
“At eve the keeper of these fair-woolled flocks

Returned, and brought his well-fed sheep and goats

Into the spacious cavern, leaving none

Without it, whether through some doubt of us

Or through the ordering of some god. He raised

The massive rock again, and laid it close

Against the opening. Then he sat and milked

The ewes and bleating goats, each one in turn,

And gave to each her young. When he had thus

Performed his household tasks, he seized again

Two of our number for his evening meal.

Then drew I near, and bearing in my hand

A wooden cup of dark red wine I said:—
"'Take this, O Cyclops, after thy repast

Of human flesh, and drink, that thou mayst know

What liquor was concealed within our ship.

I brought it as an offering to thee,

For I had hope that thou wouldst pity us,

And send us home. Yet are thy cruelties

Beyond all limit. Wicked as thou art,

Hereafter who, of all the human race,

Will dare approach thee, guilty of such wrong?’
“As thus I spake, he took the cup and drank.

The luscious wine delighted mightily

His palate, and he asked a second draught.
“‘Give me to drink again, and generously,

And tell thy name, that I may make a gift

Such as becomes a host. The fertile land

In which the Cyclops dwell yields wine, ’tis true,

And the large grapes are nursed by rains from Jove,

But nectar and ambrosia are in this.’
“He spake; I gave him of the generous juice

Again, and thrice I filled and brought the cup,

And thrice the Cyclops in his folly drank.

But when I saw the wine begin to cloud

His senses, I bespake him blandly thus:—

“ ‘Thou hast inquired, O Cyclops, by what name

Men know me. I will tell thee, but do thou

Bestow in turn some hospitable gift,

As thou hast promised. Noman is my name,

My father and my mother gave it me,

And Noman am I called by all my friends.’

“I ended, and he answered savagely:—

‘Noman shall be the last of all his band

Whom I will eat, the rest will I devour

Before him. Let that respite be my gift.’

“He spake, and, sinking backward at full length,

Lay on the ground, with his huge neck aside;

All-powerful sleep had overtaken him.

Then from his mouth came bits of human flesh

Mingled with wine, and from his drunken throat

Rejected noisily. I put the stake

Among the glowing coals to gather heat,

And uttered cheerful words, encouraging

My men, that none might fail me through their fears.

And when the olive-wood began to blaze—

For though yet green it freely took the lire—

I drew it from the embers. Round me stood

My comrades, whom some deity inspired

With calm, high courage. In their hands they took

And thrust into his eye the pointed bar,

While perched upon a higher stand than they

I twirled it round. As when a workman bores

Some timber of a ship, the men who stand

Below him with a strap, on either side

Twirl it, and round it spins unceasingly,

So, thrusting in his eye that pointed bar,

We made it turn. The blood came streaming forth

On the hot wood; the eyelids and the brow

Were scalded by the vapor, and the roots

Of the scorched eyeball crackled with the fire.

As when a smith, in forging axe or adze,

Plunges, to temper it, the hissing blade

Into cold water, strengthening thus the steel,

So hissed the eyeball of the Cyclops round

That olive stake. He raised a fearful howl;

The rocks rang with it, and we fled from him

In terror. Plucking from his eye the stake

All foul and dripping with the abundant blood,

He flung it madly from him with both hands.

Then called he to the Cyclops who in grots

Dwelt on that breezy height. They heard his voice

And came by various ways, and stood beside

The cave, and asked the occasion of his grief.
"'What hurts thee, Polyphemus, that thou thus

Dost break our slumbers in the ambrosial night

With cries? Hath any of the sons of men

Driven off thy flocks in spite of thee, or tried

By treachery or force to take thy life?'
"Huge Polyphemus answered from his den:—

'O friends! 'tis Noman who is killing me;

By treachery Noman kills me; none by force'
"Then thus with winged words they spake again:—

'If no man does thee violence, and thou

Art quite alone, reflect that none escape

Diseases; they are sent by Jove. But make

Thy prayer to Father Neptune, ocean's king.'

“So spake they and departed. In my heart

I laughed to think that by the name I took,

And by my shrewd device, I had deceived

The Cyclops. Meantime, groaning and in pain,

And groping with his hands, he moved away

The rock that barred the entrance. There he sat,

With arms outstretched, to seize whoever sought

To issue from the cavern with the flock,

So dull of thought he deemed me. Then I planned

How best to save my comrades and myself

From death. I framed a thousand stratagems

And arts—for here was life at stake, and great

The danger was. At last I fixed on this.

“The rams were plump and beautiful, and large

With thick dark fleeces. These I silently

Bound to each other, three and three, with twigs

Of which that prodigy of lawless guilt,

The Cyclops, made his bed. The middle ram

Of every three conveyed a man; the two,

One on each side, were there to make him safe.

Thus each of us was borne by three; but I

Chose for myself the finest one of all,

And seized him by the back, and, slipping down

Beneath his shaggy belly, stretched myself

At length, and clung with resolute heart, and hands

That firmly clenched the rich abundant fleece.

Then sighed we for the holy Morn to rise.
“And when again the daughter of the Dawn,

The rosy-fingered Morn, looked forth, the males

Went forth to pasture, while the ewes remained

Within the stables, bleating, yet unmilked,

For heavy were their udders. Carefully

The master handled, though in grievous pain,

The back of everyone that rose and passed,

Yet, slow of thought, perceived not that my men

Were clinging hid beneath their woolly breasts.

As the last ram of all the flock went out,

His thick fleece heavy with my weight, and I

In agitated thought, he felt his back,

And thus the giant Polyphemus spake:—
"'My favorite ram, how art thou now the last

To leave the cave? It hath not been thy wont

To let the sheep go first, but thou didst come

Earliest to feed among the flowery grass,

Walking with stately strides, and thou wert first

At the fresh stream, and first at eve to seek

The stable; now thou art the last of all.

Grievest thou for thy master, who has lost

His eye, put out by a deceitful wretch

And his vile crew, who stupefied me first

With wine—this Noman—who, if right I deem,

Has not escaped from death. O, didst thou think

As I do, and hadst but the power of speech

To tell me where he hides from my strong arm,

Then should his brains, dashed out against the ground,

Be scattered here and there; then should my heart

Be somewhat lighter, even amid the woes

Which Noman, worthless wretch, has brought on me!’
“He spake, and sent him forth among the rest;

And when we were a little way beyond

The cavern and the court, I loosed my hold

Upon the animal and unbound my men.

Then quickly we surrounded and drove off,

Fat sheep and stately paced, a numerous flock,

And brought them to our ship, where joyfully

Our friends received us, though with grief and tears

For those who perished. Yet I suffered not

That they should weep, but, frowning, gave command

By signs to lift with speed the fair-woolled sheep

On board, and launch our ship on the salt sea.

They went on board, where each one took his place

Upon the benches, and with diligent oars

Smote the gray deep; and when we were as far

As one upon the shore could hear a shout,

Thus to the Cyclops tauntingly I called:—

“‘Ha! Cyclops! those whom in thy rocky cave

Thou, in thy brutal fury, hast devoured,

Were friends of one not unexpert in war;

Amply have thy own guilty deeds returned

Upon thee. Cruel one! who didst not fear

To eat the strangers sheltered by thy roof,

Jove and the other gods avenge them thus.’
“I spake; the anger in his bosom raged

More fiercely. From a mountain peak he wrenched

Its summit, hurling it to fall beside

Our galley, where it almost touched the helm.

The rock dashed high the water where it fell,

And the returning billow swept us back

And toward the shore. I seized a long-stemmed pike

And pushed it from the shore, encouraging

The men to bend with vigor to their oars

And so escape. With nods I gave the sign.

Forward to vigorous strokes the oarsmen leaned

Till we were out at sea as far from land

As when I spake before, and then again

I shouted to the Cyclops, though my crew

Strove to prevent it with beseeching words,

And one man first and then another said:—
"'O most unwise! why chafe that savage man

To fury—him who just has cast his bolt

Into the sea, and forced us toward the land

Where we had well-nigh perished? Should he hear

A cry from us, or even a word of speech,

Then would he fling a rock to crush our heads

And wreck our ship, so fatal is his cast.'

“He spake, but moved not my courageous heart;

And then I spake again, and angrily:—

“‘Cyclops, if any man of mortal birth

Note thine unseemly blindness, and inquire

The occasion, tell him that Laertes’ son,

Ulysses, the destroyer of walled towns,

Whose home is Ithaca, put out thine eye.’

“I spake; he answered with a wailing voice:—

‘Now, woe is me! the ancient oracles

Concerning me have come to pass. Here dwelt

A seer named Telemus Eurymides,

Great, good, and eminent in prophecy,

And prophesying he grew old among

The Cyclops. He foretold my coming fate—

That I should lose my sight, and by the hand

And cunning of Ulysses. Yet I looked

For one of noble presence, mighty strength,

And giant stature landing on our coast.

Now a mere weakling, insignificant

And small of stature, has put out my eye,

First stupefying me with wine. Yet come

Hither, I pray, Ulysses, and receive

The hospitable gifts which are thy due;

And I will pray to Neptune, and entreat

The mighty god to guide thee safely home.

His son am I, and he declares himself

My father. He can heal me if he will,

And no one else of all the immortal gods

Or mortal men can give me back my sight.’
“He spake; I answered: ‘Rather would I take

Thy life and breath, and send thee to the abode

Of Hades, where thou wouldst be past the power

Of even Neptune to restore thine eye.’
“As thus I said, the Cyclops raised his hands,

And spread them toward the starry heaven, and thus

Prayed to the deity who rules the deep:—
“‘Hear, dark-haired Neptune, who dost swathe the earth!

If I am thine, and thou dost own thyself

My father, grant that this Ulysses ne’er

May reach his native land! But if it be

The will of fate that he behold again

His friends, and enter his own palace-halls

In his own country, late and sorrowful

Be his return, with all his comrades lost,

And in a borrowed ship, and may he find

In his own home new griefs awaiting him.’
“He prayed, and Neptune hearkened to his prayer.

And then the Cyclops seized another stone,

Far larger than the last, and swung it round,

And cast it with vast strength. It fell behind

Our black-prowed galley, where it almost struck

The rudder’s end. The sea was dashed on high

Beneath the falling rock, and bore our ship

On toward the shore we sought. When we reached

The island where together in a fleet

Our other galleys lay, we found our friends

Sitting where they had waited long in grief.

We touched the shore and drew our galley up

On the smooth sand, and stepped upon the beach;

And taking from on board the sheep that formed

Part of the Cyclops' flock, divided them,

That none might be without an equal share.

When all the rest were shared, my warrior friends

Decreed the ram to me. Of him I made

Upon the beach a sacrifice to Jove

The Cloud-compeller, Saturn's son, whose rule

Is over all; to him I burned the thighs.

He heeded not the offering; even then

He planned the wreck of all my gallant ships,

And death of my dear comrades. All that day

Till set of sun we sat and feasted high

Upon the abundant meats and delicate wine.

But when the sun went down, and darkness crept

Over the earth, we slumbered on the shore;

And when again the daughter of the Dawn,

The rosy-fingered Morn, looked forth, I called

My men with cheerful words to climb the decks

And cast the hawsers loose. With speed they went

On board and manned the benches, took in hand

The oars and smote with them the hoary deep.

Onward in sadness, glad to have escaped,

We sailed, yet sorrowing for our comrades lost.”

Book X

Aeolus, the Lestrigonians, and Circè

Arrival of Ulysses at the land of Aeolus, who gives him the winds in a bag—Folly of the seamen, who untie the bag while Ulysses is asleep—A tempest—Disastrous encounter with the gigantic laestrigons—Arrival at the island of Circè—Transformation of the Greeks to swine, and recovery of their former shape—Preparations for a journey to the region of the dead.

"We reached the Aeolian isle, where Aeolus,

Dear to the gods, a son of Hippotas,

Made his abode. It was a floating isle;

A wall of brass enclosed it, and smooth rocks

Edged it around. Twelve children in his halls

Were born, six daughters and six blooming sons;

He gave his daughters to his sons for wives.

And they with their dear father and his queen

Banquet from day to day, with endless change

Of meats before them. In his halls all day

The sound of pipes is in the perfumed air;

At night the youths beside their modest wives

Sleep on fair couches spread with tapestry.

So coming to his town and fair abode,

I found a friendly welcome. One full month

The monarch kept me with him, and inquired

Of all that might concern the fate of Troy,

The Argive fleet, and the return to Greece,

And just as it befell I told him all.

And when I spake to him of going thence,

And prayed him to dismiss me, he complied,

And helped to make us ready for the sea.

The bladder of a bullock nine years old

He gave, in which he had compressed and bound

The stormy winds of air; for Saturn’s son

Had given him empire o’er the winds, with power

To calm them or to rouse them at his will.

This in our roomy galley he made fast

With a bright chain of silver, that no breath

Of ruder air might blow. He only left

The west wind free to waft our ships and us

Upon our way. But that was not to be;

We perished by a folly of our own.
“Nine days we held our way, both day and night;

And now appeared in sight our native fields

On the tenth night, where on the shore we saw

Men kindling fires. Meantime a pleasant sleep

Had overcome my weary limbs, for long

Had I been guiding with incessant toil

The rudder, nor would trust it to the hand

Of any other, such was my desire

To reach our country by the shortest way.

Then talked my crew among themselves, and said

That I had brought with me from Aeolus,

The large-souled son of Hippotas, rich gifts

Of gold and silver. Standing side by side

And looking at each other, thus they said:—

“‘How wonderfully is our chief revered

And loved by all men, wander where he will

Into what realm soever! From the coast

Of Troy he sailed with many precious things,

His share of spoil, while we, who with him went

And with him came, are empty-handed yet;

And now hath Aeolus, to show how much

He prizes him, bestowed the treasures here.

Come, let us see them; let us know how much

Of gold and silver is concealed in this.’
“Thus speaking to each other, they obeyed

The evil counsel. They untied the sack,

And straight the winds rushed forth and seized the ship,

And swept the crews, lamenting bitterly,

Far from their country out upon the deep;

And then I woke, and in my noble mind

Bethought me whether I should drop at once

Into the deep and perish, or remain

And silently endure and keep my place

Among the living. I remained, endured,

And covered with my mantle lay within

My galley, while the furious whirlwind bore

Back to the Aeolian isle our groaning crews.
“We landed on the coast, and to our barques

Brought water. Then my men prepared a meal

Beside the fleet; and having tasted food

And wine, I took a herald and a friend,

And, hastening to the sumptuous palace-halls

Of Aeolus, I found him with his wife

And children banqueting. We sat us down

Upon the threshold at the palace-doors,

And they were all astonished, and inquired:—
“ ‘Why art thou here? What god thine enemy

Pursues thee, O Ulysses! whom we sent

So well prepared to reach thy native land,

Thy home, or any place that pleased thee most?’

“They spake, and sorrowfully I replied:—

‘The fault is all with my unthinking crew

And my own luckless slumber. Yet, my friends,

Repair the mischief, for ye have the power.’
“Thus with submissive words I spake, but they

Sat mute, the father only answered me:—
“ ‘Hence with thee! Leave our island instantly,

Vilest of living men! It may not be

That I receive or aid as he departs

One who is hated by the blessed gods—

And thou art hated by the gods. Away!’
“He spake, and sent us from the palace-door

Lamenting. Sorrowfully went we on.

And now with rowing hard and long—the fruit

Of our own folly—all our crews lost heart,

And every hope of safe return was gone.

“Six days and nights we sailed; the seventh we came

To lofty Laestrigoni with wide gates,

The city of Lamos, where, on going forth,

The shepherd calls to shepherd entering in.

There might a man who never yields to sleep

Earn double wages, first in pasturing herds,

And then in tending sheep; for there the fields

Grazed in the daytime are by others grazed

At night. We reached its noble haven, girt

By towering rocks that rise on every side,

And the bold shores run out to form its mouth—

A narrow entrance. There the other crews

Stationed their barques, and moored them close beside

Each other, in that hill-encircled port.

No billow, even the smallest, rises there;

The water glimmers with perpetual calm.

I only kept my dark-hulled ship without,

And bound its cable to a jutting rock.
“I climbed a rugged headland, and looked forth.

No marks of tilth appeared, the work of men

Or oxen, only smokes that from below

Rose in the air. And then I sent forth scouts

To learn what race of men who live by bread

Inhabited the land. Two chosen men

I sent, a herald made the third; and these

Went inland by a level path, on which

The wains brought fuel from the woody heights

Into the city. On their way they met,

Before the town, a damsel with an ewer—

The stately daughter of Antiphates,

The Laestrigonian, who was coming down

To where Artacia’s smoothly flowing fount

Gave water for the city. They drew near

And spake, and asked her who was sovereign there,

And who his people. Straight she pointed out

A lofty pile in which her father dwelt.

They entered that proud palace, and beheld,

Tall as a mountain peak, the monarch’s wife,

And shuddered at the sight. With eager haste

She called her husband, King Antiphates,

From council. With a murderous intent

He came, and, seizing one of my poor friends,

Devoured him, while the other two betook

Themselves to sudden flight and reached the ships.

And then he raised a fearful yell that rang

Through all the city. The strong Laestrigons

Rushed forth by thousands from all sides, more like

To giants than to common men. They hurled

Stones of enormous weight from cliffs above,

And cries of those who perished and the crash

Of shattered galleys rose. They speared our friends

Like fishes for their horrid feasts, and thus

Bore them away. While those within the port

Were slaughtered, drawing my good sword I cut

The hawsers fastened to my ship’s blue prow,

And cheered my men, and bade them fling themselves

Upon the oars, that so we might escape

Our threatened fate. They heard, and plied their oars

Like men who rowed for life. The galley shot

Forth from these beetling rocks into the sea

Full gladly; all the others perished there.
“Onward we sailed, with sorrow in our hearts

For our lost friends, though glad to be reprieved

From death. And now we landed at an isle—

Aeaea, where the fair-haired Circè dwelt,

A goddess high in rank and skilled in song,

Own sister of the wise Aeaetes. Both

Were children of the source of light, the Sun,

And Persè, Ocean’s daughter, brought them forth.

We found a haven here, where ships might lie;

And guided by some deity we brought

Our galley silently against the shore,

And disembarked, and gave two days and nights

To rest, unmanned with hardship and with grief.

“When bright-haired Morning brought the third day round,

I took my spear and my good sword, and left

The ship, and climbed a height, in hope to spy

Some trace of human toil, or hear some voice.

On a steep precipice I stood, and saw

From the broad earth below a rising smoke,

Where midst the thickets and the forest-ground

Stood Circè’s palace. Seeing that dark smoke,

The thought arose within my mind that there

I should inquire. I pondered till at last

This seemed the wisest—to return at once

To my good ship upon the ocean-side,

And give my crew their meal, and send them forth

To view the region. Coming to the spot

Where lay my well-oared barque, some pitying god

Beneath whose eye I wandered forth alone

Sent a huge stag into my very path,

High-horned, which from his pasture in the wood

Descended to the riverside to drink,

For grievously he felt the hot sun’s power.

Him as he ran I smote; the weapon pierced,

Just at the spine, the middle of his back.

The brazen blade passed through, and with a moon

He fell amid the dust, and yielded up

His life. I went to him, and set my foot

Against him, and plucked forth the brazen spear,

And left it leaning there. And then I broke

Lithe osiers from the shrubs, and twined of these

A rope, which, doubled, was an ell in length.

With that I tied the enormous creature’s feet,

And slung him on my neck, and brought him thus

To my black ship. I used the spear to prop

My steps, since he no longer could be borne

Upon the shoulder, aided by the hand,

Such was the animal’s bulk. I flung him down

Before the ship, encouraging my men

With cheerful words, and thus I said to each:—
“ ‘My friends, we will not, wretched as we are,

Go down to Pluto’s realm before our time.

While food and wine are yet within the hold

Of our good galley, let us not forget

Our daily meals, and famine-stricken pine.’
“I spake; they all obeyed, and at my word

Came forth, and standing by the barren deep

Admired the stag, for he was huge of bulk;

And when their eyes were tired with wondering,

My people washed their hands, and soon had made

A noble banquet ready. All that day

Till set of sun we sat and feasted there

Upon the abundant meat and delicate wine;

And when the sun went down, and darkness came,

We slept upon the shore. But when the Morn,

The rosy-fingered child of Dawn, looked forth,

I called a council of my men and spake:—
"'Give ear, my friends, amid your sufferings,

To words that I shall say. We cannot here

Know which way lies the west, nor where the east,

Nor where the sun, that shines for all mankind,

Descends below the earth, nor where again

He rises from it. Yet will we consult,

If room there be for counsel—which I doubt,

For when I climbed that height I overlooked

An isle surrounded by the boundless deep—

An isle low lying. In the midst I saw

Smoke rising from a thicket of the wood.’
“I spake; their courage died within their hearts

As they remembered what Antiphates,

The Laestrigon, had done, and what foul deeds

The cannibal Cyclops, and they wept aloud.

Tears flowed abundantly, but tears were now

Of no avail to our unhappy band.
“Numbering my well-armed men, I made of them

Two equal parties, giving each its chief.

Myself commanded one; Eurylochus,

The hero, took the other in his charge.

“Then in a brazen helm we shook the lots;

The lot of brave Eurylochus leaped forth,

And he with two-and-twenty of our men

Went forward with quick steps, and yet in tears,

While we as sorrowful were left behind.

“They found the fair abode where Circè dwelt,

A palace of hewn stone within the vale,

Yet nobly seated. There were mountain wolves

And lions round it, which herself had tamed

With powerful drugs; yet these assaulted not

The visitors, but, wagging their long tails,

Stood on their hinder feet, and fawned on them,

Like mastiffs on their master when he comes

From banqueting and brings them food. So fawned

The strong-clawed wolves and lions on my men.

With fear my men beheld those beasts of prey,

Yet went, and, standing in the portico

Of the bright-haired divinity, they heard

Her sweet voice singing, as within she threw

The shuttle through the wide immortal web,

Such as is woven by the goddesses—

Delicate, bright of hue, and beautiful.
“Polites then, a chief the most beloved

And most discreet of all my comrades, spake:—
“‘Someone is here, my friends, who sweetly sings,

Weaving an ample web, and all the floor

Rings to her voice. Whoever she may be,

Woman or goddess, let us call to her.’
“He spake; aloud they called, and forth she came

And threw at once the shining doors apart,

And bade my comrades enter. Without thought

They followed her. Eurylochus alone

Remained without, for he suspected guile.

She led them in and seated them on thrones.

Then mingling for them Pramnian wine with cheese,

Meal, and fresh honey, and infusing drugs

Into the mixture—drugs which made them lose

The memory of their home—she handed them

The beverage and they drank. Then instantly

She touched them with a wand, and shut them up

In sties, transformed to swine in head and voice,

Bristles and shape, though still the human mind

Remained to them. Thus sorrowing they were driven

Into their cells, where Circè flung to them

Acorns of oak and ilex, and the fruit

Of cornel, such as nourish wallowing swine.

“Back came Eurylochus to our good ship

With news of our poor comrades and their fate,

He strove to speak, but could not; he was stunned

By that calamity; his eyes were filled

With tears, and his whole soul was given to grief.

We marvelled greatly; long we questioned him,

And thus he spake of our lost friends at last:—

“ ‘Through yonder thickets, as thou gav’st command,

Illustrious chief! we went, until we reached

A stately palace of hewn stones, within

A vale, yet nobly seated. Someone there,

Goddess or woman, weaving busily

An ample web, sang sweetly as she wrought.

My comrades called aloud, and forth she came,

And threw at once the shining doors apart,

And bade us enter. Without thought the rest

Followed, while I alone, suspecting guile,

Remained without. My comrades, from that hour,

Were seen no more; not one of them again

Came forth, though long I sat and watched for them.’
“He spake; I slung my silver-studded sword

Upon my shoulders—a huge blade of brass—

And my bow with it, and commanded him

To lead the way. He seized and clasped my knees

With both his hands in attitude of prayer,

And sorrowfully said these winged words:—
“ ‘Take me not thither; force me not to go,

O foster-child of Jove! but leave me here;

For thou wilt not return, I know, nor yet

Deliver one of our lost friends. Our part

Is to betake ourselves to instant flight

With these who yet remain, and so escape.’
“He spake, and I replied: ‘Eurylochus,

Remain thou here, beside our roomy ship,

Eating and drinking. I shall surely go.

A strong necessity is laid on me.’
“I spake, and from the ship and shore went up

Into the isle; and when I found myself

Within that awful valley, and not far

From the great palace in which Circè dwelt,

The sorceress, there met me on my way

A youth; he seemed in manhood’s early prime,

When youth has most of grace. He took my hand

And held it, and, accosting me, began:—
“ ‘Rash mortal! whither art thou wandering thus

Alone among the hills, where every place

Is strange to thee? Thy comrades are shut up

In Circè’s palace in close cells like swine.

Com’st thou to set them free? Nay, thou like them

Wilt rather find thyself constrained to stay.

Let me bestow the means to make thee safe

Against that mischief. Take this potent herb,

And bear it with thee to the palace-halls

Of Circè, and it shall avert from thee

The threatened evil. I will now reveal

The treacherous arts of Circè. She will bring

A mingled draught to thee, and drug the bowl,

But will not harm thee thus; the virtuous plant

I gave thee will prevent it. Hear yet more:

When she shall smite thee with her wand, draw forth

Thy good sword from thy thigh and rush at her

As if to take her life, and she will crouch

In fear, and will solicit thine embrace.

Refuse her not, that so she may release

Thy comrades, and may send thee also back

To thine own land; but first exact of her

The solemn oath which binds the blessed gods,

That she will meditate no other harm

To thee, nor strip thee of thy manly strength.’
“The Argus-queller spake, and plucked from earth

The potent plant and handed it to me,

And taught me all its powers. The root is black,

The blossom white as milk. Among the gods

Its name is Moly; hard it is for men

To dig it up; the gods find nothing hard.
“Back through the woody island Hermes went

Toward high Olympus, while I took my way

To Circè’s halls, yet with a beating heart.

There, as I stood beneath the portico

Of that bright-haired divinity, I called

Aloud; the goddess heard my voice and came,

And threw at once the shining doors apart,

And prayed me to come in. I followed her,

Yet grieving still. She led me in and gave

A seat upon a silver-studded throne,

Beautiful, nobly wrought, and placed beneath

A footstool, and prepared a mingled draught

Within a golden chalice, and infused

A drug with mischievous intent. She gave

The cup; I drank it off; the charm wrought not,

And then she smote me with her wand and said:—

‘Go to the sty, and with thy fellows sprawl.’
“She spake; but drawing forth the trusty sword

Upon my thigh, I rushed at her as if

To take her life. She shrieked and, stooping low,

Ran underneath my arm and clasped my knees,

And uttered piteously these winged words:—

“ ‘Who art thou? of what race and of what land,

And who thy parents? I am wonder-struck

To see that thou couldst drink that magic juice

And yield not to its power. No living man,

Whoever he might be, that tasted once

Those drugs, or passed them o’er his lips, has yet

Withstood them. In thy breast a spirit dwells

Not to be thus subdued. Art thou not then

Ulysses, master of wise stratagems,

Whose coming hither, on his way from Troy,

In his black galley, oft has been foretold

By Hermes of the golden wand? But sheathe

Thy sword and share my couch, that, joined in love,

Each may hereafter trust the other's faith.'
"She spake, and I replied: 'How canst thou ask,

O Circè, that I gently deal with thee,

Since thou, in thine own palace, hast transformed

My friends to swine, and plottest even now

To keep me with thee, luring me to pass

Into thy chamber and to share thy couch,

That thou mayst strip me of my manly strength

I come not to thy couch till thou engage,

O goddess, by a solemn oath, that thou

Wilt never seek to do me further harm.'

“I spake; she straightway took the oath required,

And, after it was uttered and confirmed,

Up to her sumptuous couch I went. Meanwhile

Four diligent maidens ministered within

The palace—servants of the household they,

Who had their birth from fountains and from groves,

And sacred rivers flowing to the sea.

One spread the thrones with gorgeous coverings;

Above was purple arras, and beneath

Were linen webs; another, setting forth

The silver tables just before the thrones,

Placed on them canisters of gold; a third

Mingled the rich wines in a silver bowl,

And placed the golden cups; and, last, the fourth

Brought water from the fountain, and beneath

A massive tripod kindled a great fire

And warmed the water. When it boiled within

The shining brass, she led me to the bath,

And washed me from the tripod. On my head

And shoulders pleasantly she shed the streams

That from my members took away the sense

Of weariness, unmanning body and mind.

And when she thus had bathed me and with oil

Anointed me, she put a princely cloak

And tunic on me, led me in, and showed

My seat—a stately silver-studded throne,

High-wrought—and placed a footstool for my feet.

Then came a handmaid with a golden ewer,

And from it poured pure water for my hands

Into a silver laver. Next she placed

A polished table near to me, on which

The matron of the palace laid the feast,

With many delicacies from her store,

And bade me eat. The banquet pleased me not.

My thoughts were elsewhere; dark imaginings

Were in my mind. When Circè marked my mood,

As in a gloomy revery I sat,

And put not forth my hands to touch the feast,

She came to me and spake these winged words:—

"'Why sittest thou like one who has no power

Of speech, Ulysses, wrapt in thoughts that gnaw

Thy heart, and tasting neither food nor wine?

Still dost thou dream of fraud? It is not well

That thou shouldst fear it longer, since I pledged

Myself against it with a mighty oath.’
“She spake, and I replied: ‘What man whose heart

Is faithful could endure to taste of food

Or wine till he should see his captive friends

Once more at large? If with a kind intent

Thou bidst me eat and drink, let me behold

With mine own eyes my dear companions free.’
“I spake; and Circè took her wand and went

Forth from her halls, and, opening the gate

That closed the sty, drove forth what seemed a herd

Of swine in their ninth year. They ranged themselves

Before her, and she went from each to each

And shed on them another drug. Forthwith

Fell from their limbs the bristles which had grown

All over them, when mighty Circè gave

At first the baleful potion. Now again

My friends were men, and younger than before,

And of a nobler mien and statelier growth.

They knew me all; and each one pressed my hand

In his, and there were tears and sobs of joy

That sounded through the palace. Circè too

Was moved, the mighty goddess; she drew near

And stood by me, and spake these winged words:—
"'Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Ulysses! go to thy good ship beside

The sea and draw it up the beach, and hide

The goods and weapons in the caverns there,

And come thou back and bring with thee thy friends.'
"She spake, and easily my generous mind

Was moved by what she said. Forthwith I went

To my good ship beside the sea, and found

My friends in tears, lamenting bitterly.

As in some grange the calves come leaping round

A herd of kine returning to the stall

From grassy fields where they have grazed their fill,

Nor can the stall contain the young which spring

Around their mothers with continual bleat;

So when my comrades saw me through their tears,

They sprang to meet me, and their joy was such

As if they were in their own native land

And their own city, on the rugged coast

Of Ithaca, where they were born and reared;

And as they wept they spake these winged words:—
"'O foster-child of Jove! we welcome thee

On thy return with a delight as great

As if we all had reached again the land

That gave us birth, our Ithaca. And now

Tell by what death our other friends have died.’
“They spake; I answered with consoling words:—

‘First draw our galley up the beach, and hide

Our goods and all our weapons in the caves,

And then let all make haste to follow me,

And see our friends in Circè’s sacred halls,

Eating and drinking at the plenteous board.’
“I spake; and cheerfully my men obeyed,

Save that Eurylochus alone essayed

To hold them back, and spake these winged words:—
“ ‘Ah, whither are we going, wretched ones?

Are ye so eager for an evil fate,

That ye must go where Circè dwells, who waits

To turn us into lions, swine, or wolves,

Forced to remain and guard her spacious house?

So was it with the Cyclops, when our friends

Went with this daring chief to his abode,

And perished there through his foolhardiness.’
“He spake; and then I thought to draw my sword

From my stout thigh, and with the trenchant blade

Strike off his head and let it fall to earth,

Though he were my near kinsman; yet the rest

Restrained me, each one speaking kindly words:—
“ ‘Nay, foster-child of Jove! if thou consent,

This man shall stay behind and with the ship,

And he shall guard the ship, but lead us thou

To where the sacred halls of Circè stand.’
“They spake, and from the ship and shore went up

Into the land, nor was Eurylochus

Left with the ship; he followed, for he feared

My terrible threat. Meantime had Circè bathed

My comrades at the palace, and with oil

Anointed them, and robed them in fair cloaks

And tunics. There we found them banqueting.

When they and those who came with me beheld

Each other, and the memory of the past

Came back to them, they wept abundantly,

And all the palace echoed with their sobs.

And then the mighty goddess came and said:—
"'Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Prolong thou not these sorrows. Well I know

What ye have suffered on the fishy deep,

And all the evil that malignant men

Have done to you on land. Now take the food

Before you, drink the wine, till ye receive

Into your hearts the courage that was yours

When long ago ye left your fatherland,

The rugged Ithaca. Ye are unnerved

And spiritless with thinking constantly

On your long wanderings, and your minds allow

No space for mirth, for ye have suffered much.’
“She spake; her words persuaded easily

Our generous minds, and there from day to day

We lingered a full year, and banqueted

Nobly on plenteous meats and delicate wines.

But when the year was ended, and the hours

Renewed their circle, my beloved friends

From Circè’s palace called me forth and said:—
“‘Good chief, do not forget thy native land,

If fate indeed permit that ever thou

Return in safety to that lofty pile

Thy palace in the country of thy birth.’
“So spake they, and my generous mind was moved.

All that day long until the set of sun

We sat and feasted on the abundant meats

And delicate wines; and when the sun went down

They took their rest within the darkened halls,

While I to Circè’s sumptuous couch went up,

A suppliant at her knees. The goddess heard

My prayer, as thus in winged words I said:—
“‘O Circè! make, I pray, the promise good

Which thou hast given, to send me to my home.

My heart is pining for it, and the hearts

Of all my friends, who weary out my life

Lamenting round me when thou art not nigh.’
“I spake; the mighty goddess thus replied:—

‘Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Ulysses! ye must not remain with me

Unwillingly; but ye have yet to make

Another voyage, and must visit first

The abode of Pluto, and of Proserpine

His dreaded queen, and there consult the soul

Of the blind seer Tiresias—him of Thebes—

Whose intellect was spared; for Proserpine

Gave back to him in death the power of mind,

That only he might know of things to come.

The rest are shades that flit from place to place.’
“Thus spake the goddess; and my heart was wrung

With sorrow, and I sat upon the couch

And wept, nor could I longer wish to live

And see the light of day. But when my grief,

With shedding tears and tossing where I sat,

Was somewhat spent, I spake to Circè thus:—
"'O Circè, who will guide me when I make

This voyage? for no galley built by man

Has ever yet arrived at Pluto's realm.'
"I spake; the mighty goddess answered me:—

'Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Take thou no thought of who shall guide thy barque,

But raise the mast and spread the glimmering sail,

And seat thyself, and let the north-wind waft

Thy galley on. As soon as thou shalt cross

Océanus, and come to the low shore

And groves of Proserpine, the lofty groups

Of poplars, and the willows that let fall

Their withered fruit, moor thou thy galley there

In the deep eddies of Océanus,

And pass to Pluto’s comfortless abode.

There into Acheron are poured the streams

Of Pyriphlegethon, and of that arm

Of Styx, Cocytus. At the place where meet

The ever-roaring waters stands a rock;

Draw near to that, and there I bid thee scoop

In earth a trench, a cubit long and wide.

And round about it pour to all the dead

Libations—milk and honey first, and next

Rich wine, and lastly water, scattering

White meal upon them. Offer there thy prayer

Fervently to that troop of airy forms,

And make the vow that thou wilt sacrifice,

When thou at last shalt come to Ithaca,

A heifer without blemish, barren yet,

In thine own courts, and heap the altar-pyre

With things of price; and to the seer alone,

Tiresias, by himself, a ram whose fleece

Is wholly black, the best of all thy flocks.

And after thou hast duly offered prayer

To all the illustrious nations of the dead,

Then sacrifice a ram and a black ewe,

Their faces turned toward Erebus, but thine

The other way and toward the river streams.

Thither the souls of those who died will flock

In multitudes. Then call thy friends, and give

Command to flay in haste the sheep that lie

Slain by the cruel brass, and, burning there

The carcasses, pay worship to the gods—

The powerful Pluto and dread Proserpine.

Draw then the sword upon thy thigh, and sit,

And suffer none of all those airy forms

To touch the blood until thou first bespeak

Tiresias. He will come, and speedily—

The leader of the people—and will tell

What voyage thou must make, what length of way

Thou yet must measure, and will show thee how

Thou mayst return across the fishy deep.’

“She spake; and while she spake the Morn looked forth

Upon her golden throne. The Nymph bestowed

On me a cloak and tunic, and arrayed

Herself in a white robe with ample folds—

A delicate web and graceful. Round her loins

She clasped a shining zone of gold, and hung

A veil upon her forehead. Forth I went

Throughout the palace and aroused my friends,

And thus I said in cheerful tones to each:—
“ ‘No longer give yourselves to idle rest

And pleasant slumber; we are to depart.

The gracious Circè counsels us to go.’
“I spake, and easily their generous minds

Inclined to me. Yet brought I not away

All my companions safely from the isle.

Elpenor was the youngest of our band,

Not brave in war was he, nor wise in thought.

He, overcome with wine, and for the sake

Of coolness, had lain down to sleep, apart

From all the rest, in Circè’s sacred house;

And as my friends bestirred themselves, the noise

And tumult roused him; he forgot to come

By the long staircase; headlong from the roof

He plunged; his neck was broken at the spine,

And his soul went to the abode of death.
"My friends came round me, and I said to them:—

'Haply your thought may be that you are bound

For the dear country of your birth; but know

That Circè sends us elsewhere, to consult

The Theban seer, Tiresias, in the abode

Of Pluto and the dreaded Proserpine.'
"I spake, and their hearts failed them as they heard;

They sat them down, and wept, and tore their hair,

But fruitless were their sorrow and their tears.
"Thus as we sadly moved to our good ship

Upon the seashore, weeping all the while,

Circè, meantime, had visited its deck,

And there had bound a ram and a black ewe

By means we saw not; for what eye discerns

The presence of a deity, who moves

From place to place, and wills not to be seen?”

Book XI

Visit of Ulysses to the Land of the Dead

Voyage to the land of the dead—Interview with Tiresias, the seer—The heroes and heroines whom Ulysses saw there—Interview with his mother, and with Agamemnon, Achilles, and others—Occupations of the dead—Punishments of the guilty.

"Now, when we reached our galley by the shore,

We drew it first into the mighty deep,

And set the mast and sails, and led on board

The sheep, and sorrowfully and in tears

Embarked ourselves. The fair-haired and august

Circè, expert in music, sent with us

A kindly fellow-voyager—a wind

That breathed behind the dark-prowed barque, and swelled

The sails; and now, with all things in their place

Throughout the ship, we sat us down—the breeze

And helmsman guiding us upon our way.

All day our sails were stretched, as o’er the deep

Our vessel ran; the sun went down; the paths

Of the great sea were darkened, and our barque

Reached the far confines of Océanus.
“There lies the land, and there the people dwell

Of the Cimmerians, in eternal cloud

And darkness. Never does the glorious sun

Look on them with his rays, when he goes up

Into the starry sky, nor when again

He sinks from heaven to earth. Unwholesome night

O’erhangs the wretched race. We touched the land,

And, drawing up our galley on the beach,

Took from on board the sheep, and followed on

Beside the ocean-stream until we reached

The place of which the goddess Circè spake.
“Here Perimedes and Eurylochus

Held in their grasp the victims, while I drew

The trusty sword upon my thigh, and scooped

A trench in earth, a cubit long and wide,

Round which we stood, and poured to all the dead

Libations—milk and honey first, and next

Rich wine, and lastly water, scattering

White meal upon them. Then I offered prayer

Fervently to that troop of airy forms,

And made a vow that I would sacrifice,

When I at last should come to Ithaca,

A heifer without blemish, barren yet,

In my own courts, and heap the altar-pyre

With things of price, and to the seer alone,

Tiresias, by himself, a ram whose fleece

Was wholly black, the best of all my flocks.
“When I had worshipped thus with prayer and vows

The nations of the dead, I took the sheep

And pierced their throats above the hollow trench.

The blood flowed dark; and thronging round me came

Souls of the dead from Erebus—young wives

And maids unwedded, men worn out with years

And toil, and virgins of a tender age

In their new grief, and many a warrior slain

In battle, mangled by the spear, and clad

In bloody armor, who about the trench

Flitted on every side, now here, now there,

With gibbering cries, and I grew pale with fear.

Then calling to my friends, I bade them flay

The victims lying slaughtered by the knife,

And, burning them with fire, invoke the gods—

The mighty Pluto and dread Proserpine.

Then from my thigh I drew the trusty sword,

And sat me down, and suffered none of all

Those airy phantoms to approach the blood

Until I should bespeak the Theban seer.
“And first the soul of my companion came,

Elpenor, for he was not buried yet

In earth’s broad bosom. We had left him dead

In Circè’s halls, unwept and unentombed.

We had another task. But when I now

Beheld I pitied him, and, shedding tears,

I said these winged words: ‘How earnest thou,

Elpenor, hither into these abodes

Of night and darkness? Thou hast made more speed,

Although on foot, than I in my good ship.’
“I spake; the phantom sobbed and answered me:—

‘Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Ulysses! ’twas the evil doom decreed

By some divinity, and too much wine,

That wrought my death. I laid myself to sleep

In Circè’s palace, and, remembering not

The way to the long stairs that led below,

Fell from the roof, and by the fall my neck

Was broken at the spine; my soul went down

To Hades. I conjure thee now, by those

Whom thou hast left behind and far away,

Thy consort and thy father—him by whom

Thou when a boy wert reared—and by thy son

Telemachus, who in thy palace-halls

Is left alone—for well I know that thou,

In going hence from Pluto’s realm, wilt moor

Thy gallant vessel in the Aeaean isle—

That there, O king, thou wilt remember me,

And leave me not when thou departest thence

Unwept, unburied, lest I bring on thee

The anger of the gods. But burn me there

With all the armor that I wore, and pile,

Close to the hoary deep, a mound for me—

A hapless man of whom posterity

Shall hear. Do this for me, and plant upright

Upon my tomb the oar with which I rowed,

While yet a living man, among thy friends.’

“He spake and I replied: ‘Unhappy youth,

All this I duly will perform for thee.’
“And then the soul of Anticleia came—

My own dead mother, daughter of the king

Autolycus, large-minded. Her I left

Alive, what time I sailed for Troy, and now

I wept to see her there, and pitied her,

And yet forbade her, though with grief, to come

Near to the blood till I should first accost

Tiresias. He too came, the Theban seer,

Tiresias, bearing in his hand a wand

Of gold; he knew me and bespake me thus:—
“ ‘Why, O unhappy mortal, hast thou left

The light of day to come among the dead

And to this joyless land? Go from the trench

And turn thy sword away, that I may drink

The blood, and speak the word of prophecy.’
“He spake; withdrawing from the trench, I thrust

Into its sheath my silver-studded sword,

And after drinking of the dark red blood

The blameless prophet turned to me and said:—
“‘Illustrious chief Ulysses, thy desire

Is for a happy passage to thy home,

Yet will a god withstand thee. Not unmarked

By Neptune shalt thou, as I deem, proceed

Upon thy voyage. He hath laid up wrath

Against thee in his heart, for that thy hand

Deprived his son of sight. Yet may ye still

Return, though after many hardships borne,

If thou but hold thy appetite in check,

And that of thy companions, when thou bring

Thy gallant barque to the Trinacrian isle,

Safe from the gloomy deep. There will ye find

The beeves and fading wethers of the Sun—

The all-beholding and all-hearing Sun.

If these ye leave unharmed, and keep in mind

The thought of your return, ye may go back,

Though sufferers, to your home in Ithaca;

But if thou do them harm, the event will be

Destruction to thy ship and to its crew;

And thou, if thou escape it, wilt return

Late to thy country, all thy comrades lost,

And in a foreign barque, and thou shalt find

Wrong in thy household—arrogant men who waste

Thy substance, wooers of thy noble wife,

And offering bridal gifts. On thy return

Thou shalt avenge thee of their violent deeds;

And when thou shalt have slain them in thy halls,

Whether by stratagem or by the sword

In open fight, then take a shapely oar

And journey on, until thou meet with men

Who have not known the sea nor eaten food

Seasoned with salt, nor ever have beheld

Galleys with crimson prows, nor shapely oars,

Which are the wings of ships. I will declare

A sign by which to know them, nor canst thou

Mistake it. When a traveller, meeting thee,

Shalt say that thou dost bear a winnowing-fan

Upon thy sturdy shoulder, stop and plant

Thy shapely oar upright in earth, and there

Pay to King Neptune solemn sacrifice—

A ram, a bull, and from his herd of swine

A boar. And then returning to thy home,

See that thou offer hallowed hecatombs

To all the ever-living ones who dwell

In the broad heaven, to each in order due.

So at the last thy death shall come to thee

Far from the sea, and gently take thee off

In a serene old age that ends among

A happy people. I have told thee true.’

“He spake, and thus I answered him: ‘The gods,

Tiresias, have decreed as thou hast said.

But tell, and tell me truly—I behold

The soul of my dead mother; there she sits

In silence by the blood, and will not deign

To look upon her son nor speak to him.

Instruct me, mighty prophet, by what means

To make my mother know me for her son.’
“I spake, and instantly the seer replied:—

‘Easily that is told; I give it thee

To bear in mind. Whoever of the dead

Thou sufferest to approach and drink the blood

Will speak the truth; those whom thou dost forbid

To taste the blood will silently withdraw.’
“The soul of King Tiresias, saying this,

Passed to the abode of Pluto; he had given

The oracle I asked. I waited still

Until my mother, drawing near again,

Drank the dark blood; she knew me suddenly,

And said in piteous tones these winged words:—
“ ‘How didst thou come, my child, a living man,

Into this place of darkness? Difficult

It is for those who breathe the breath of life

To visit these abodes, through which are rolled

Great rivers, fearful floods—the first of these

Océanus, whose waters none can cross

On foot, or save on board a trusty barque.

Hast thou come hither on thy way from Troy,

A weary wanderer with thy ship and friends?

And hast thou not been yet at Ithaca,

Nor in thine island palace seen thy wife?'
"She spake, I answered: ''Tis necessity,

Dear mother, that has brought me to the abode

Of Pluto, to consult the Theban seer,

Tiresias. Not to the Achaian coast

Have I returned, nor reached our country, yet

Continually I wander; everywhere

I meet misfortune—even from the time

When, in the noble Agamemnon’s train,

I came to Ilium, famed for steeds, and made

War on its dwellers. Tell me now, I pray,

And truly, how it was that fate on thee

Brought the long sleep of death? by slow disease?

Or, stealing on thee, did the archer-queen,

Diana, slay thee with her silent shafts?

And tell me of my father, and the son

Left in my palace. Rests the sway I bore

On them, or has another taken it,

Since men believe I shall return no more?

And tell me of my wedded wife, her thoughts

And purposes, and whether she remains

Yet with my son. Is she the guardian still

Of my estates, or has the noblest chief

Of those Achaians led her thence a bride?’
“I spake; my reverend mother answered thus:—

‘Most certain is it that she sadly dwells

Still in thy palace. Weary days and nights

And tears are hers. No man has taken yet

Thy place as ruler, but Telemachus

Still has the charge of thy domain, and gives

The liberal feasts which it befits a prince

To give, for all invite him. In the fields

Thy father dwells, and never in the town

Is seen; nor beds nor cloaks has he, nor mats

Of rich device, but, all the winter through,

He sleeps where sleep the laborers, on the hearth,

Amid the dust, and wears a wretched garb;

And when the summer comes, or autumn days

Ripen the fruit, his bed is on the ground,

And made of leaves, that everywhere are shed

In the rich vineyards. There he lies and grieves,

And, cherishing his sorrow, mourns thy fate,

And keenly feels the miseries of age.

And thus I underwent my fate and died;

For not the goddess of the unerring bow

Stealing upon me smote me in thy halls

With silent arrows, nor did slow disease

Come o’er me, such as, wasting cruelly

The members, takes at last the life away;

But constant longing for thee, anxious thoughts

Of thee, and memory of thy gentleness,

Ulysses, made an end of my sweet life.’
“She spake; I longed to take into my arms

The soul of my dead mother. Thrice I tried,

Moved by a strong desire, and thrice the form

Passed through them like a shadow or a dream.

And then did the great sorrow in my heart

Grow sharper, and in winged words I said:—
“ ‘Beloved mother, why wilt thou not keep

Thy place, that I may clasp thee, so that here,

In Pluto’s realm and in each other’s arms,

We each might in the other soothe the sense

Of misery? Hath mighty Proserpine

Sent but an empty shade to meet me here,

That I might only grieve and sigh the more?’
“I spake, and then my reverend mother said:—

‘Believe not that Jove’s daughter Proserpine

Deceives thee. ’Tis the lot of all our race

When they are dead. No more the sinews bind

The bones and flesh, when once from the white bones

The life departs. Then like a dream the soul

Flies off, and flits about from place to place.

But haste thou to the light again, and mark

What I have said, that thou in after days

Mayst tell it to thy wife on thy return.’
“Thus we conferred. Meantime the women came

Around me, moved by mighty Proserpine;

In throngs they gathered to the dark red blood.

Then, as I pondered how to question each,

This seemed the wisest—from my sturdy thigh

I plucked the trenchant sword, and suffered not

All that were there to taste the blood at once;

So one by one they came, and each in turn

Declared her lineage. Thus I questioned all.
“Then saw I highborn Tyro first, who claimed

To be the daughter of that blameless man

Salmoneus, and who called herself the wife

Of Cretheus, son of Aeolus. She loved

Enipeus, hallowed river, fairest stream

Of all that flow on earth, and often walked

Beside its pleasant waters. He whose arms

Surround the islands, Neptune, once put on

The river’s form, and at its gulfy mouth

Met her; the purple waters stood upright

Around them like a wall, and formed an arch,

And hid the god and woman. There he loosed

The virgin zone of Tyro, shedding sleep

Upon her. Afterward he took her hand

And said: ‘Rejoice, O maiden, in our love,

For with the year’s return shalt thou bring forth

Illustrious sons; the embraces of the gods

Are not unfruitful. Rear them carefully.

And now return to thy abode, and watch

Thy words, and keep thy secret. Thou must know

That I am Neptune, he who shakes the earth.’
“He spake, and plunged into the billowy deep.

And she became a mother, and brought forth

Pelias and Neleus, valiant ministers

Of mighty Jupiter. On the broad lands

Of Iäolchos Pelias dwelt, and reared

Vast flocks of sheep, while Neleus made his home

In Pylos midst the sands. The queenly dame,

His mother, meanwhile brought forth other sons

To Cretheus—Aeson first, and Pheres next,

And Amythaon, great in horsemanship.
“And after her I saw Antiopè,

The daughter of Asopus—her who made

A boast that she had slumbered in the arms

Of Jove. Two sons she bore—Amphion one,

The other Zethus—and they founded Thebes

With its seven gates, and girt it round with towers;

For, valiant as they were, they could not dwell

Safely in that great town unfenced by towers.
“And after her I saw Amphitryon’s wife,

Alcmena, her who brought forth Hercules,

The dauntless hero of the lion-heart—

For she had given herself into the arms

Of mighty Jupiter. I also saw

Megara there, a daughter of the house

Of haughty Creion. Her Amphitryon’s son,

Unamable in strength, had made his wife.
“The mother, too, of Oedipus I saw,

Beautiful Epicastè, who in life

Had done unwittingly a heinous deed—

Had married her own son, who, having slain

Her father first, espoused her; but the gods

Published abroad the rumor of the crime.

He in the pleasant town of Thebes bore sway

O’er the Cadmeians; yet in misery

He lived, for so the offended gods ordained.

And she went down to Hades and the gates

That stand forever barred; for, wild with grief,

She slung a cord upon a lofty beam

And perished by it, leaving him to bear

Woes without measure, such as on a son

The furies of a mother might inflict.
“And there I saw the dame supremely fair,

Chloris, whom Neleus with large marriage-gifts

Wooed, and brought home a bride; the youngest she

Among the daughters of Iäsus’ son,

Amphion, ruler o’er Orchomenus,

The Minyeian town, and o’er the realm

Of Pylos. Three illustrious sons she bore

To Neleus—Nestor, Chromius, and a chief

Of lofty bearing, Periclymenus.

She brought forth Pero also, marvellous

In beauty, wooed by all the region round;

but Neleus would bestow the maid on none

Save him who should drive off from Phylacè

The beeves, broad-fronted and with crooked horns,

Of valiant Iphicles—a difficult task.

One man alone, a blameless prophet, dared

Attempt it; but he found himself withstood

By fate, and rigid fetters, and a force

Of rustic herdsmen. Months and days went by,

And the full year, led by the hours, came round.

The valiant Iphicles, who from the seer

Had heard the oracles explained, took off

The shackles, and the will of Jove was done.
"Then saw I Leda, wife of Tyndarus,

Who bore to Tyndarus two noble sons,

Castor the horseman, Pollux skilled to wield

The cestus. Both of them have still a place

Upon the fruitful earth; for Jupiter

Gave them such honor that they live by turns

Each one a day, and then are with the dead

Each one by turns; they rank among the gods.
“The wife of Aloëus next appeared,

Iphidameia, who, as she declared,

Had won the love of Neptune. She brought forth

Two short-lived sons—one like a god in form,

Named Otus; and the other, far renowned,

Named Ephialtes. These the bounteous earth

Nourished to be the tallest of mankind,

And goodliest, save Orion. When the twain

Had seen but nine years of their life, they stood

In breadth of frame nine cubits, and in height

Nine fathoms. They against the living gods

Threatened to wage, upon the Olympian height,

Fierce and tumultuous battle, and to fling

Ossa upon Olympus, and to pile

Pelion, with all its growth of leafy woods,

On Ossa, that the heavens might thus be scaled.

And they, if they had reached their prime of youth,

Had made their menace good. The son of Jove

And amber-haired Latona took their lives

Ere yet beneath their temples sprang the down

And covered with its sprouting tufts the chin.
“Phaedra I saw, and Procris, and the child

Of the wise Minos, Ariadne, famed

For beauty, whom the hero Theseus once

From Crete to hallowed Athens’ fertile coast

Led, but possessed her not. Diana gave

Ear to the tale which Bacchus brought to her,

And in the isle of Dia slew the maid.
“And Maera I beheld, and Clymenè,

And Eriphylè, hateful in her guilt,

Who sold her husband for a price in gold.

But vainly might I think to name them all—

The wives and daughters of heroic men

Whom I beheld—for first the ambrosial night

Would wear away. And now for me the hour

Of sleep is come, at my good ship among

My friends, or haply here. Meantime the care

For my return is with the gods and you.”
He spake, and all were silent: all within

The shadows of those palace-halls were held

Motionless by the charm of what he said.

And thus the white-armed Queen Aretè spake:—
“Phaeacians, how appears this man to you

In form, in stature, and well-judging mind?

My guest he is, but each among you shares

The honor of the occasion. Now, I pray,

Dismiss him not in haste, nor sparingly

Bestow your gifts on one in so much need;

For in your dwellings is much wealth, bestowed

Upon you by the bounty of the gods.”
Then also Echeneüs, aged chief,

The oldest man of the Phaeacians, spake:—
“My friends, the word of our sagacious queen

Errs not, nor is ill-timed, and yours it is

To hearken and obey: but all depends

Upon Alcinoüs—both the word and deed.”

And then in turn Alcinoüs spake: “That word

Shall be fulfilled, if I am ruler here

O’er the Phaeacians, skilled in seamanship.

But let the stranger, though he long for home,

Bear to remain till morning, that his store

Of gifts may be complete. To send him home

Shall be the charge of all, but mostly mine,

Since mine it is to hold the sovereign power.”
And then the wise Ulysses said: “O King

Alcinoüs, eminent o’er all thy race!

Shouldst thou command me to remain with thee

Even for a twelvemonth, and at length provide

For my return, and give me princely gifts,

Even that would please me; for with fuller hands,

The happier were my lot on my return

To my own land. I should be honored then,

And meet a kinder welcome there from all

Who see me in my Ithaca once more.”
And then again in turn Alcinoüs spake:—

“Ulysses, when we look on thee, we feel

No fear that thou art false, or one of those,

The many, whom the dark earth nourishes,

Wandering at large, and forging lies, that we

May not suspect them. Thou hast grace of speech

And noble thoughts, and fitly hast thou told,

Even as a minstrel might, the history

Of all thy Argive brethren and thy own.

Now say, and frankly, didst thou also see

Any of those heroic men who went

With thee to Troy, and in that region met

Their fate? A night immeasurably long

Is yet before us. Let us have thy tale

Of wonders. I could listen till the break

Of hallowed morning, if thou canst endure

So long to speak of hardships thou hast borne.”
He spake, and wise Ulysses answered thus:—

“O King Alcinoüs, eminent beyond

All others of thy people. For discourse

There is a time; there is a time for sleep.

If more thou yet wouldst hear, I will not spare

To give the story of the greater woes

Of my companions, who were afterward

Cut off from life; and though they had escaped

The cruel Trojan war, on their return

They perished by a woman’s fraud and guilt.

“When chaste Proserpina had made the ghosts

Of women scatter right and left, there came

The soul of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son.

He came attended by a throng of those

Who in the palace of Aegisthus met

A fate like his and died. When he had drunk

The dark red blood, he knew me at a look,

And wailed aloud, and, bursting into tears,

Stretched out his hands to touch me; but no power

Was there of grasp or pressure, such as once

Dwelt in those active limbs. I could not help

But weep at sight of him, for from my heart

I pitied him, and spake these winged words:—

“ ‘Most glorious son of Atreus, king of men!

How, Agamemnon, has the fate that brings

To man the everlasting sleep of death

O’ertaken thee? Did Neptune, calling up

The winds in all their fury, make thy fleet

A wreck, or did thine enemies on land

Smite thee, as thou wert driving off their beeves

And their fair flocks, or fighting to defend

Some city, and the helpless women there?’
“I spake, and Agamemnon thus replied:—

‘Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

’Twas not that Neptune calling up the winds

In all their fury wrecked me in my fleet,

Nor hostile warriors smote me on the land,

But that Aegisthus, bent upon my death,

Plotted against me with my guilty wife,

And bade me to his house and slew me there,

Even at the banquet, as a hind might slay

A bullock at the stall. With me they slew

My comrades, as a herd of white-toothed swine

Are slaughtered for some man of large estates,

Who makes a wedding or a solemn feast.

Thou hast seen many perish by the sword

In the hard battle, one by one, and yet

Thou wouldst have pitied us, hadst thou beheld

The slain beside the wine-jar, and beneath

The loaded tables, while the pavement swam

With blood. I heard Cassandra’s piteous cry,

The cry of Priam’s daughter, stricken down

By treacherous Clytemnestra at my side.

And there I lay, and, dying, raised my hands

To grasp my sword. The shameless woman went

Her way, nor stayed to close my eyes, nor press

My mouth into its place, although my soul

Was on its way to Hades. There is naught

That lives more horrible, more lost to shame,

Than is the woman who has brought her mind

To compass deeds like these—the wretch who plans

So foul a crime—the murder of the man

Whom she a virgin wedded. I had looked

For a warm welcome from my children here,

And all my household in my ancient home.

This woman, deep in wickedness, hath brought

Disgrace upon herself and all her sex,

Even those who give their thoughts to doing good.’
“He spake, and I replied: ‘O, how the God

Who wields the thunder, Jupiter, must hate

The house of Atreus for the women’s sake!

At first we fell by myriads in the cause

Of Helen; Clytemnestra now hath planned

This guile against thee while thou wert afar.’
“I spake, and instantly his answer came:—

‘Therefore be not compliant to thy wife,

Nor let her hear from thee whatever lies

Within thy knowledge. Tell her but a part,

And keep the rest concealed. Yet is thy life,

Ulysses, in no danger from thy spouse;

For wise and well instructed in the rules

Of virtuous conduct is Penelope,

The daughter of Icarius. When we went

To war, we left her a young bride; a babe

Was at her breast, a boy, who now must sit

Among grown men; and fortunate is he,

For certainly his father will behold

The youth on his return, and he embrace

His father, as is meet. But as for me,

My consort suffered not my eyes to feed

Upon the sight of my own son; for first

She slew me. This, then, I admonish thee—

Heed thou my words. Bring not thy ship to land

Openly in thy country, but by stealth,

Since now no longer can we put our trust

In woman. Meantime, tell me of my son,

And faithfully, if thou hast heard of him

As living, whether in Orchomenus,

Or sandy Pylos, or in the broad realm

Of Menelaus, Sparta; for not yet

Has my Orestes passed from earth and life.’
“He spake, and I replied: ‘Why ask of me

That question, O Atrides? I know not

Whether thy son be living or be dead,

And this is not a time for idle words.’
“Thus in sad talk we stood, and freely flowed

Our tears. Meanwhile the ghosts of Peleus’ son

Achilles, and Patroclus, excellent

Antilochus, and Ajax, all drew near—

Ajax for form and stature eminent

O’er all the Greeks save Peleus’ faultless son.

Then did the soul of fleet Aeacides

Know me, and thus in winged words he said:—
“ ‘Ulysses! what hath moved thee to attempt

This greatest of thy labors? How is it

That thou hast found the courage to descend

To Hades, where the dead, the bodiless forms

Of those whose work is done on earth, abide?’
“He spake; I answered: ‘Greatest of the Greeks!

Achilles, son of Peleus! ’Twas to hear

The counsel of Tiresias that I came,

If haply he might tell me by what means

To reach my rugged Ithaca again;

For yet have I not trod my native coast,

Nor even have drawn nigh to Greece. I meet

Misfortunes everywhere. But as for thee,

Achilles, no man lived before thy time,

Nor will hereafter live, more fortunate

Than thou—for while alive we honored thee

As if thou wert a god, and now again

In these abodes thou rulest o’er the dead;

Therefore, Achilles, shouldst thou not be sad.’
“I spake; Achilles quickly answered me:—

‘Noble Ulysses, speak not thus of death,

As if thou couldst console me. I would be

A laborer on earth, and serve for hire

Some man of mean estate, who makes scant cheer,

Rather than reign o’er all who have gone down

To death. Speak rather of my noble son,

Whether or not he yet has joined the wars

To fight among the foremost of the host.

And tell me also if thou aught hast heard

Of blameless Peleus—whether he be yet

Honored among his many Myrmidons,

Or do they hold him now in small esteem

In Hellas and in Phthia, since old age

Unnerves his hands and feet, and I no more

Am there, beneath the sun, to give him aid,

Strong as I was on the wide plain of Troy,

When warring for the Achaian cause I smote

That valiant people. Could I come again,

But for a moment, with my former strength,

Into my father’s palace, I would make

That strength and these unconquerable hands

A terror to the men who do him wrong,

And rob him of the honor due a king.’
“He spake; I answered: ‘Nothing have I heard

Of blameless Peleus, but I will relate

The truth concerning Neoptolemus,

Thy son, as thou requirest. Him I took

From Scyros in a gallant barque to join

The well-armed Greeks. Know, then, that when we sat

In council, planning to conduct the war

Against the city of Troy, he always rose

The first to speak, nor were his words unwise.

The godlike Nestor and myself alone

Rivalled him in debate. And when we fought

About the city walls, he loitered not

Among the others in the numerous host,

But hastened on before them, giving place

To no man there in valor. Many men

He slew in desperate combat, whom to name

Were past my power, so many were they all

Whom in the cause of Greece he struck to earth.

Yet one I name, Eurypylus, the son

Of Telephus, who perished by his sword

With many of his band, Citeians, led

To war because of liberal gifts bestowed

Upon their chieftain’s wife; the noblest he

Of men, in form, whom I have ever seen,

Save Memnon. When into the wooden steed,

Framed by Epeius, we the chiefs of Greece

Ascended, and to me was given the charge

Of all things there, to open and to shut

The close-built fraud, while others of high rank

Among the Greeks were wiping off their tears,

And their limbs shook, I never saw thy son

Turn pale in his fine face, or brush away

A tear, but he besought me earnestly

That he might leave our hiding-place, and grasped

His falchion’s hilt, and lifted up his spear

Heavy with brass, for in his mind he smote

The Trojan crowd already. When at last

We had o’erthrown and sacked the lofty town

Of Priam, he embarked upon a ship,

With all his share of spoil—a large reward—

Unhurt, not touched in combat hand to hand,

Nor wounded from afar, as oftentimes

Must be the fortune of a fight, for Mars

Is wont to rage without regard to men.’
“I spake. The soul of swift Aeacides

Over the meadows thick with asphodel

Departed with long strides, well pleased to hear

From me the story of his son’s renown.

“The other ghosts of those who lay in death

Stood sorrowing by, and each one told his griefs;

But that of Ajax, son of Telamon,

Kept far aloof, displeased that I had won

The victory contending at the fleet

Which should possess the arms of Peleus’ son.

His goddess-mother laid them as a prize

Before us, and the captive sons of Troy

And Pallas were the umpires to award

The victory. And now how much I wish

I had not conquered in a strife like that,

Since for that cause the dark earth hath received

The hero Ajax, who in nobleness

Of form and greatness of exploits excelled

All other Greeks, except the blameless son

Of Peleus. Then I spake in soothing words:—
"'O Ajax, son of blameless Telamon!

Wilt thou not even in death forget the wrath

Caused by the strife for those accursed arms?

The gods have made them fatal to the Greeks,

For thou, the bulwark of our host, didst fall,

And we lamented thee as bitterly

When thou wert dead as we had mourned the son

Of Peleus. Nor was any man to blame;

'Twas Jupiter who held in vehement hate

The army of the warlike Greeks, and laid

This doom upon thee. Now, O king, draw near,

And hear our voice and words, and check, I pray,

The anger rising in thy generous breast.'
"I spake; he answered not, but moved away

To Erebus, among the other souls

Of the departed. Yet would I have had

Speech of him, angry as he was, or else

Have spoken to him further, but my wish

Was strong to see yet others of the dead.
“Then I beheld the illustrious son of Jove,

Minos, a golden sceptre in his hand,

Sitting to judge the dead, who round the king

Pleaded their causes. There they stood or sat

In Pluto’s halls—a pile with ample gates.
“And next I saw the huge Orion drive,

Across the meadows green with asphodel,

The savage beast whom he had slain; he bore

The brazen mace, which no man’s power could break.
“And Tityus there I saw—the mighty earth

His mother—overspreading, as he lay,

Nine acres, with two vultures at his side,

That, plucking at his liver, plunged their beaks

Into the flesh; nor did his hands avail

To drive them off, for he had offered force

To Jove’s proud wife Latona, as she went

To Pytho, through the pleasant Panopeus.
“And next I looked on Tantalus, a prey

To grievous torments, standing in a lake

That reached his chin. Though painfully athirst,

He could not drink; as often as he bowed

His aged head to take into his lips

The water, it was drawn away, and sank

Into the earth, and the dark soil appeared

Around his feet; a god had dried it up.

And lofty trees drooped o’er him, hung with fruit—

Pears and pomegranates, apples fair to sight,

And luscious figs, and olives green of hue.

And when that ancient man put forth his hands

To pluck them from their stems, the wind arose

And whirled them far among the shadowy clouds.
"There I beheld the shade of Sisyphus

Amid his sufferings. With both hands he rolled

A huge stone up a hill. To force it up,

He leaned against the mass with hands and feet;

But, ere it crossed the summit of the hill

A power was felt that sent it rolling back,

And downward plunged the unmanageable rock

Before him to the plain. Again he toiled

To heave it upward, while the sweat in streams

Ran down his limbs, and dust begrimed his brow.

“Then I beheld the mighty Hercules—

The hero’s image—for he sits himself

Among the deathless gods, well pleased to share

Their feasts, and Hebe of the dainty feet—

A daughter of the mighty Jupiter

And golden-sandalled Juno—is his wife.

Around his image flitted to and fro

The ghosts with noise, like fear-bewildered birds.

His look was dark as night. He held in hand

A naked bow, a shaft upon the string,

And fiercely gazed, like one about to send

The arrow forth. Upon his breast he wore

The formidable baldric, on whose band

Of gold were sculptured marvels—forms of bears,

Wild boars, grim lions, battles, skirmishings,

And death by wounds, and slaughter. He who wrought

That band had never done the like before,

Nor could thereafter. As I met his eye,

The hero knew me, and, beholding me

With pity, said to me in winged words:—
"'Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

And yet unhappy; surely thou dost bear

A cruel fate, like that which I endured

While yet I saw the brightness of the sun.

The offspring of Saturnian Jupiter

Am I, and yet was I compelled to serve

One of a meaner race than I, who set

Difficult tasks. He sent me hither once

To bring away the guardian hound; he deemed

No harder task might be. I brought him hence,

I led him up from Hades, with such aid

As Hermes and the blue-eyed Pallas gave.’
“Thus having spoken, he withdrew again

Into the abode of Pluto. I remained

And kept my place, in hope there yet might come

Heroes who perished in the early time,

And haply I might look on some of those—

The ancients, whom I greatly longed to see—

On Theseus and Pirithoüs, glorious men,

The children of the gods. But now there flocked

Already round me, with a mighty noise,

The innumerable nations of the dead;

And I grew pale with fear, lest from the halls

Of Pluto the stern Proserpine should send

The frightful visage of the monster-maid,

The Gorgon. Hastening to my ship, I bade

The crew embark, and cast the hawsers loose.

Quickly they went on board, and took their seats

Upon the benches. Through Océanus

The current bore my galley, aided first

By oars and then by favorable gales.”

Book XII

The Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis

Return of Ulysses to the island of Circè—Her counsels respecting his homeward voyage—The sirens—Escape from Scylla and Charybdis—His arrival at Trinacria—Slaughter of the oxen of the Sun by his companions—A tempest, in consequence, by which his companions all perish, and he only escapes by swimming to the island of Calypso.

"Now when our barque had left Océanus

And entered the great deep, we reached the isle

Aeaea, where the Morning, child of Dawn,

Abides, and holds her dances, and the Sun

Goes up from earth. We landed there and drew

Our galley up the beach; we disembarked

And laid us down to sleep beside the sea,

And waited for the holy Morn to rise.

"Then when the rosy-fingered Morn appeared,

The child of Dawn, I sent my comrades forth

To bring from Circè’s halls Elpenor’s corse.

And where a headland stretched into the deep

We hewed down trees, and held the funeral rites

With many tears; and having there consumed

The body and the arms with fire, we built

A tomb, and reared a column to the dead,

And on its summit fixed a tapering oar.
“All this was duly done; yet was the news

Of our return from Hades not concealed

From Circè. She attired herself in haste

And came; her maids came with her, bringing bread

And store of meats and generous wine; and thus

Spake the wise goddess, standing in the midst:—
“ ‘Ah, daring ones! who, yet alive, have gone

Down to the abode of Pluto; twice to die

Is yours, while others die but once. Yet now

Take food, drink wine, and hold a feast today,

And with the dawn of morning ye shall sail;

And I will show the way, and teach you all

Its dangers, so that ye may not lament

False counsels followed, either on the land

Or on the water, to your grievous harm.’
“She spake, and our confiding minds were swayed

Easily by her counsels. All that day

Till set of sun we sat and banqueted

Upon the abundant meats and generous wines;

And when the Sun went down, and darkness came,

The crew beside the fastenings of our barque

Lay down to sleep, while Circè took my hand,

Led me apart, and made me sit, and took

Her seat before me, and inquired of all

That I had seen. I told her faithfully,

And then the mighty goddess Circè said:—
“ ‘Thus far is well; now needfully attend

To what I say, and may some deity

Help thee remember it! Thou first wilt come

To where the Sirens haunt. They throw a spell

O’er all who pass that way. If unawares

One finds himself so nigh that he can hear

Their voices, round him nevermore shall wife

And lisping children gather, welcoming

His safe return with joy. The Sirens sit

In a green field, and charm with mellow notes

The comer, while beside them lie in heaps

The bones of men decaying underneath

The shrivelled skins. Take heed and pass them by.

First fill with wax well kneaded in the palm

The ears of thy companions, that no sound

May enter. Hear the music, if thou wilt,

But let thy people bind thee, hand and foot,

To the good ship, upright against the mast,

And round it wind the cord, that thou mayst hear

The ravishing notes. But shouldst thou then entreat

Thy men, commanding them to set thee free,

Let them be charged to bind thee yet more fast

With added bands. And when they shall have passed

The Sirens by, I will not judge for thee

Which way to take; consider for thyself;

I tell thee of two ways. There is a pile

Of beetling rocks, where roars the mighty surge

Of dark-eyed Amphitritè; these are called

The Wanderers by the blessed gods. No birds

Can pass them safe, not even the timid doves,

Which bear ambrosia to our father Jove,

But ever doth the slippery rock take off

Someone, whose loss the God at once supplies,

To keep their number full. To these no barque

Guided by man has ever come, and left

The spot unwrecked; the billows of the deep

And storms of fire in air have scattered wide

Timbers of ships and bodies of drowned men.

One only of the barques that plough the deep

Has passed them safely—Argo, known to all

By fame, when coming from Aeaeta home—

And her the billows would have dashed against

The enormous rocks, if Juno, for the sake

Of Jason, had not come to guide it through.
“ ‘Two are the rocks; one lifts to the broad heaven

Its pointed summit, where a dark gray cloud

Broods, and withdraws not; never is the sky

Clear o’er that peak, not even in summer days

Or autumn; nor can man ascend its steeps,

Or venture down—so smooth the sides, as if

Man’s art had polished them. There in the midst

Upon the western side toward Erebus

There yawns a shadowy cavern; thither thou,

Noble Ulysses, steer thy barque, yet keep

So far aloof that, standing on the deck,

A youth might send an arrow from a bow

Just to the cavern’s mouth. There Scylla dwells,

And fills the air with fearful yells; her voice

The cry of whelps just littered, but herself

A frightful prodigy—a sight which none

Would care to look on, though he were a god.

Twelve feet are hers, all shapeless; six long necks,

A hideous head on each, and triple rows

Of teeth, close set and many, threatening death.

And half her form is in the cavern’s womb,

And forth from that dark gulf her heads are thrust,

To look abroad upon the rocks for prey—

Dolphin, or dogfish, or the mightier whale,

Such as the murmuring Amphitritè breeds

In multitudes. No mariner can boast

That he has passed by Scylla with a crew

Unharmed; she snatches from the deck, and bears

Away in each grim mouth, a living man.
"'Another rock, Ulysses, thou wilt see,

Of lower height, so near her that a spear,

Cast by the hand, might reach it. On it grows

A huge wild fig-tree with luxuriant leaves.

Below, Charybdis, of immortal birth,

Draws the dark water down; for thrice a day

She gives it forth, and thrice with fearful whirl

She draws it in. O, be it not thy lot

To come while the dark water rushes down!

Even Neptune could not then deliver thee.

Then turn thy course with speed toward Scylla's rock,

And pass that way; 'twere better far that six

Should perish from the ship than all be lost’
“She spake, and I replied: ‘O goddess, deign

To tell me truly, cannot I at once

Escape Charybdis and defend my friends

Against the rage of Scylla when she strikes?’
“I spake; the mighty goddess answered me:—

‘Rash man! dost thou still think of warlike deeds,

And feats of strength? And wilt thou not give way

Even to the deathless gods? That pest is not

Of mortal mould; she cannot die, she is

A thing to tremble and to shudder at,

And fierce, and never to be overcome.

There is no room for courage; flight is best.

And if thou shouldst delay beside the rock

To take up arms, I fear lest once again

She fall on thee with all her heads, and seize

As many men. Pass by the monster’s haunt

With all the speed that thou canst make, and call

Upon Crataeis, who brought Scylla forth

To be the plague of men, and who will calm

Her rage, that she assault thee not again.

“ ‘Then in thy voyage shalt thou reach the isle

Trinacria, where, in pastures of the Sun,

His many beeves and fading sheep are fed—

Seven herds of oxen, and as many flocks

Of sheep, and fifty in each flock and herd.

They never multiply; they never die.

Two shepherdesses tend them, goddesses,

Nymphs with redundant locks—Lampelia one,

The other Phaëthusa. These the nymph

Naeëra to the overgoing Sun

Brought forth, and when their queenly mother’s care

Had reared them, she appointed them to dwell

In far Trinacria, there to keep the flocks

And oxen of their father. If thy thoughts

Be fixed on thy return, so that thou leave

These flocks and herds unharmed, ye all will come

To Ithaca, though after many toils.

But if thou rashly harm them, I foretell

Destruction to thy ship and all its crew;

And if thyself escape, thou wilt return

Late and in sorrow, all thy comrades lost.’
“She spake; the Morning on her golden throne

Looked forth; the glorious goddess went her way

Into the isle, I to my ship, and bade

The men embark and cast the hawsers loose.

And straight they went on board, and duly manned

The benches, smiting as they sat with oars

The hoary waters. Circè, amber-haired,

The mighty goddess of the musical voice,

Sent a fair wind behind our dark-prowed ship

That gayly bore us company, and filled

The sails. When we had fairly ordered all

On board our galley, we sat down, and left

The favoring wind and helm to bear us on,

And thus in sadness I bespake the crew:—
"'My friends! it were not well that one or two

Alone should know the oracles I heard

From Circè, great among the goddesses;

And now will I disclose them, that ye all,

Whether we are to die or to escape

The doom of death, may be forewarned. And first

Against the wicked Sirens and their song

And flowery bank she warns us. I alone

May hear their voice, but ye must bind me first

With bands too strong to break, that I may stand

Upright against the mast; and let the cords

Be fastened round it. If I then entreat

And bid you loose me, make the bands more strong.’
“Thus to my crew I spake, and told them all

That they should know, while our good ship drew near

The island of the Sirens, prosperous gales

Wafting it gently onward. Then the breeze

Sank to a breathless calm; some deity

Had hushed the winds to slumber. Straightway rose

The men and furled the sails and laid them down

Within the ship, and sat and made the sea

White with the beating of their polished blades,

Made of the fir-tree. Then I took a mass

Of wax and cut it into many parts,

And kneaded each with a strong hand. It grew

Warm with the pressure, and the beams of him

Who journeys round the earth, the monarch Sun.

With this I filled the ears of all my men

From first to last. They bound me, in their turn,

Upright against the mast-tree, hand and foot,

And tied the cords around it. Then again

They sat and threshed with oars the hoary deep.

And when, in running rapidly, we came

So near the Sirens as to hear a voice

From where they sat, our galley flew not by

Unseen by them, and sweetly thus they sang:—
"'O world-renowned Ulysses! thou who art

The glory of the Achaians, turn thy barque

Landward, that thou mayst listen to our lay

No man has passed us in his galley yet,

Ere he has heard our warbled melodies.

He goes delighted hence a wiser man;

For all that in the spacious realm of Troy

The Greeks and Trojans by the will of Heaven

Endured we know, and all that comes to pass

In all the nations of the fruitful earth.'"
'Twas thus they sang, and sweet the strain. I longed

To listen, and with nods I gave the sign

To set me free; they only plied their oars

The faster. Then upsprang Eurylochus

And Perimedes, and with added cords

Bound me, and drew the others still more tight.

And when we now had passed the spot, and heard

No more the melody the Sirens sang,

My comrades hastened from their ears to take

The wax, and loosed the cords and set me free.
"As soon as we had left the isle, I saw

Mist and a mountain billow, and I heard

The thunder of the waters. From the hands

Of my affrighted comrades flew the oars,

The deep was all in uproar; but the ship

Stopped there, for all the rowers ceased their task.

I went through all the ship exhorting them

With cheerful words, man after man, and said:—

“ ‘Reflect, my friends, that we are not untried

In evil fortunes, nor in sadder plight

Are we than when within his spacious cave

The brutal Cyclops held us prisoners;

Yet through my valor we escaped, and through

My counsels and devices, and I think

That ye will live to bear this day’s events

In memory like those. Now let us act.

Do all as I advise; go to your seats

Upon the benches, smiting with your oars

These mighty waves, and haply Jove will grant

That we escape the death which threatens us.

Thee, helmsman, I adjure—and heed my words,

Since to thy hands alone is given in charge

Our gallant vessel’s rudder—steer thou hence

From mist and tumbling waves, and well observe

The rock, lest where it juts into the sea

Thou heed it not, and bring us all to wreck.’
    “I spake, and quickly all obeyed my words.

Yet said I naught of Scylla—whom we now

Could not avoid—lest all the crew in fear

Should cease to row, and crowd into the hold.

And then did I forget the stern command

Which Circè gave me, not to arm myself

For combat. In my shining arms I cased

My limbs, and took in hand two ponderous spears,

And went on deck, and stood upon the prow—

For there it seemed to me that Scylla first

Would show herself—that monster of the rocks—

To seize my comrades. Yet I saw her not,

Though weary grew my eyes with looking long

And eagerly upon those dusky cliffs.
“Sadly we sailed into the strait, where stood

On one hand Scylla, and the dreaded rock

Charybdis on the other, drawing down

Into her horrid gulf the briny flood;

And as she threw it forth again, it tossed

And murmured as upon a glowing fire

The water in a cauldron, while the spray,

Thrown upward, fell on both the summit-rocks;

And when once more she swallowed the salt sea,

It whirled within the abyss, while far below

The bottom of blue sand was seen. My men

Grew pale with fear; we looked into the gulf

And thought our end was nigh. Then Scylla snatched

Six of my comrades from our hollow barque,

The best in valor and in strength of arm.

I looked to my good ship; I looked to them,

And saw their hands and feet still swung in air

Above me, while for the last time on earth

They called my name in agony of heart.

As when an angler on a jutting rock

Sits with his taper rod, and casts his bait

To snare the smaller fish, he sends the horn

Of a wild bull that guards his line afar

Into the water, and jerks out a fish,

And throws it gasping shoreward; so were they

Uplifted gasping to the rocks, and there

Scylla devoured them at her cavern’s mouth,

Stretching their hands to me with piercing cries

Of anguish. ’Twas in truth the saddest sight,

Whatever I have suffered and where’er

Have roamed the waters, that mine eyes have seen.
“Escaping thus the rocks, the dreaded haunt

Of Scylla and Charybdis, we approached

The pleasant island of the Sun, where grazed

The oxen with broad foreheads, beautiful,

And flocks of sheep, the fatlings of the god

Who makes the round of heaven. While yet at sea

I heard from my black ship the low of herds

In stables, and the bleatings of the flocks,

And straightway came into my thought the words

Of the blind seer Tiresias, him of Thebes,

And of Aeaean Circè, who had oft

Warned me to shun the island of the god

Whose light is sweet to all. And then I said

To my companions with a sorrowing heart:—
"'My comrades, sufferers as ye are, give ear.

I shall disclose the oracles which late

Tiresias and Aeaean Circè gave.

The goddess earnestly admonished me

Not to approach the island of the Sun,

Whose light is sweet to all, for there she said

Some great misfortune lay in wait for us.

Now let us speed the ship and pass the isle.'
"I spake; their hearts were broken as they heard,

And bitterly Eurylochus replied:—
"'Austere art thou, Ulysses; thou art strong

Exceedingly; no labor tires thy limbs;

They must be made of iron, since thy will

Denies thy comrades, overcome with toil

And sleeplessness, to tread the land again,

And in that isle amid the waters make

A generous banquet. Thou wouldst have us sail

Into the swiftly coming night, and stray

Far from the island, through the misty sea.

By night spring up the mighty winds that make

A wreck of ships, and how can one escape

Destruction, should a sudden hurricane

Rise from the south or the hard-blowing west,

Such as, in spite of all the sovereign gods,

Will cause a ship to founder in the deep?

Let us obey the dark-browed Night, and take

Our evening meal, remaining close beside

Our gallant barque, and go on board again

When morning breaks, and enter the wide sea.’
“So spake Eurylochus; the rest approved.

And then I knew that some divinity

Was meditating evil to our band,

And I bespake him thus in winged words:—
“‘Eurylochus, ye force me to your will,

Since I am only one. Now all of you

Bind yourselves to me firmly, by an oath,

That if ye haply here shall meet a herd

Of beeves or flock of sheep, ye will not dare

To slay a single ox or sheep, but feed

Contented on the stores that Circè gave.’
“I spake, and readily my comrades swore

As I required; and when that solemn oath

Was taken, to the land we brought and moored

Our galley in a winding creek, beside

A fountain of sweet water. From the deck

Stepped my companions and made ready there

Their evening cheer. They ate and drank till thirst

And hunger were appeased, and then they thought

Of those whom Scylla from our galley’s deck

Snatched and devoured; they thought and wept till sleep

Stole softly over them amid their tears.

Now came the third part of the night; the stars

Were sinking when the Cloud-compeller Jove

Sent forth a violent wind with eddying gusts,

And covered both the earth and sky with clouds,

And darkness fell from heaven. When Morning came,

The rosy-fingered daughter of the Dawn,

We drew the ship into a spacious grot.

There were the seats of nymphs, and there we saw

The smooth fair places where they danced. I called

A council of my men, and said to them:—
"'My friends, in our good ship are food and drink;

Abstain we from these beeves, lest we be made

To suffer; for these herds and these fair flocks

Are sacred to a dreaded god, the Sun—

The all-beholding and all-hearing Sun.'
"I spake, and all were swayed by what I said

Full easily. A month entire the gales

Blew from the south, and after that no wind

Save east and south. While yet we had our bread

And ruddy wine, my comrades spared the beeves,

Moved by the love of life. But when the stores

On board our galley were consumed, they roamed

The island in their need, and sought for prey,

And snared with barbed hooks the fish and birds—

Whatever came to hand—till they were gaunt

With famine. Meantime I withdrew alone

Into the isle, to supplicate the gods,

If haply one of them might yet reveal

The way of my return. As thus I strayed

Into the land, apart from all the rest,

I found a sheltered nook where no wind came,

And prayed with washen hands to all the gods

Who dwell in heaven. At length they bathed my lids

In a soft sleep. Meantime, Eurylochus

With fatal counsels thus harangued my men:—

“ ‘Hear, my companions, sufferers as ye are,

The words that I shall speak. All modes of death

Are hateful to the wretched race of men;

But this of hunger, thus to meet our fate,

Is the most fearful. Let us drive apart

The best of all the oxen of the Sun,

And sacrifice them to the immortal ones

Who dwell in the broad heaven. And if we come

To Ithaca, our country, we will there

Build to the Sun, whose path is o’er our heads,

A sumptuous temple, and endow its shrine

With many gifts and rare. But if it be

His will, approved by all the other gods,

To sink our barque in anger, for the sake

Of these his high-horned oxen, I should choose

Sooner to gasp my life away amid

The billows of the deep, than pine to death

By famine in this melancholy isle.’
“So spake Eurylochus; the crew approved.

Then from the neighboring herd they drove the best

Of all the beeves; for near the dark-prowed ship

The fair broad-fronted herd with crooked horns

Were feeding. Round the victims stood my crew,

And, offering their petitions to the gods,

Held tender oak-leaves in their hands, just plucked

From a tall tree, for in our good ship’s hold

Was no white barley now. When they had prayed,

And slain and dressed the beeves, they hewed away

The thighs and covered them with double folds

Of caul, and laid raw slices over these.

Wine had they not to pour in sacrifice

Upon the burning flesh; they poured instead

Water, and roasted all the entrails thus.

Now when the thighs were thoroughly consumed,

And entrails tasted, all the rest was carved

Into small portions, and transfixed with spits.
"Just then the gentle slumber left my lids.

I hurried to the shore and my good ship,

And, drawing near, perceived the savory steam

From the burnt-offering. Sorrowfully then

I called upon the ever-living gods:—
"'O Father Jove, and all ye blessed gods,

Who live forever, 'twas a cruel sleep

In which ye lulled me to my grievous harm;

My comrades here have done a fearful wrong.'
"Lampetia, of the trailing robes, in haste

Flew to the Sun, who journeys round the earth,

To tell him that my crew had slain his beeves,

And thus in anger he bespake the gods:—
"'O Father Jove, and all ye blessed gods

Who never die, avenge the wrong I bear

Upon the comrades of Laertes' son,

Ulysses, who have foully slain my beeves,

In which I took delight whene'er I rose

Into the starry heaven, and when again

I sank from heaven to earth. If for the wrong

They make not large amends, I shall go down

To Hades, there to shine among the dead.'
"The cloud-compelling Jupiter replied:—

'Still shine, O Sun! among the deathless gods

And mortal men, upon the nourishing earth.

Soon will I cleave, with a white thunderbolt,

Their galley in the midst of the black sea.'

“This from Calypso of the radiant hair

I heard thereafter; she herself, she said,

Had heard it from the herald Mercury.

“When to the ship I came, beside the sea,

I sternly chid them all, man after man,

Yet could we think of no redress; the beeves

Were dead; and now with prodigies the gods

Amazed my comrades—the skins moved and crawled,

The flesh both raw and roasted on the spits

Lowed with the voice of oxen. Six whole days

My comrades feasted, taking from the herd

The Sun’s best oxen. When Saturnian Jove

Brought the seventh day, the tempest ceased; the wind

Fell, and we straightway went on board. We set

The mast upright, and, spreading the white sails,

We ventured on the great wide sea again.
“When we had left the isle, and now appeared

No other land, but only sea and sky,

The son of Saturn caused a lurid cloud

To gather o’er the galley, and to cast

Its darkness on the deep. Not long our ship

Ran onward, ere the furious west-wind rose

And blew a hurricane. A strong blast snapped

Both ropes that held the mast; the mast fell back;

The tackle dropped entangled to the hold;

The mast, in falling on the galley’s stern,

Dashed on the pilot’s head and crushed the bones,

And from the deck he plunged like one who dives

Into the deep; his gallant spirit left

The limbs at once. Jove thundered from on high,

And sent a thunderbolt into the ship,

That, quaking with the fearful blow, and filled

With stifling sulphur, shook my comrades off

Into the deep. They floated round the ship

Like seamews; Jupiter had cut them off

From their return. I moved from place to place,

Still in the ship, until the tempest’s force

Parted the sides and keel. Before the waves

The naked keel was swept. The mast had snapped

Just at the base, but round it was a thong

Made of a bullock’s hide; with this I bound

The mast and keel together, took my seat

Upon them, and the wild winds bore me on.

“The west-wind ceased to rage; but in its stead

The south-wind blew, and brought me bitter grief.

I feared lest I must measure back my way

To grim Charybdis. All night long I rode

The waves, and with the rising sun drew near

The rock of Scylla and the terrible

Charybdis as her gulf was drawing down

The waves of the salt sea. There as I came

I raised myself on high till I could grasp

The lofty fig-tree, and I clung to it

As clings a bat—for I could neither find

A place to plant my feet, nor could I climb,

So distant were the roots, so far apart

The long huge branches overshadowing

Charybdis. Yet I firmly kept my hold

Till she should throw the keel and mast again

Up from the gulf. They, as I waited long,

Came up again, though late—as late as one

Who long has sat adjudging strifes between

Young suitors pleading in the marketplace

Rises and goes to take his evening meal;

So late the timbers of my barque returned,

Thrown from Charybdis. Then I dropped amid

The dashing waves, and came with hands and feet

On those long timbers in the midst, that they

Might bear my weight. I sat on them and rowed

With both my hands. The father of the gods

And mortals suffered not that I should look

On Scylla’s rock again, else had I not

Escaped a cruel death. For nine long days

I floated on the waters; on the tenth

The gods at nightfall bore me to an isle—

Ogygia, where Calypso, amber-haired,

A mighty goddess, skilled in song, abides,

Who kindly welcomed me, and cherished me.

Why should I speak of this? Here in these halls

I gave the history yesterday to thee

And to thy gracious consort, and I hate

To tell again a tale once fully told.”

Book XIII

Arrival of Ulysses at Ithaca

Departure of Ulysses from the court of Alcinoüs—Arrival of the ship at Ithaca—Ulysses carried on shore by the Phaeacians while asleep, and left—His treasures landed also—The ship, while returning, transformed by Neptune into a rock—Dialogue between Pallas and Ulysses concerning the destruction of the suitors—Concealment of the treasures in a cave—Transformation of Ulysses into an old man.

He spake, and all within those shadowy halls

Were silent; all were held in mute delight.

Alcinoüs then took up the word and said:—

“Since thou hast come, Ulysses, as a guest,

To this high pile and to these brazen rooms,

So long a sufferer, thou must not depart

Upon thy homeward way a wanderer still.

And this let me enjoin on each of you

Who in this palace drink at our repasts

The choice red wine, and listen to the bard:

Already in a polished chest are laid

Changes of raiment, works of art in gold,

And other gifts, which the Phaeacian chiefs

Have destined for our guest; now let us each

Bestow an ample tripod and a vase,

And we in an assembly of the realm

Will see the cost repaid, since otherwise

Great would the burden be that each must bear.”

So spake Alcinoüs; they approved, and sought

Their homes to sleep, but when the child of Dawn,

The rosy-fingered Morn, appeared, they came,

All bringing to the ship their gifts of brass

In honor of the guest. The mighty prince

Alcinoüs, going through the ship, bestowed

The whole beneath the benches, that no one

Of those who leaned to pull the oar might thence

Meet harm or hindrance. Then they all went back

To the king’s palace, and prepared a feast.
The mighty prince Alcinoüs offered up

For them an ox to cloud-compelling Jove,

The son of Saturn, ruler over all.

They burned the thighs, and held high festival,

And all was mirth. Divine Demodocus

The bard, whom all men reverenced, sang to them.

Meantime Ulysses often turned to look

At the bright Sun, and longed to see him set,

So eager was the hero to set sail

Upon his homeward way. As when a swain

Awaits his evening meal, for whom all day

Two dark-brown steers have dragged the solid plough

Through fallow grounds, and welcome is the hour

Of sunset, calling him to his repast,

And wearily he walks with failing knees,

So welcome to Ulysses did the light

Of day go down. Then did he hold discourse

With the Phaeacians, lovers of the sea,

And chiefly with Alcinoüs, speaking thus:—
"O monarch most illustrious of thy race,

Alcinoüs, now when ye have duly poured

Wine to the gods, be pleased to send me hence

In peace, and fare ye well! All that my heart

Could wish have ye provided bounteously—

An escort and rich gifts; and may the gods

Bestow their blessing with them! May I meet

My blameless wife again, and find my friends

Prosperous! And ye whom I shall leave behind,

Long may ye make the wives of your young years

And children happy! May the gods vouchsafe

To crown with every virtue you and them,

And may no evil light upon your isle!”
He spake; the assembly all approved his words,

And bade send forth the stranger on his way,

Who spake so nobly. Then the mighty prince

Alcinoüs turned, and to the herald said:—
“Now mix the wine, Pontonoüs, in a jar,

And bear a part to all beneath our roof,

That we with prayers to Father Jupiter

May send the stranger to his native land.”
He spake; Pontonoüs mingled for the guests

The generous wine, and went with it to each,

Who poured it on the ground, from where they sat,

To all the dwellers of the ample heaven;

And then the great Ulysses, rising up,

Placed the round goblet in Aretè's hands,

And thus bespake the queen with winged words:—
"Farewell, O queen, through the long years, till age

And death, which are the lot of all, shall come.

Now I depart, but mayst thou, here among

Thy people, and the children of thy love,

And King Alcinoüs, lead a happy life!"
So spake the highborn chieftain, and withdrew,

And crossed the threshold. King Alcinoüs sent

A herald with him to direct his way

To the fleet ship and border of the deep.

Aretè also sent her servant-maids—

One bearing a fresh cloak and tunic, one

A coffer nobly wrought, and yet a third

Bread and red wine; and when they reached the ship

Beside the sea, the diligent crew received

Their burdens, and bestowed within the hold

The food and drink, but spread upon the deck

And at the stern a mat and linen sheet,

That there Ulysses undisturbed might sleep.

He went on board and silently lay down,

While all the rowers in due order took

Their seats upon the benches. Loosing first

The hawser from the perforated rock,

They bent them to their task, and flung the brine

Up from the oar, while on the chieftain’s lids

Lighted a sweet and deep and quiet sleep,

Most like to death. As, smitten by the lash,

Four harnessed stallions spring on high and dart

Across the plain together; so the prow

Rose leaping forward, while behind it rolled

A huge dark billow of the roaring sea.

Safely and steadily the galley ran,

Nor could a falcon, swiftest of the birds,

Have kept beside it, with such speed it flew,

Bearing a hero who was like the gods

In wisdom, and whose sufferings in the wars

And voyages among the furious waves

Were great and many, though he slumbered now

In peace, forgetful of misfortunes past.
Now when that brightest star, the harbinger

Of Morning, daughter of the Dawn, arose,

The barque had passed the sea, and reached the isle.
A port there is in Ithaca, the haunt

Of Phorcys, Ancient of the Sea. Steep shores

Stretch inward toward each other, and roll back

The mighty surges which the hoarse winds hurl

Against them from the ocean, while within

Ships ride without their hawsers when they once

Have passed the haven’s mouth. An olive-tree

With spreading branches at the farther end

Of that fair haven stands, and overbrows

A pleasant shady grotto of the nymphs

Called Naiads. Cups and jars of stone are ranged

Within, and bees lay up their honey there.

There from their spindles wrought of stone the nymphs

Weave their sea-purple robes, which all behold

With wonder; there are ever-flowing springs.

Two are the entrances: one toward the north

By which men enter; but a holier one

Looks toward the south, nor ever mortal foot

May enter there. By that way pass the gods.
They touched the land, for well they knew the spot.

The galley, urged so strongly by the arms

Of those who plied the oar, ran up the beach

Quite half her length. And then the crew came forth

From the good ship, and first they lifted out

Ulysses with the linen and rich folds

Of tapestry, and laid him on the sands

In a deep slumber. Then they also took

The presents from the hold, which, as he left

Their isle, the princes of Phaeacia gave

By counsel of wise Pallas. These they piled

Close to the olive-tree, without the way,

That none, in passing, ere Ulysses woke,

Might do their owner wrong. Then homeward sailed

The crew; but Neptune, who could not forge

The threats which he had uttered long before

Against the godlike chief Ulysses, thus

Sought to explore the will of Jupiter:—
“O Father Jove! I shall no more be held

In honor with the gods, since mortal men,

The people of Phaeacia, though their race

Is of my lineage, do not honor me.

I meant Ulysses should not reach his home

Save with much suffering, though I never thought

To hinder his return, for thou hadst given

Thy promise and thy nod that it should be.

Yet these Phaeacians, in a gallant barque,

Have borne him o’er the deep, and while he slept,

Have laid him down in Ithaca, and given

Large gifts, abundant store of brass and gold,

And woven work, more than he could have brought

From captured Ilium, if he had returned

Safely, with all his portion of the spoil.”
Then cloud-compelling Jupiter replied:

“Earth-shaker, ruler of a mighty realm!

What hast thou said? The gods deny thee not

Due honor; perilous it were for them

To show contempt for one who stands in age

And might above them all. But if among

The sons of men be one who puts such trust

In his own strength as not to honor thee,

Do as seems good to thee, and as thou wilt.”
Promptly the god who shakes the shores replied;

“What thou dost bid me I would do at once,

But that I fear and would avoid thy wrath.

I would destroy that fair Phaeacian barque

In its return across the misty sea

From bearing home Ulysses, that no more

May the Phaeacians lend an escort thus

To wandering men, and I would also cause

A lofty mount to rise and hide their town.”
Then spake again the Cloud-compeller Jove:

“Thus were it best, my brother: when the crowd

Of citizens already see the ship

Approaching, then transform it to a rock

In semblance of a galley, that they all

May gaze in wonder; thus wilt thou have caused

A lofty mount to stand before their town.”
 This when the shaker of the shores had heard,

He flew to Scheria, the Phaeacian isle,

And stood, until that galley, having crossed

The sea, came swiftly scudding. He drew near

And smote it with his open palm, and made

The ship a rock, fast rooted in the bed

Of the deep sea, and then he went his way.
 Then winged words were spoken in that throng

Of the Phaeacians, wielders of long oars,

And far renowned in feats of seamanship.

And, looking on each other, thus they said:—
 “Ha! what has stayed our good ship on the sea?

This moment we beheld her hastening home.”

’Twas thus they talked, unweeting of the cause.

But then Alcinoüs to the assembly said:—
“Yes! now I call to mind the ancient words

Of prophecy—my father’s—who was wont

To say that Neptune sorely is displeased

That we should give to every man who comes

Safe escort to his home. In coming times—

Such was my father’s prophecy—the god

Would yet destroy a well-appointed barque

Of the Phaeacians on the misty deep

Returning from an escort, and would cause

A lofty mount to stand before our town.

So prophesied the aged man; his words

Are here fulfilled. Now do as I appoint,

And let us all obey. Henceforth refrain

From bearing to their homes the strangers thrown

Upon our coast; and let us sacrifice

To Neptune twelve choice bullocks of the herd,

That he may pity us, nor hide our town

With a huge mountain from the sight of men.”
He spake, and they were awed and straightway brought

The bullocks for the sacrifice. So prayed

To sovereign Neptune the Phaeacian chiefs

And princes, standing round the altar-fires.
Now woke the great Ulysses from his sleep

In his own land, and yet he knew it not.

Long had he been away, and Pallas now,

The goddess-child of Jove, had cast a mist

Around him, that he might not yet be known

To others, and that she might tell him first

What he should learn; nor even might his wife,

Nor friends, nor people, know of his return,

Ere he avenged upon the suitor crew

His wrongs, and therefore all things wore to him

Another look—the footways stretching far,

The bights where ships were moored, the towering rocks,

And spreading trees. He rose and stood upright,

And gazed upon his native coast and wept,

And smote his thigh, and said in bitter grief:—
"Ah me! what region am I in, among

What people? lawless, cruel, and unjust?

Or are they hospitable men, who fear

The gods? And where shall I bestow these goods,

And whither go myself? Would that they all

Were still with the Phaeacians, and that I

Had found some other great and mighty king

Kindly to welcome me, and send me back

To my own land. I know not where to place

These treasures, and I must not leave them here,

Lest others come and seize them as a spoil.

Nay, these Phaeacian chiefs and counsellors

Were not, in all things, either wise or just.

They gave their word to land me on the coast

Of pleasant Ithaca, and have not kept

Their promise. O, may Jove avenge this wrong!

He who protects the suppliant, who beholds

All men with equal eye, and punishes

The guilty. Now will I review my stores

And number them again, that I may see

If those who left me here have taken aught.”
Thus having said, he numbered all his gifts—

Beautiful tripods, cauldrons, works of gold,

And gorgeous woven raiment; none of these

Were wanting. Then he pined to see again

His native isle, and slowly paced the beach

Of the loud sea, lamenting bitterly.

There Pallas came to meet him in the shape

Of a young shepherd, delicately formed,

As are the sons of kings. A mantle lay

Upon her shoulder in rich folds; her feet

Shone in their sandals: in her hand she bore

A javelin. As Ulysses saw, his heart

Was glad within him, and he hastened on,

And thus accosted her with winged words:—

“Fair youth, who art the first whom I have met

Upon this shore, I bid thee hail, and hope

Thou meetest me with no unkind intent.

Protect what thou beholdest here and me;

I make my suit to thee as to a god,

And come to thy dear knees. And tell, I pray,

That I may know the truth, what land is this?

What people? who the dwellers? may it be

A pleasant isle, or is it but the shore

Of fruitful mainland shelving to the sea?”

And then the goddess, blue-eyed Pallas, said:

“Of simple mind art thou, unless perchance

Thou comest from afar, if thou dost ask

What country this may be. It is not quite

A nameless region; many know it well

Of those who dwell beneath the rising sun,

And those, behind, in Evening’s dusky realm.

Rugged it is, and suited ill to steeds,

Yet barren it is not, though level grounds

Are none within its borders. It is rich

In corn and wine, for seasonable rains

And dews refresh its soil. Large flocks of goats

And herds of beeves are pastured here; all kinds

Of trees are in its forests, and its springs

Are never dry. The fame of Ithaca,

Stranger, has travelled to the Trojan coast,

Though that, I hear, lies far away from Greece.”
She spake; Ulysses, the great sufferer,

Rejoiced to be in his own land, whose name

Pallas, the child of aegis-bearing Jove,

Had just now uttered. Then with winged words

He spake, but not the truth; his artful speech

Put that aside, forever in his breast

The power of shrewd invention was awake:—
"In the broad fields of Crete, that lie far off

Beyond the sea, I heard of Ithaca,

To which I now am come with these my goods.

I left as many for my sons and fled,

For I had slain Orsilochus, the fleet

Of foot, the dear son of Idomeneus,

Who overcame by swiftness in the race

The foremost runners in the realm of Crete.

He sought to rob me wholly of my share

Of Trojan spoil, for which I had endured

Hardships in war with heroes, and at sea

Among the angry waves. The cause was this:

I would not in the siege of Troy submit

To serve his father, but, apart from him,

I led a troop, companions of my own.

The youth returning from the fields I met,

And smote him with the spear—for near the way

I lay in ambush with a single friend.

A night exceeding dark was in the sky;

No human eye beheld, nor did he know

Who took his life. When I had slain him thus

With the sharp spear I hastened to a ship

Of the Phoenicians, and besought their aid,

And gave them large reward, and bade them steer

To Pylos, bearing me, and leave me there,

Or where the Epeians hold the hallowed coast

Of Elis. But the force of adverse winds

Drove them unwilling thence; they meant no fraud.

We wandered hither, just at night we came;

And rowing hard, the seamen brought their ship

Within the port. No word was said of food,

Though great our need. All disembarked in haste

And lay upon the shore. Deep was the sleep

That stole upon my weary limbs. The men

Took from the hold my goods, and, bearing them

To where I slumbered on the sand, set sail

For populous Sidonia, leaving me

Here quite alone with sorrow in my heart."
He spake; the blue-eyed goddess, Pallas, smiled,

And touched the chief caressingly. She seemed

A beautiful and stately woman now,

Such as are skilled in works of rare device,

And thus she said to him in winged words:—
"Full shrewd were he, a master of deceit,

Who should surpass thee in the ways of craft,

Even though he were a god—thou unabashed

And prompt with shifts, and measureless in wiles!

Thou canst not even in thine own land refrain

From artful figments and misleading words,

As thou hast practised from thy birth. But now

Speak we of other matters, for we both

Are skilled in stratagem. Thou art the first

Of living men in counsel and in speech,

And I am famed for foresight and for craft

Among the immortals. Dost thou not yet know

Pallas Athenè, child of Jove, whose aid

Is present to defend thee in all time

Of peril, and but lately gained for thee

The favor of the whole Phaeacian race?

And hither am I come to frame for thee

Wise counsels, and to hide away the stores

Given by the opulent Phaeacian chiefs

At thy departure. I shall also tell

What thou must yet endure beneath the roof

Of thine own palace, by the will of fate.

Yet bear it bravely, since thou must, nor speak

To any man or woman of thyself

And of thy wandering hither, but submit

To many things that grieve thee, silently,

And bear indignities from violent men.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, thus rejoined:

“O goddess, it is hard for mortal man

To know thee when he meets thee, though his sight

Be of the sharpest, for thou puttest on

At pleasure any form. Yet this I know,

That thou wert kind to me when we, the sons

Of Greece, were warring in the realm of Troy.

But when we had o’erthrown the lofty town

Of Priam, and embarked, and when some god

Had scattered the Achaians, after that,

Daughter of Jove, I never saw thee more,

Never perceived thee entering my barque

And guarding me from danger—but I roamed

Ever from place to place, my heart weighed down

By sorrow, till the gods delivered me,

And till thy counsels in the opulent realm

Of the Phaeacians brought my courage back,

And thou thyself didst guide me to the town.

And now in thy great father’s name I pray—

For yet I cannot think that I am come

To pleasant Ithaca, but have been thrown

Upon some other coast, and fear that thou

Art jesting with me, and hast spoken thus

But to deceive me—tell me, is it true

That I am in my own beloved land?”
And then the goddess, blue-eyed Pallas, said:

“Such ever are thy thoughts, and therefore I

Must not forsake thee in thy need. I know

How prompt thy speech, how quick thy thought, how shrewd

Thy judgment. If another man had come

From such long wanderings, he had flown at once

Delighted to his children and his wife

In his own home. But thou desirest not

To ask or hear of them till thou hast put

Thy consort to the trial of her truth—

Her who now sits within thy halls and waits

In vain for thee, and in perpetual grief

And weeping wears her nights and days away.

I never doubted—well, in truth, I knew

That thou, with all thy comrades lost, wouldst reach

Thy country, but I dreaded to withstand

My father’s brother Neptune, who was wroth,

And fiercely wroth, for that thou hadst deprived

His well-beloved son of sight. But now

Attend, and I will show thee Ithaca

By certain tokens; mark them and believe.

The port of Phorcys, Ancient of the Deep,

Is here; and there the spreading olive-tree,

Just at the haven’s head; and, close beside,

The cool dark grotto, sacred to the nymphs

Called Naiads—a wide-vaulted cave where once

Thou earnest oft with chosen hecatombs,

An offering to the nymphs—and here thou seest

The mountain Neritus with all his woods.”
So spake the goddess, and dispersed the mist,

And all the scene appeared. Ulysses saw

Well pleased, rejoicing in his own dear land,

And, stooping, kissed the bountiful earth, and raised

His hands, and thus addressed the nymphs in prayer:—

“Nymphs, Naiads, born to Jove, I did not hope

To be with you again. With cheerful prayers

I now salute you. We shall bring you soon

Our offerings, as of yore, if graciously

Jove’s daughter, huntress-queen, shall grant me yet

To live, and bless my well-beloved son.”
And then the goddess, blue-eyed Pallas, said:

“Be of good cheer, and let no anxious thought

Disturb thy mind. Let us bestir ourselves

To hide away the treasures thou hast brought

Within this hallowed grot in some recess

Where they may lie in safety; afterward

Will we take counsel what should next be done.”
The goddess said these words, and took her way

Into the shadowy cavern, spying out

Its hiding-places; while Ulysses brought

The treasures thither in his arms—the gold,

The enduring brass, the raiment nobly wrought—

Which the Phaeacians gave him. These they laid

Together in due order; Pallas then,

The daughter of the Aegis-bearer Jove,

Closed up the opening with a massive rock.

Then, sitting by the sacred olive-tree,

They plotted to destroy the haughty crew

Of suitors, and the blue-eyed Pallas said:—
“O nobly born, and versed in many wiles,

Son of Laertes! now the hour is come

To think how thou shalt lay avenging hands

Upon the shameless crew who, in thy house,

For three years past have made themselves its lords,

And wooed thy noble wife and brought her gifts,

While, pining still for thy return, she gave

Hopes to each suitor, and by messages

Made promises to all, though cherishing

A different purpose in her secret heart.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her:

“Ah me, I should have perished utterly,

By such an evil fate as overtook

Atrides Agamemnon, in the halls

Of my own palace, but for thee, whose words,

O goddess, have revealed what I should know.

Now counsel me how I may be avenged.

Be ever by my side, and strengthen me

With courage, as thou didst when we o’erthrew

The towery crest of Ilium. Would thou wert

Still my ally, as then! I would engage,

O blue-eyed Pallas, with three hundred foes,

If thou, dread goddess, wouldst but counsel me.”
And then the blue-eyed Pallas spake again:

“I will be present with thee. When we once

Begin the work, thou shalt not leave my sight;

And many a haughty suitor with his blood

And brains shall stain thy spacious palace floor.

Now will I change thine aspect, so that none

Shall know thee. I will wither thy fair skin,

And it shall hang on crooked limbs; thy locks

Of auburn I will cause to fall away,

And round thee fling a cloak which all shall see

With loathing. I will make thy lustrous eyes

Dull to the sight, and thus shalt thou appear

A squalid wretch to all the suitor train,

And to thy wife, and to the son whom thou

Didst leave within thy palace. Then at first

Repair thou to the herdsman, him who keeps

Thy swine; for he is loyal, and he loves

Thy son and the discreet Penelope.

There wilt thou find him as he tends his swine,

That find their pasturage beside the rock

Of Corax, and by Arethusa’s fount.

On nourishing acorns they are fed, and drink

The dark clear water, whence the flesh of swine

Is fattened. There remain, and carefully

Inquire of all that thou wouldst know, while I,

Taking my way to Sparta, the abode

Of lovely women, call Telemachus,

Thy son, Ulysses, who hath visited

King Menelaus in his broad domain,

To learn if haply thou art living yet.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her:

“Why didst not thou, to whom all things are known,

Tell him concerning me? Must he too roam

And suffer on the barren deep, and leave

To others his estates, to be their spoil?”
And then the blue-eyed goddess spake again:

“Let not that thought distress thee. It was I

Who sent him thither, that he might deserve

The praise of men. No evil meets him there;

But in the halls of Atreus’ son he sits,

Safe mid the abounding luxuries. ’Tis true

That even now the suitors lie in wait,

In their black ship, to slay him ere he reach

His native land; but that will hardly be

Before the earth shall cover many a one

Of the proud suitors who consume thy wealth.”
So Pallas spake, and touched him with her wand,

And caused the blooming skin to shrivel up

On his slow limbs, and the fair hair to fall,

And with an old man’s wrinkles covered all

His frame, and dimmed his lately glorious eyes.

Another garb she gave—a squalid vest;

A ragged, dirty cloak, all stained with smoke;

And over all the huge hide of a stag,

From which the hair was worn. A staff, beside,

She gave, and shabby scrip with many a rent,

Tied with a twisted thong. This said and done,

They parted; and the goddess flew to seek

Telemachus in Sparta’s sacred town.

Book XIV

Meeting of Ulysses and Eumaeus

Hospitable reception by Eumaeus of Ulysses in the disguise of a beggar—His feigned account of himself—His promise that Ulysses shall return—Supper in the lodge of Eumaeus—Stratagem of Ulysses to procure a cloak for the night.

Then from the haven up the rugged path

Ulysses went among the woody heights.

He sought the spot where Pallas bade him meet

The noble swineherd, who of all that served

The great Ulysses chiefly had in charge

To bring the day’s supplies. He found him there

Seated beneath the portico, before

His airy lodge, that might be seen from far,

Well built and spacious, standing by itself.

Eumaeus, while his lord was far away,

Had built it, though not bidden by the queen

Nor old Laertes, with the stones he drew

From quarries thither. Round it he had set

A hedge of thorns, encircling these with stakes

Close set and many, cloven from the heart

Of oak. Within that circuit he had made

Twelve sties, beside each other, for the swine

To lie in. Fifty wallowed in each sty,

All females; there they littered. But the males

Were fewer, and were kept without; and these

The suitor train made fewer every day,

Feeding upon them, for Eumaeus sent

Always the best of all his fatling herd.

These numbered twice nine score. Beside them slept

Four mastiffs, which the master swineherd fed,

Savage as wolves. Eumaeus to his feet

Was fitting sandals, which he carved and shaped

From a stained ox-hide, while the other hinds

Were gone on different errands—three to drive

The herds of swine—a fourth was sent to take

A fatling to the city, that the crew

Of arrogant suitors, having offered him

In sacrifice, might feast upon his flesh.
The loud-mouthed dogs that saw Ulysses come

Ran toward him, fiercely baying. He sat down

At once, through caution, letting fall his staff

Upon the ground, and would have suffered there

Unseemly harm, within his own domain,

But then the swineherd, following with quick steps,

Rushed through the vestibule, and dropped the hide.

He chid the dogs and, pelting them with stones,

Drave them asunder, and addressed the king:—
“O aged man, the mastiffs of the lodge

Had almost torn thee, and thou wouldst have cast

Bitter reproach upon me. Other griefs

And miseries the gods have made my lot.

Here sorrowfully sitting I lament

A godlike master, and for others tend

His fading swine; while, haply hungering

For bread, he wanders among alien men

In other kingdoms, if indeed he lives

And looks upon the sun. But follow me,

And come into the house, that there, refreshed

With food and wine, old man, thou mayst declare

Whence thou dost come and what thou hast endured.”
So the good swineherd spake, and led the way

Into the lodge, and bade his guest sit down,

And laid thick rushes for his seat, and spread

On these a wild goat’s shaggy hide to make

A soft and ample couch. Rejoiced to meet

So kind a welcome, thus Ulysses spake:—
“May Jupiter and all the deathless gods

Bestow on thee, my host, in recompense

Of this kind welcome, all thy heart’s desire!”
And then, Eumaeus, thou didst answer thus:

“My guest, it were not right to treat with scorn

A stranger, though he were of humbler sort

Than thou, for strangers and the poor are sent

By Jove; our gifts are small, though gladly given,

As it must ever be with those who serve

Young masters, whom they fear. The gods themselves

Prevent, no doubt, the safe return of him

Who loved me much, and would ere this have given

What a kind lord is wont to give his hind—

A house, a croft, the wife whom he has wooed,

Rewarding faithful services which God

Hath prospered, as he here hath prospered mine.

Thus would my master, had he here grown old,

Have recompensed my toils; but he is dead.

O that the house of Helen, for whose sake

So many fell, had perished utterly!

For he went forth at Agamemnon’s call,

Honoring the summons, and on Ilium’s coast,

Famed for its coursers, fought the sons of Troy.”

He spake, and girt his tunic round his loins,

And hastened to the sties in which the herds

Of swine were lying. Thence he took out two

And slaughtered them, and singed them, sliced the flesh,

And fixed it upon spits, and, when the whole

Was roasted, brought and placed it reeking hot,

Still on the spits and sprinkled with white meal,

Before Ulysses. Then he mingled wine

Of delicate flavors in a wooden bowl,

And opposite Ulysses sat him down,

And thus with kindly words bespake his guest:—

"Feast, stranger, on these porkers. We who serve

May feed on them; it is the suitor train

That banquet on the fatted swine—the men

Who neither fear heaven's anger nor are moved

By pity. The great gods are never pleased

With violent deeds; they honor equity

And justice. Even those who land as foes

And spoilers upon foreign shores, and bear

Away much plunder by the will of Jove,

Returning homeward with their laden barques,

Feel, brooding heavily upon their minds,

The fear of vengeance. But these suitors know—

For haply they have heard some god declare—

That he, the king, is dead; they neither make

Their suit with decency, nor will withdraw

To their own homes, but at their ease devour

His substance with large waste, and never spare.

Of all the days and nights which Jupiter

Gives to mankind is none when they require

A single victim only, or but two,

For sacrifice, and lavishly they drain

His wine-jars. Once large revenues were his.

No hero on the dark-soiled continent

Nor in the isle of Ithaca possessed

Such wealth as he, nor even twenty men

Together. Hear me while I give the amount.

Twelve herds of kine that on the mainland graze

Are his, as many flocks of sheep, of swine

As many droves; as many flocks of goats

Are tended there by strangers, and by hinds,

His servants. Here moreover, in the fields

Beyond us, graze eleven numerous flocks

Of goats, attended by his trusty men,

Each one of whom brings daily home a goat,

The finest of the fatlings. I meantime

Am keeper of these swine, and from the drove

I choose and to the palace send the best.”
So spake the swineherd, while Ulysses ate

The flesh with eager appetite, and drank

The wine in silence, meditating woe

To all the suitors. When the meal was o’er,

And he was strengthened by the food, his host

Filled up with wine the cup from which he drank.

And gave it to Ulysses, who, well pleased,

Received it, and with winged words replied:—
“What rich and mighty chief was he, my friend,

Of whom thou speakest, and who purchased thee?

Thou sayest that he died to swell the fame

Of Agamemnon. Tell his name, for I

Perchance know somewhat of him. Jupiter

And the great gods know whether I have seen

The man, and have some tidings for thy ear;

For I have wandered over many lands."
And then again the noble swineherd spake:

"O aged man, no wanderer who should bring

News of Ulysses e'er would win his wife

And son to heed the tale. For roving men,

In need of hospitality, are prone

To falsehood, and will never speak the truth.

The vagabond who comes to Ithaca

Goes straightway to my mistress with his lies.

Kindly she welcomes him, and cherishes

And questions him, while tears abundantly

Fall from her lids—such tears as women shed

Whose lords have perished in a distant land.

Thou too, old man, perchance, couldst readily

Frame a like fable, if someone would give

A change of raiment for thy news—a cloak

And tunic. But the dogs and fowls of air

Have doubtless fed upon the frame from which

The life has passed, and torn from off his bones

The skin, or fishes of the deep have preyed

Upon it, and his bones upon the shore

Lie whelmed in sand. So is he lost to us,

And sorrow is the lot of all his friends,

Mine most of all; for nowhere shall I find

So kind a master, though I were to come

Into my father’s and my mother’s house,

Where I was born and reared. Nor do I pine

So much to look on them with my own eyes,

And in my place of birth, as I lament

Ulysses lost. Though he be far away,

Yet must I ever speak, O stranger guest,

His name with reverence, for exceedingly

He loved me and most kindly cared for me;

And though he is to be with us no more,

I hold him as an elder brother still."
Ulysses, the great sufferer, thus replied:

"Since then, my friend, thou dost not say nor think

That he will come again, nor wilt believe

My words, I now repeat, but with an oath,

Ulysses will return. Let this reward

Be given for my good news: the very hour

When he once more is in his house, bestow

On me a comely change of raiment—cloak

And tunic—nor will I accept the gift,

Though great my need, until he comes again.

For as the gates of hell do I detest

The man who, tempted by his poverty,

Deceives with lying words. Now Jupiter

Bear witness, and this hospitable board

And hearth of good Ulysses where I sit,

That all which I foretell will come to pass.

This very year Ulysses will return.

He, when this month goes out, and as the next

Is entering, will be here in his domain,

To be avenged on those, whoe’er they be,

That dare insult his wife and noble son.”
And then, Eumaeus, thou didst answer thus:

“Old man, I shall not give thee that reward,

For never will Ulysses come again

To his own palace. Drink thy wine in peace,

And let us give our thoughts to other things.

Remind me not of this again; my heart

Grows heavy in my bosom when I hear

My honored master named. But leave the oath

Unsworn, and may Ulysses come, as we

Earnestly wish—I and Penelope,

And old Laertes, and the godlike youth

Telemachus. And then, again, I bear

Perpetual sorrow for Telemachus,

My master’s son, to whom the gods had given

A generous growth like that of some young plant,

And who, I hoped, would prove no less in worth

Than his own father, and of eminent gifts

In form and mind. Some god, perchance some man,

Hath caused that mind to lose its equal poise,

And he is gone to Pylos the divine

For tidings of his father. Meanwhile here

The arrogant suitors plan to lie in wait

For him as he returns, that utterly

The stock of great Arcesius from our isle

May perish, and its name be heard no more.

Speak we no more of him, be it his fate

To fall or flee; but O, may Saturn’s son

Protect him with his arm! And now, old man,

Relate, I pray, thy fortunes; tell me true,

That I may know who thou mayst be, and whence

Thou earnest, where thy city lies, and who

Thy parents were, what galley landed thee

Upon our coast, and how the manners

Brought thee to Ithaca, and of what race

They claim to be; for I may well suppose

Thou hast not come to Ithaca on foot."
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered him:

"I will tell all and truly. Yet if here

Were store of food, and wine for many days,

And we might feast at ease within thy lodge

While other labored, I should hardly end

In a whole year the history of the woes

Which I have borne, and of the many toils

Which it hath pleased the gods to lay on me.
“It is my boast that I am of the race

Who dwell in spacious Crete, a rich man’s son,

Within whose palace many other sons

Were born and reared, the offspring of his wife;

But me a purchased mother whom he made

His concubine brought forth to him. And yet

Castor Hylacides, from whom I sprang,

Held me in equal favor with the rest;

And he himself was honored like a god

Among the Cretan people, for his wealth

And for his prosperous life and gallant sons.

But fate and death o’ertook and bore him down

To Pluto’s realm, and his magnanimous sons

Divided his large riches, casting lots.

Small was the portion they assigned to me;

They gave a dwelling, but my valor won

A bride, the daughter of a wealthy house—

For I was not an idler, nor in war

A coward; but all that is with the past.

And thou, who seest the stubble now, mayst guess

What was the harvest, ere calamities

Had come so thick upon me. Once did Mars

And Pallas lend me courage, and the power

To break through ranks of armed men. Whene’er

I formed an ambush of the bravest chiefs,

And planned destruction to the enemy,

My noble spirit never set the fear

Of death before me; I was ever first

To spring upon the foes, and with my spear

To smite them as they turned their steps to flee.

Such was I once in war; to till the fields

I never liked, nor yet the household cares

By which illustrious sons are reared. I loved

Ships well appointed, combats, polished spears

And arrows. Things that others hold in dread

Were my delight; some god inclined to them

My mind—so true it is that different men

Rejoice in different labors. Ere the sons

Of Greece embarked for Troy, I served in war

Nine times as leader against foreign foes,

With troops and galleys under me, and then

I prospered; from the mass of spoil I chose

The things that pleased me, and obtained by lot

Still other treasures. Thus my household grew

In riches, and I was revered and great

Among the Cretans. When all-seeing Jove

Decreed the unhappy voyage to the coast

Of Troy, they made the great Idomeneus

And me commanders of the fleet. No power

Had we—the public clamor was so fierce—

To put the charge aside. Nine years we warred—

We sons of Greece—and in the tenth laid waste

The city of Priam, and embarked for home.

Our fleets were scattered by the gods. For me

Did all-disposing Jupiter ordain

A wretched lot. But one short month I dwelt

Happy among my children, with the wife

Wedded to me in youth, and my large wealth.

And then I planned a voyage to the coast

Of Egypt, with a gallant fleet, and men

Of godlike valor. I equipped nine ships,

And quickly came the people to embark.

Six days on shore my comrades banqueted,

And many a victim for the sacrifice

And for the feast I gave; the seventh we sailed

From Crete’s broad isle before a favoring wind

That blew from the clear north, and easily

We floated on as down a stream. No ship

Was harmed upon its way; in health and ease

We sat, the wind and helmsmen guiding us,

And came upon the fifth day to the land

Of Egypt, watered by its noble streams.

I bade my comrades keep beside our ships

Upon the strand, and watch them well. I placed

Sentries upon the Heights. Yet confident

In their own strength, and rashly giving way

To greed, my comrades ravaged the fair fields

Of the Egyptians, slew them, and bore off

Their wives and little ones. The rumor reached

The city soon; the people heard the alarm

And came together. With the early morn

All the great plain was thronged with horse and foot,

And gleamed with brass; while Jove, the Thunderer, sent

A deadly fear into our ranks, where none

Dared face the foe. On every side was death.

The Egyptians hewed down many with the sword,

And some they led away alive to toil

For them in slavery. To my mind there came

A thought, inspired by Jove; yet I could wish

That I had met my fate, and perished there

In Egypt, such have been my sorrows since.

I took the well-wrought helmet from my head,

And from my shoulders dropped the shield, and flung

The javelin from my hand, and went to meet

The monarch in his chariot, clasped his knees

And kissed them. He was moved to pity me,

And spared me. In his car he seated me,

And bore me weeping home. Though many rushed

At me with ashen spears, to thrust me through—

For furious was their anger—he forbade.

He feared the wrath of Jove, the stranger’s friend

And foe of wrong. Seven years I dwelt among

The Egyptians, and I gathered in their land

Large wealth, for all were liberal of their gifts.

But with the eighth revolving year there came

A shrewd Phoenician, deep in guile, whose craft

Had wrought much wrong to many. With smooth words

This man persuaded me to go with him

Into Phoenicia, where his dwelling lay

And his possessions. With him I abode

For one whole year; and when its months and days

Were ended, and another year began,

He put me in a ship to cross the sea

To Lybia. He had framed a treacherous plot,

By making half the vessel’s cargo mine,

To lure me thither, and to sell me there

For a large price. I went on board constrained,

But with misgivings. Under a clear sky,

With favoring breezes from the north, we ran

O’er the mid sea, beyond the isle of Crete.

When we had left the isle, and saw no land

But only sky and sea, Saturnius bade

A black cloud gather o’er our roomy ship.

The sea grew dark below. On high the God

Thundered again and yet again, and sent

A bolt into our ship, which, as it felt

The lightning, reeled and shuddered, and was filled

With sulphur-smoke. The seamen from the deck

Fell headlong, and were tossed upon the waves

Like seamews round our galley, which the God

Forbade them to regain. But Jupiter

Gave to my hands, bewildered as I was,

Our dark-prowed galley’s mast, unbroken yet,

That by its aid I might escape. I wound

My arms around it, and the raging winds

Swept me along. Nine days they bore me on,

And on the tenth dark night a mighty surge

Drifted me, as it rolled, upon the coast

Of the Thesprotians. There the hero-king

Of the Thesprotians freely sheltered me

And fed me; for his well-beloved son

Had found me overcome with cold and toil,

And took me by the hand and raised me up,

And led me to his father’s house, and gave

Seemly attire, a tunic and a cloak.
"There heard I of Ulysses. Pheidon told

How he received him as a guest and friend,

When on his homeward voyage. Then he showed

The wealth Ulysses gathered, brass and gold,

And steel divinely wrought. That store might serve

To feed, until ten generations pass,

Another household. But the chief himself,

So Pheidon said, was at Dodona then;

For he had gone to hear from the tall oak

Of Jupiter the counsel of the God,

Whether to land in opulent Ithaca,

After long years of absence, openly

Or in disguise. The monarch took an oath

In his own palace, pouring to the gods

Their wine, that even then the ship was launched,

And the crew ready to attend him home.

But me he first dismissed. There was a ship

Of the Thesprotians just about to make

A voyage to Dulichium, rich in fields

Of wheat. He bade them take me faithfully

To King Acastus; but another thought

Found favor with the crew, a wicked scheme

To plunge me deeper in calamity.

And when our ship had sailed away from land,

They hastened to prepare me for a life

Of slavery. They took my garments off,

Mantle and cloak, and clothed me in a vest

And cloak, the very rags which thou dost see.

The evening brought them to the pleasant fields

Of Ithaca. They bound me in the ship

With a strong cord, and disembarked, and took

A hasty meal upon the ocean-side;

Easily did the gods unbind my limbs.

I wrapped a tattered cloth about my head,

And, slipping from the polished rudder, brought

My bosom to the sea, and spread my hands,

And swam away. I soon had left the crew

At distance; then I turned and climbed the shore,

Where it was dark with forest, and lay close

Within its shelter, while they wandered round

And grumbled, but they ventured not to pass

Into the island farther on their search.

They turned, and went on board their roomy barque.

Thus mightily the gods delivered me,

And they have brought me to a wise man’s lodge,

And now I see it is my lot to live.”
Then thou, Eumaeus, thus didst make reply:

“Unhappy stranger, thou hast deeply moved

My heart in telling all that thou hast borne,

And all thy wanderings. Yet are some things wrong.

Thou hast not spoken of Ulysses well.

Why should a man like thee invent such tales,

So purposeless? Of one thing I am sure

Concerning his return—the gods all hate

My master, since they neither caused his death

In the great war of Troy, nor, when the war

Was over, suffered him to die at home,

And in the arms of those who loved him most;

For then would all the Greeks have reared to him

A monument, and mighty would have been

The heritage of glory for his son;

But now ingloriously the harpy brood

Have torn him. I, apart among my swine,

Go never to the town, unless, perchance,

The sage Penelope requires me there,

When someone comes with tidings from abroad.

Then those who sorrow for their absent lord,

And those who waste his substance, both inquire

News of the king. For me, it suits me not

Ever to ask for tidings, since the day

When an Aetolian with a flattering tale

Deceived me. He had slain a man, and came

Wandering in many lands to my abode,

And kindly I received him. He had seen,

He said, my master with Idomeneus,

Among the Cretans, putting in repair

His galleys, shattered by a furious storm,

And in the summer time he would be here,

Or in the autumn, bringing ample wealth,

And his brave comrades with him. Seek not then,

O aged sufferer, whom some deity

Has guided hither, to amuse my grief

With fictions that may bring back pleasant thoughts,

Since not for them I minister to thee

And love thee, but through reverence for Jove—

The stranger’s friend—and pity for thyself.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, spake again:

“Within thy bosom thou dost bear a heart

Of slow belief, since not the oath I take

Persuades or even moves thee. Make we now

A covenant, and let the gods who dwell

Upon Olympus be our witnesses,

That when thy master comes to this abode

Thou wilt bestow a tunic and a cloak,

And wilt despatch me clothed in seemly garb

Hence to Dulichium, whither I would go.

But if he come not as I have foretold,

Then charge thy servants that they cast me down

From a tall rock, that never beggar more

May think to cozen thee with lying tales.”
The noble swineherd answered him and said:

“Great would my honor be, and I should gain

Great praise for worth among the sons of men,

If, having welcomed thee into my lodge

And spread the board for thee, I took thy life;

Then boldly might I pray to Saturn’s son.

But see, the supper hour is come, and soon

Will my companions be within, and they

Will make a liberal banquet ready here.”
Thus did the twain confer. Now came the swine,

And those who tended them. They penned the herd

In their enclosure, and a din of cries

Rose as they entered. Then the swineherd called

To his companions: “Bring the best of all,

And we will make an offering for the sake

Of one who comes from far and is my guest.

And we will also feast, for we have toiled

Long time in tendance of this white-toothed herd,

And others waste, unpunished, what we rear.”
So spake he, and began to cleave the wood

With the sharp steel; the others chose and brought

A fatted brawn, and placed him on the hearth.

Nor was the swineherd careless of the rites

Due to the gods—such was his piety.

From off the white-toothed victim first he sheared

The bristles of the forehead, casting them

Into the flames, and prayed to all the gods

For wise Ulysses and his safe return.

Next, with a fragment of the oaken trunk

Which he had just then cleft, he smote the boar,

And the life left it. Then they cut its throat,

And, having singed it, quickly hewed the parts

Asunder, while the swineherd took and laid,

On the rich fat, raw portions from the limbs

For sacrifice, and other parts he cast,

Sprinkled with flour of meal, into the flames;

The rest they duly sliced and fixed on spits,

And roasted carefully, and drew it back,

And heaped it on the board. And now arose

The swineherd to divide the whole, for well

He knew the duty of a host. He made

Seven parts; and one he offered to the Nymphs,

To Hermes, son of Maia, one, and both

With prayer; the rest he set before the guests,

But, honoring Ulysses, gave to him

The white-toothed victim’s ample chine. The king,

The wise Ulysses, was well pleased, and said:—

“Eumaeus, be thou ever dear to Jove

As to myself, since with thy benefits

Thou freely honorest such a one as I.”
And thou, Eumaeus, madest answer thus:

“Eat, venerable stranger, and enjoy

What is before us. At his pleasure God

Gives or withholds; his power is over all.”
He spake, and burned to the eternal gods

The firstlings, and poured out the dark red wine,

And to Ulysses, spoiler of walled towns,

Who sat beside the table, gave the cup.

Meantime to each Mesaulius brought the bread—

A servant whom Eumaeus, while his lord

Was far away, had taken for himself,

Without the order of Penelope

Or old Laertes; from the Taphian tribe

With his own goods he bought him. Now the guests

Put forth their hands and shared the ready feast;

And when their thirst and hunger were appeased

Mesaulius took the bread away, and all,

Satiate with food and wine, lay down to rest.
  Then came the darkness on, without a moon;

And Jupiter the whole night long sent down

The rain, and strong the showery west-wind blew.

And now to try the swineherd, if with all

His kindly ministrations to his guest

He yet would spare to him his cloak, or bid

Another do the like, Ulysses spake:—
  “Eumaeus, hearken thou, and all the rest,

Thy comrades, while I utter boastful words.

Wine makes me foolish, it can even cause

The wise to sing and laugh a silly laugh

And dance, and often to the lips it brings

Words that were better left unsaid. But since

I have begun to prattle, I will not

Keep back my thought. I would I were as young

And in the same full strength as when I formed

Part of an ambush near the walls of Troy.

The leaders were Ulysses, and the son

Of Atreus, Menelaus, with myself

The third, for they desired it. When we reached

The city and the lofty walls we lay

Couched in a marshy spot among the reeds

And thick-grown shrubs, with all our armor on.

’Twas an inclement night, and the north-wind

Blew bitter chill, the cold snow fell and lay

White like hoar frost; ice gathered on our shields.

The rest had cloaks and tunics, and they slept

At ease, their shoulders covered with their shields.

I only, when I joined the squadron, left

My cloak unwisely, for I had not thought

Of such fierce cold. I went but with my shield

And my embroidered girdle. When the night

Was in its later watches, and the stars

Were turning toward their set, I thus bespake

Ulysses near me, thrusting in his side

My elbow, and he listened readily:—
"'Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise!

Ulysses, I shall not be long among

The living; for I perish with the cold.

I have no cloak; some god misled my thought,

So that I brought one garment and no more,

And now I see there is no help for me.’
“I spake, and instantly his mind conceived

This stratagem—such was his readiness

In council and in battle—and he said

To me in a low voice: ‘Be silent now,

And let no others of the Achaians hear!’

And leaning on his elbow thus he spake:—
“‘Hear me, my friends: a dream has come from heaven

Into my sleep. Far from our ships we lie;

And now let someone haste to bear from us

This word to Agamemnon, Atreus’ son,

The shepherd of the people, that he send

More warriors to this ambush from the fleet.’
“He spake, and Thoas instantly arose—

Andraemon’s son—and threw his purple cloak

Aside, and hastened toward the fleet. I took

Gladly the garment he had left, and lay

Till Morning in her golden chariot came.

And now I would that I were young again,

And in the vigor of my prime, for then

Someone among the swineherds in the stalls

Would find, I think, a cloak for me, through love

And reverence of such a man; but now

They hold me in slight favor, dressed in rags.”
And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

“O aged man! we see no cause of blame

In thy recital, and of all thy words

Not one is unbecoming or inapt.

Thou shalt not lack for garments, nor aught else

That any suppliant in his poverty

Might hope for at our hands tonight. With morn

Gird thou thy tatters on again; for here

We have not many cloaks, nor many a change

Of raiment—only one for each of us.

But when the son of our Ulysses comes

Again, he will provide thee with a cloak

And tunic, and will send thee where thou wilt.”
He spake and rose, and made his guest a bed

Close to the hearth, and threw on it the skins

Of sheep and goats, and there Ulysses lay,

O’er whom the swineherd spread a thick large cloak,

Which he had often worn for a defence

When a wild winter storm was in the air.
Thus slept Ulysses with the young men near.

A couch within, and distant from his charge,

Pleased not the swineherd, who first armed himself,

And then went forth. Ulysses gladly saw

That while he was in distant lands his goods

Were watched so faithfully. Eumaeus hung

About his sturdy shoulders a sharp sword,

And wrapped a thick cloak round him, tempest-proof,

And took the hide of a huge pampered goat,

And a well-pointed javelin for defence

Both against dogs and men. So went he forth

To take his rest where lay the white-toothed swine,

Herded and slumbering underneath a rock,

Whose hollow fenced them from the keen north-wind.

Book XV

Return of Telemachus

Appearance of Pallas in a dream to Telemachus, warning him to return to Ithaca—His departure from Lacedaemon, and arrival at Pylos—Theoclymenus, an augur, taken on board by him at Pylos—The story of Eumaeus related by him to Ulysses—Arrival of Telemachus at the coast of Ithaca—The ship sent forward to the city, while Telemachus, having committed Theoclymenus to the care of his friend Piraeus, goes to the lodge of Eumaeus.

Then Pallas, hastening to the mighty realm

Of Lacedaemon, sought the illustrious son

Of great Ulysses, to remind the youth

Of home, and bid him think of his return.

She found Telemachus and Nestor’s son

Upon their couches in the portico

Of Menelaus, the renowned. Deep sleep

Held Nestor’s son; but to Telemachus

The welcome slumber came not, for his thoughts

Uneasily through all the quiet night

Dwelt on his father. Now beside his bed

The blue-eyed Pallas took her stand and spake:—
“Telemachus, it is no longer well

That thou shouldst wander from thy home, and leave

All thy possessions, and those arrogant men

That crowd thy halls. Beware, lest they devour

Thy substance utterly, dividing all

Among them, and this journey be for naught.

Make suit to Menelaus, great in war,

Quickly to send thee home, that thou mayst join

Thy blameless mother in thy halls; for now

Her father and her brothers counsel her

To wed Eurymachus, whose gifts exceed

Those of the other suitors, and besides

He offers a yet richer bridal dower.

It were not hard without thy leave to take

Wealth from a palace. What a wife will do

Thou knowest. ’Tis her pleasure to increase

The riches of the man whom she has wed.

Care of her former children has she none,

Nor memory of the husband whom she took

While yet a maid, and who is in his grave;

Of these she never speaks. Return thou, then,

And give thy goods in charge to one among

The handmaids of thy household who shall seem

The fittest for the trust, until the gods

Bring thee a noble wife. Another word

Have I for thee, and bear thou it in mind:

The chief among the suitors in the strait

Between the rugged Samos and the isle

Of Ithaca are lurking, in the hope

To slay thee on thy voyage home; but this

I think they cannot do before the earth

Hold many of the suitor-crew who make

Thy wealth a spoil. Steer thou thy gallant barque

Far from the isles; sail only in the night.

Some god, whoever it may be that keeps

Watch over thee, will send a prosperous gale.

When to the nearest shore of Ithaca

Thou comest in thy ship, let it go on,

With all thy comrades, to the town, while thou

Repairest to the keeper of thy swine,

Whose heart is faithful to thee. There remain

With him that night, and send him to the town

With tidings to the sage Penelope

That thou art come from Pylos and art safe.”
So having said, the goddess took her way

Up to the Olympian height. Telemachus

Touched with his heel and wakened Nestor’s son

From a soft slumber and bespake him thus:—
“Rise, Nestor’s son, Peisistratus, and bring

The firm-paced steeds and yoke them to the car,

And we will now set forth upon our way.”
And Nestor’s son, Peisistratus, replied:

“Telemachus, whatever be our haste,

It were not well in darkness to begin

Our journey, and the morn will soon be here.

Remain till Menelaus, Atreus’ son,

The hero mighty with the spear, shall come,

And bring his gifts, and place them in our car,

And send us on our way with kindly words.

Well does a guest remember all his days

The generous host who shows himself his friend.”
He spake, and quickly on her car of gold

Appeared the Morn. Then Menelaus came,

The great in battle, from his couch beside

The fair-haired Helen. When Telemachus

Knew of the king’s approach, the hero threw

In haste his tunic o’er his noble form,

And over his broad shoulders flung a cloak

Of ample folds. Then, going forth, the son

Of great Ulysses met the king and said:—
“Atrides Menelaus, loved of Jove

And sovereign of the people, send me hence,

I pray, to the dear country of my birth,

For earnestly I long to be at home.”
And Menelaus, great in war, replied:

“Telemachus, I will not keep thee long,

Since thou so much desirest to return.

I am displeased with him who as a host

Is lavish of his love, for he will hate

Beyond due measure; best it is to take

The middle way. It is alike a wrong

To thrust the unwilling stranger out of doors,

And to detain him when he longs to go.

While he is with us we should cherish him,

And, when he wishes, help him to depart.

Remain until I bring thee worthy gifts

And place them in thy chariot, that thine eyes

May look on them; and I will give command

That in the palace here the women spread

A liberal feast from stores that lie within.

But if, in turning from thy course, thou choose

To pass through Hellas and the midland tract

Of Argos, I will yoke my steeds and go

With thee, and show the cities thronged with men;

Nor will they send us empty-handed thence,

But bring us gifts which we may bear away—

Tripod, perchance, or cauldron wrought of brass,

Perchance a pair of mules or golden cup.”
Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn:

“Atrides Menelaus, loved of Jove

And sovereign of the people, rather far

Would I return to my own home; for there

Is no man left in charge of what is mine,

And I must go, lest, while I vainly seek

My father, I may perish, or may lose

Some valued treasure from my palace rooms.”
The valiant Menelaus heard, and bade

His wife and maidens spread without delay

A ready banquet from the stores within.

Then Eteöneus from his morning sleep,

Son of Boëtheus, came, for very near

His dwelling was. The sovereign bade him light

A fire and roast the flesh, and he obeyed.

And then into the fragrant treasure-room

Descended Menelaus, not alone;

Helen and Megapenthes went with him.

And when they came to where the treasures lay,

Atrides took a double goblet up,

And bade his son, young Megapenthes, bear

A silver beaker thence, while Helen stood

Beside the coffers where the embroidered robes

Wrought by her hands were laid. The glorious dame

Took one and brought it forth, most beautiful

In needlework, and amplest of them all.

The garment glittered like a star, and lay

Below the other robes. Then, passing through

The palace halls, they found Telemachus,

And thus the fair-haired Menelaus spake:—
"Telemachus, may Jove the Thunderer,

Husband of Juno, grant thee to return

According to thy wish! I give thee here

Of all the treasures which my house contains

The fairest and most precious. I present

A goblet all of silver, save the lips,

And they are bound with gold; it is the work

Of Vulcan. Phaedimus the hero, king

Of the Sidonians, gave it me when once

His palace sheltered me. He gave it me

At parting, and I now would have it thine."
Atrides spake, and gave into his hands

The double goblet. Megapenthes next

Before him set the shining beaker wrought

Of silver. Rosy Helen, holding up

The robe, drew near, and spake to him and said:—
"I also bring to thee, dear son, a gift,

The work of Helen's hands, which thou shalt keep,

In memory of her, until the day

Of thy desired espousals, when thy bride

Shall wear it. Let it in the meantime lie

Within thy halls, in thy dear mother’s care;

And mayst thou soon and happily arrive

At thy fair palace and thy native coast.”
So spake she, placing in his hands the robe.

He took it, and was glad. Peisistratus

Was moved with wonder as he saw, and laid

The presents in the car. The fair-haired king

Then led them to the hall, and seated them

On thrones and couches, where a maiden brought

Water in a fair golden ewer, and o’er

A silver basin poured it for their hands,

And near them set a table smoothly wrought.

The matron of the palace brought them bread

And many a delicate dish to please the taste

From stores within the house. Then to the board

Boëtheus’ son drew near and carved the meats,

And gave to each a portion, while the son

Of glorious Menelaus poured the wine.

The guests put forth their hands and shared the food

That lay prepared before them. When the calls

Of thirst and hunger ceased, Telemachus

And Nestor’s famous son brought forth and yoked

The steeds, and climbed into the sumptuous car,

And drove from out the echoing portico.

Atrides Menelaus, amber-haired,

Went forth with them, and, holding in his hand

A golden cup of generous wine, poured out

An offering for their voyage to the gods.

Before the steeds he took his stand, and first

Drank from the cup, and then bespake the guests:—
"Now fare ye well, young men, and when ye come

To Nestor, shepherd of the people, give

Greetings from me; for he was kind to me

As if he were a father, when the sons

Of Greece were warring in the realm of Troy."
Then spake in turn discreet Telemachus:

"Assuredly I shall relate to him,

As soon as I am with him, all that thou,

foster-child of Jove, hast bid me say;

And would to heaven I might as surely tell

Ulysses in his palace, when again

I come to Ithaca, how welcome thou

Hast made me here, and how I came away

With treasures rich and many from thy court.”
As thus he spake, an eagle to the right

Appeared, that, flying, bore a large white goose,

Clutched from the tame flock in the palace court;

And men and women ran the way he flew,

And shouted after him. Before the steeds

Of the young men, and still on the right hand,

The bird went sweeping on. They saw well pleased,

And every heart was gladdened. To the rest

Peisistratus, the son of Nestor, said:—
“Now tell me, Menelaus, loved of Jove,

Prince of the people! does the god who sends

This portent mean the sign for us or thee?”
He spake; and Menelaus, dear to Mars,

Paused, thinking how to answer him aright,

When thus the long-robed Helen interposed:—

“Listen to me, and I will prophesy

As the gods prompt me, and as I believe

The event will be. Just as this eagle came

From the wild hills, his birthplace and his haunt,

And seized and bore away the waterfowl

Reared near our halls, so will Ulysses come,

After much hardship and long wanderings,

To his own home, to be avenged: perchance

Already is at home, and meditates

An evil end to all the suitor crew.”
Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn:

“May Juno’s husband, Jove the Thunderer,

So order the event, and I will there

Make vows to thee as to a deity.”
He spake, and touched the coursers with the lash;

And through the city rapidly they went

And toward the plain, and all day long they shook

The yoke upon their necks. The sun went down:

The roads all lay in darkness as they came

To Pherae, and the house of Diodes,

Whose father was Orsilochus, and he

The offspring of Alpheius. There that night

They slept; their host was liberal of his cheer.

But when appeared the daughter of the Dawn,

The rosy-fingered Morn, they yoked the steeds

And climbed the sumptuous car, and drove afield

From underneath the echoing portico.

The son of Nestor plied the lash; the steeds

Flew not unwillingly, and quickly reached

The lofty citadel of Pylos. There

Telemachus bespake his comrade thus:—
“Wilt thou consent to do what I shall ask,

O son of Nestor? ’Tis our boast that we

Are friends because our fathers were; besides,

We are of equal age, and journeying thus

Has made our friendship firmer. Take me not,

O foster-child of Jove, beyond the spot

Where lies my galley, lest against my will

The aged Nestor should detain me here

Through kindness, when I needs must hasten home.”
He spake, and then the son of Nestor mused

How what his friend desired might best be done.

And this seemed wisest after careful thought:

He turned the chariot to the ship and shore,

And taking out the garments and the gold—

Beautiful gifts which Menelaus gave—

He put them in the galley's stern, and thus

Bespake Telemachus with winged words:—
"Embark in haste, and summon all thy crew

On board before I reach my home and tell

The aged king. I know how vehement

His temper is; he will not let thee go,

But hastening hither to enforce thy stay,

At Pylos, will not, I am sure, go back

Without thee; his displeasure will be great."
He spake, and toward the Pylian city turned

His steeds with flowing manes, and quickly reached

His home. Meantime Telemachus held forth

To his companions, thus exhorting them:—
"My friends, make ready all things in our ship

And mount the deck, for we must now set sail."

He spake, they hearkened and obeyed, and leaped
On board and manned the benches. While he thus
Was hastening his departure, offering prayer
And pouring wine to Pallas at the stern,
A stranger came, a seer, a fugitive
From Argos, where his hand had slain a man.
Melampus was his ancestor, who dwelt
Some time in Pylos, mother of fair flocks—
Rich, and inhabiting a sumptuous house
Among the Pylians. Afterward he joined
Another people, fleeing from his home
And from the mighty Neleus, haughtiest
Of living men, who, seizing his large wealth,
Held it a year by force. Melampus lay
Meantime within the house of Phylacus

Fast bound, and suffering greatly, both because

Of Neleus’ daughter, and of his own mind

Distempered by the unapproachable

Erinnys. Yet did he escape from death,

And drove the lowing herds to Phylace

And Pylos, and avenged his cruel wrong

On Neleus, carrying off his child to be

A consort for his brother. Then he came

Into the realm of Argos, famed for steeds;

For there it was decreed that he should dwell,

And rule o’er many of the Argive race.

And there he took a wife and built a house—

A lofty pile; and there to him were born Antiphates and Mantius, valiant men.

Antiphates was father of a son,

The brave Oïcleus, and to him was born

Amphioraüs, one of those whose voice

Rouses the nations. Aegis-bearing Jove

And Phoebus loved him with exceeding love;

Yet reached he not the threshold of old age,

But, through the treachery of his bribed wife,

Perished too soon at Thebes. To him were born

Two sons, Alcmaeon and Amphilochus.

Clytus and Polyphides were the sons

Of Mantius; but Aurora, she who fills

A golden chariot, bore away to heaven

Clytus for his great beauty, there to dwell

Among the immortals, while Apollo gave

To Polyphides of the noble mind

To be a prophet, first of living men,

Since now Amphiaraüs was no more.

His father had displeased him, and he went

To Hyperesia, where he dwelt, and there

Revealed to all what yet should come to pass.
It was his son who now approached; his name

Was Theoclymenus; he saw the prince

Telemachus, who stood beside the swift

Black ship, and, pouring a libation, prayed;

And thus he said to him in winged words:—
“My friend, whom here beside this barque I find

Making a pious offering, I entreat

Both by that offering and the deity,

And by thy life, and by the lives of these

Who follow thee, declare to me the truth,

And keep back naught of all that I inquire—

Who art thou, from what race of men, and where

Thy city lies, and who thy parents are.”
Then spake in turn discreet Telemachus:

“Stranger, to every point I answer thee.

I am by race a son of Ithaca,

My father was Ulysses when alive,

But he has died a miserable death;

Long years has he been absent, and I came

With my companions here, and this black ship,

To gather tidings of my father’s fate.”
Then said the godlike Theoclymenus:

“I too, like thee, am far away from home;

For I have slain a man of my own tribe,

And he had many brothers, many friends,

In Argos famed for steeds. Great is the power

Of those Achaians, and I flee from them

And the black doom of death, to be henceforth

A wanderer among men. O, shelter me

On board thy galley! I, a fugitive,

Implore thy mercy, lest they overtake

And slay me; they are surely on my track."
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

"If thou desire to come on board my ship,

I shall not hinder thee. Come with us then,

And take a friendly share in what we have."
So saying he received his brazen spear,

And laid it on the good ship's deck, and went

Himself on board, and, taking at the stern

His place, he seated Theoclymenus

Beside him. Then the mariners cast loose

The hawsers, and Telemachus gave forth

The order to prepare for sea. They heard

And eagerly obeyed; they raised the mast,

A pine-tree stem—and, bringing it to stand

In its deep socket, bound it there with cords,

And hoisted by their strongly twisted thongs

The ship’s white sails. The blue-eyed Pallas sent

A favorable and fresh-blowing wind,

That swept the sky to drive more speedily

The galley through the salt-sea waves. They came

To Cruni, and to Chalcis pleasantly

Watered by rivers. Now the sun went down;

Night closed around their way, but onward still

A favorable wind from Jupiter

Toward Pherae bore them, and the hallowed coast

Of Elis, where the Epeian race bear sway,

And then among the isles whose rocky peaks

Rise from the waters. Here Telemachus

Mused thoughtfully on what his fate might be—

To perish by the ambush or escape.
Meantime Ulysses and the swineherd sat

At meat within the lodge; the other men

Were at the board, and when the calls of thirst

And hunger ceased, Ulysses spake to try

The swineherd, whether he were bent to show

Yet further kindness, and entreat his stay,

Or whether he would send him to the town.
“Eumaeus, hearken thou, and all the rest.

Tomorrow ’tis my wish to go to town,

That I may beg, and be no charge to thee

And thy companions. Give me thy advice,

And send a trusty guide to show the way.

There will I roam the streets, for so I must,

And haply someone there will give a cup

Of wine and cake of meal. And when I find

The house of great Ulysses, I will tell

The sage Penelope the news I bring.

Nay, I would even go among the crew

Of arrogant suitors, who perhaps might give

A meal, for there is plenty at their feasts,

And I would do whatever they require.

For let me tell thee, and do thou give heed,

There lives no man who can contend with me

In menial tasks—to keep alive a fire

With fuel, cleave dry wood, and carve and roast

The meat and pour the wine—whate’er is done

By poor men waiting on the better sort.”
    And thou, Eumasus, keeper of the swine,

Didst answer in displeasure: “Woe is me!

How could thy bosom harbor such a thought?

O stranger! thou must surely be resolved

To perish if thy purpose be to go

Among the suitor crew, whose insolence

And riot reach the iron vault of heaven.

Not such attendants minister to them

As thou art, but fair youths arrayed in cloaks

And tunics, with sleek heads and smooth of face.

These wait at polished tables heavily

Loaded with bread and flesh and wine. Stay thou

Content among us, sure that no one here

Is wearied by thy presence, neither I

Nor any of my fellows. When he comes,

The dear son of Ulysses will provide

For thee the garments thou dost need—a cloak

And tunic—and will send thee where thou wilt.”
Ulysses, the great sufferer, answered thus:

“I pray that thou mayst be as dear to Jove,

The great All-Father, as thou art to me,

Since through thy kindness I enjoy a pause

Amid my weary wanderings. There is naught

Worse than a wandering life. Unseemly cares

A hungry stomach brings to homeless men;

Hardship and grief are theirs. But since thou wilt

That I remain and wait for thy young lord,

Speak to me of the mother of thy chief

Ulysses, and his father, whom he left

Just on the threshold of old age, if yet

They live, and still may look upon the sun;

Or have they died, and passed to Pluto’s realm?”
And then in turn the master swineherd spake:

“Rightly and truly will I answer thee,

stranger! still Laertes lives, but prays

Continually to Jove that he may die

In his own house; for sorely he laments

His son long absent, and his excellent wife,

Bride of his youth, whose death has brought on him

Sharp sorrow, and old age before its time.

By a sad death she died—through wasting grief

For her lost, glorious son. May no one here,

No friend of mine, nor one who has bestowed

A kindness on me, die by such a death!

While yet she lived, great as her sorrow was,

I loved to speak with her and hear her words;

For she had reared me with her youngest-born—

Her daughter, long-robed Ctimena. With her

Was I brought up, and scarcely less than her

Was held in honor. When at length we came

Into the pleasant years of youth, they sent

The princess hence to Samos, and received at

Large presents; but to me her mother gave

Garments of price, a tunic and a cloak,

And sandals for my feet, and sent me forth

Into the fields, and loved me more and more.

All this is over now, yet must I say

My calling has been prospered by the gods.

From this I have the means to eat and drink,

And wherewithal to feast a worthy guest;

But from the queen I never have a word

Or deed of kindness, since that evil came

Upon her house—that crew of lawless men.

Greatly the servants would rejoice to speak

Before their mistress, and inquire her will,

And eat and drink, and carry to their homes

Some gift, for gifts delight a servant’s heart.”
Again Ulysses, the sagacious, spake:

“Swineherd Eumaeus, thou, while yet a child,

Wert doubtless strangely tossed about the world,

Far from thy kindred and thy native land.

Now tell me, was the spacious town wherein

Thy father and thy mother dwelt laid waste?

Or wert thou left among the flocks and herds

Untended, and borne off by hostile men,

Who came in ships and sold thee to the lord

Of these possessions for a worthy price?”
And then the master swineherd spake again:

“Since thou dost ask me, stranger, hear my words

In silence; sit at ease and drink thy wine.

These nights are very long; there’s time enough

For sleep, and time to entertain ourselves

With talk. It is not fitting to lie down

Ere the due hour arrive, and too much sleep

Is hurtful. Whosoever here shall feel

The strong desire, let him withdraw and sleep,

And rise with early morn and break his fast,

And tend my master’s swine. Let us remain

Within, and drink and feast, and pass the time

Gayly, relating what we have endured,

Each one of us; for in the after time

One who has suffered much and wandered far

May take a pleasure even in his griefs.
“But let me tell what thou hast asked of me:

Beyond Ortygia lies an island named

Syria; thou must have heard of it. The sun

Above it turns his course. It is not large,

But fruitful, fit for pasturage, and rich

In flocks, abounding both in wine and wheat.

There never famine comes, nor foul disease

Fastens on wretched mortals; but when men

Grow old, Apollo of the silver bow

Comes with Diana, aims his silent shafts,

And slays them. There two cities stand, and share

The isle between them. There my father reigned,

The godlike Ctesias, son of Ormenus,

And both the cities owned him as their king.
“There came a crew of that seafaring race,

The people of Phoenicia, to our isle.

Shrewd fellows they, and brought in their black ship

Large store of trinkets. In my father’s house

Was a Phoenician woman, large and fair,

And skilful in embroidery. As she came

A laundress to their ship, those cunning men

Seduced her. One of them obtained her love—

For oft doth love mislead weak womankind,

Even of the more discreet. Her paramour

Asked who she was, and whence. She pointed out

The lofty pile in which my father dwelt.
"'At Sidon, rich in brass, I had my birth—

A daughter of the opulent Arybas;

And once, as I was coming from the fields,

The Taphian pirates seized and bore me off,

And brought me to this isle and sold me here,

At that man's house; much gold he paid for me.'
"Then said her paramour: 'Wilt thou not then

Return with us, that thou mayst see again

Father and mother, and their fair abode?

For yet they live, and rumor says are rich.'
"To this the woman answered: 'I consent

If first ye take an oath—ye mariners—

And pledge your faith to bear me safely home.'
"She spake, and they complied, and when the oath

Was duly taken, thus the woman said:—

“‘Now hold your peace; let none of all the crew

Speak to me more, in meeting on the road

Or at the fountain, lest someone should tell

The old man at the house, and he suspect

Some fraud and bind me fast, and plot your death.

Lock up your words within your breast; make haste

To buy supplies, and when the ship is full

Of all things needful, let a messenger

Come to me at the palace with all speed;

And I will bring with me whatever gold

My hands may find, and something else to pay

My passage. I am nurse to the young heir

Of the good man who dwells in yonder halls—

A shrewd boy for his years, who oft goes out

With me—and I will lead him to the ship,

And he will bring, in any foreign land

To which ye carry him, a liberal price.’
“The woman spake, and to our fair abode

Departed. The Phoenician crew remained

Until the twelvemonth’s end, and filled their ship

With many things, and, when its roomy hull

Was fully laden, sent a messenger

To tell the woman. He, a cunning man,

Came to my father’s house, and brought with him

A golden necklace set with amber beads.

The palace maidens and the gracious queen,

My mother, took it in their hands, and gazed

Upon it, and debated of its price.

Meantime the bearer gave the sign, and soon

Departed to the ship. The woman took

My hand and led me forth. Within the hall

She found upon the tables ready placed

The goblets for my father’s guests, his peers;

But they were absent, and in council yet

Amid a great assembly. She concealed

Three goblets in her bosom, and bore off

The theft. I followed thoughtlessly. The sun

Went down, and darkness brooded o’er the ways.

Briskly we walked, and reached the famous port

And the fast-sailing ship. They took us both

On board, and sailed. Along its ocean path

The vessel ran, and Jupiter bestowed

A favorable wind. Six days we sailed,

Both night and day; but when Saturnian Jove

Brought the seventh day, Diana, archer-queen,

Struck down the woman, and with sudden noise

Headlong she plunged into the hold, as dives

A seagull. But the seamen cast her forth

To fishes and to sea-calves. I was left

Alone and sorrowful. The winds and waves

Carried our galley on to Ithaca;

And there Laertes purchased me, and thus

I first beheld the land in which I dwell."
And then again the great Ulysses spake:

"Eumaeus, the sad story of thy wrongs

And sufferings moves me deeply; yet hath Jove

Among thy evil fortunes given this good,

That, after all thy sufferings, thou art lodged

With a good master, who abundantly

Provides thee meat and drink; thou leadest here

A pleasant life, while I am come to thee

From wandering long and over many lands.”
So talked they with each other. No long time

They passed in sleep, for soon the Morning came,

Throned on her car of gold. Beside the shore

The comrades of Telemachus cast loose

The sails, took down the mast, and with their oars

Brought in the vessel to its place. They threw

The anchors out and bound the hawsers fast,

And went upon the sea-beach, where they dressed

Their morning meal, and mingled purple wine.

Then, when the calls of thirst and hunger ceased,

Discreet Telemachus bespake the crew:—
“Take the black ship to town. I visit first

The fields, and see my herdsmen, and at eve

Will come to town. Tomorrow I will give

The parting feast, rich meats and generous wine.”
Then said the godlike Theoclymenus:

“Whither, my son, am I to go? What house

Of all the chiefs of rugged Ithaca

Shall I seek shelter in? with thee, perhaps,

In thine own palace where thy mother dwells.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“I would have asked thee at another time

To make our house thy home, for there would be

No lack of kindly welcome. ’Twere not well

To ask thee now, for I shall not be there,

Nor will my mother see thee—since not oft

Doth she appear before the suitor-train,

But in an upper room, apart from them,

Weaves at her loom a web. Another man

I name, Eurymachus, the illustrious son

Of the sage Polybus, to be thy host.

The noblest of the suitors he, and seeks

Most earnestly to wed the queen, and take

The rank Ulysses held. Olympian Jove,

Who dwells in ether, knows the fatal day

That may o’ertake the suitors ere she wed.”
As thus he spake, a falcon on the right

Flew by, Apollo’s messenger. A dove

Was in his talons, which he tore, and poured

The feathers down between Telemachus

And where the galley lay. When this was seen

By Theoclymenus, he called the youth

Apart, alone, and took his hand and said:—

“The bird that passed us, O Telemachus,

Upon the right, flew not without a god

To guide him. When I saw it, well I knew

The omen. Not in Ithaca exists

A house of a more kingly destiny

Than thine, and ever will its power prevail.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“O stranger, may thy saying come to pass;

Then shalt thou quickly know me for thy friend,

And be rewarded with such liberal gifts

That all who meet thee shall rejoice with thee.”
Then turning to Piraeus he bespake

That faithful follower thus: “Piraeus, son

Of Clytius, thou who ever wert the first

To move, at my command, of all the men

Who went with me to Pylos, take, I pray,

This stranger to thy house, and there provide

For him, and honor him until I come.”
Piraeus, mighty with the spear, replied:

“Telemachus, however long thy stay,

This man shall be my guest, nor ever lack

Beneath my roof for hospitable care.”
He spake, and climbed the deck, and bade his men

Enter the ship and cast the fastenings loose.

Quickly they came together, went on board

And manned the benches, while Telemachus

Bound the fair sandals to his feet, and took

His massive spear with its sharp blade of brass

That lay upon the deck. The men unbound

The hawsers, shoved the galley forth, and sailed

Townward, as they were bidden by the son

Of great Ulysses. Meantime the quick feet

Of the young chieftain bore him on until

He reached the lodge where his great herds of swine

Were fed, and, careful of his master’s wealth,

Beside his charge the worthy swineherd slept.

Book XVI

Ulysses Discovering Himself to Telemachus

Reception of Telemachus by Eumaeus, who is sent to inform Penelope of her son’s arrival—interview of Ulysses and Telemachus, in which, at the command of Pallas, Ulysses discovers himself—Return of the disappointed suitors from lying in wait for Telemachus.

Meantime Ulysses and that noble hind

The swineherd, in the lodge, at early dawn,

Lighted a fire, prepared a meal, and sent

The herdsmen forth to drive the swine afield.

The dogs, so apt to bark, came fawning round,

And barked not as Telemachus drew near.

Ulysses heard the sound of coming feet,

And marked the crouching dogs, and suddenly

Bespake Eumaeus thus with winged words:—

“Eumaeus, without doubt some friend of thine,

Or someone known familiarly, is near.

There is no barking of the dogs; they fawn

Around him, and I hear the sound of feet.”
Scarce had he spoken, when within the porch

Stood his dear son. The swineherd starting up,

Surprised, let fall the vessels from his hands

In which he mingled the rich wines, and flew

To meet his master; kissed him on the brow;

Kissed both his shining eyes and both his hands,

With many tears. As when a father takes

Into his arms a son whom tenderly

He loves, returning from a distant land

In the tenth year—his only son, the child

Of his old age, for whom he long has borne

Hardship and grief—so to Telemachus

The swineherd clung, and kissed him o’er and o’er,

As one escaped from death, and, shedding still

Warm tears, bespake him thus with winged words:—
“Thou comest, O Telemachus! the light

Is not more sweet to me. I never thought

To see thee more when thou hadst once embarked

For Pylos. Now come in, beloved child,

And let my heart rejoice that once again

I have thee here, so newly come from far.

For ’tis not often that thou visitest

Herdsmen and fields, but dwellest in the town—

Such is thy will—beholding day by day

The wasteful pillage of the suitor-train.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“So be it, father; for thy sake I came

To see thee with these eyes, and hear thee speak

And tell me if my mother dwells within

The palace yet; or has some wooer led

The queen away, his bride, and does the couch

Of great Ulysses lie untapestried,

With ugly cobwebs gathering over it?”
And then the master swineherd spake in turn:

“Most true it is that with a constant mind

The queen inhabits yet thy palace halls,

And wastes in tears her wretched nights and days.”
So speaking he received his brazen lance,

And over the stone threshold passed the prince

Into the lodge. Ulysses yielded up

His seat to him; Telemachus forbade.
“Nay, stranger, sit; it shall be ours to find

Elsewhere a seat in this our lodge, and he

Who should provide it is already here.”

He spake; Ulysses turned, and took again

His place; the swineherd made a pile of twigs

And covered it with skins, on which sat down

The dear son of Ulysses. Next he brought

Dishes of roasted meats which yet remained,

Part of the banquet of the day before,

And heaped the canisters with bread, and mixed

The rich wines in a wooden bowl. He sat

Right opposite Ulysses. All put forth

Their hands and shared the meats upon the board;

And when the calls of thirst and hunger ceased,

Thus to the swineherd said Telemachus:—

"Whence, father, is this stranger, and how brought

By seamen to the coast of Ithaca?

And who are they that brought him?—for I deem

He came not over to our isle on foot.”
And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

“True answer will I make to all. He claims

To be a son of the broad isle of Crete,

And says that in his wanderings he has passed

Through many cities of the world, for so

Some god ordained; and now, escaped by flight

From a Thesprotian galley, he has sought

A refuge in my lodge. Into thy hands

I give him; deal thou with him as thou wilt.

He is thy suppliant, and makes suit to thee.”
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:

“Eumaeus, thou hast uttered words that pierce

My heart with pain; for how can I receive

A stranger at my house? I am a youth

Who never yet has trusted in his arm

To beat the offerer of an insult back.

And in my mother’s mind the choice is yet

Uncertain whether to remain with me

The mistress of my household, keeping still

Her constant reverence for her husband’s bed,

And still obedient to the people’s voice,

Or whether she shall follow as a bride

Him of the Achaian suitors in my halls

Who is accounted worthiest, and who brings

The richest gifts. Now, as to this thy guest,

Since he has sought thy lodge, I give to him

A cloak and tunic, seemly of their kind,

A two-edged sword, and sandals for his feet.

And I will send him to whatever coast

He may desire to go. Yet, if thou wilt,

Lodge him beneath thy roof, and I will send

Raiment and food, that he may be no charge

To thee or thy companions. To my house

Among the suitor-train I cannot bear

That he should go. Those men are insolent

Beyond all measure; they would scoff at him,

And greatly should I grieve. The boldest man

Against so many might contend in vain,

And greater is their power by far than mine."
Then spake Ulysses, the great sufferer:

"O friend—since I have liberty to speak—

My very heart is wounded when I hear

What wrongs the suitors practise in thy halls

Against a youth like thee. But give me leave

To ask if thou submittest willingly,

Or do thy people, hearkening to some god,

Hate thee with open hatred? Dost thou blame

Thy brothers?—for in brothers men confide

Even in a desperate conflict. Would that I

Were young again, and with the will I have,

Or that I could become Ulysses' son,

Or were that chief himself returned at last

From all his wanderings—and there yet is hope

Of his return—then might another strike

My head off if I would not instantly

Enter the house of Laertiades

And make myself a mischief to them all.

But should they overcome me, thus alone

Contending with such numbers, I would choose

Rather in mine own palace to be slain

Than every day behold such shameful deeds—

Insulted guests, maidservants foully dragged

Through those fair palace chambers, wine-casks drained,

And gluttons feasting idly, wastefully,

And others toiling for them without end.”
Then spake again discreet Telemachus:

“Stranger, thou shalt be answered faithfully.

Know, then, the people are by no means wroth

With me, nor have I brothers to accuse,

Though in a desperate conflict men rely

Upon a brother’s aid. Saturnian Jove

Confines our lineage to a single head.

The king Arcesius had an only son,

Laertes, and to him was only born

Ulysses; and Ulysses left me here,

The only scion of his house, and he

Had little joy of me. Our halls are filled

With enemies, the chief men of the isles—

Dulichium, Samos, and Zacynthus dark

With forests, and the rugged Ithaca—

So many woo my mother and consume

Our substance. She rejects not utterly

Their hateful suit, nor yet will give consent

And end it. They go on to waste my wealth,

And soon will end me also; but the event

Rests with the gods.—And go thou now with speed,

Eumaeus, father, to Penelope,

And say that I am safe, and just returned

From Pylos. I remain within the lodge.

And then come back as soon as thou hast told

The queen alone. Let none of all the Greeks

Hear aught; for they are plotting harm to me.”
Then thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

“Enough, I see it all, thy words are said

To one who understands them. But, I pray,

Direct me whether in my way to take

A message to Laertes, the distressed.

While sorrowing for Ulysses he o’ersaw

The labors of the field, and ate and drank,

As he had appetite, with those who wrought.

But since thy voyage to the Pylian coast

They say he never takes his daily meals

As he was wont, nor oversees the work,

But sits and mourns and sighs and pines away,

Until his limbs are shrivelled to the bone.”
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:

“’Tis sad, but we must leave him to his grief

A little while. Could everything be made

To happen as we mortals wish, I then

Would first desire my father’s safe return.

But thou, when thou hast given thy message, haste

Hither again, nor wander through the fields

To him; but let my mother send at once

The matron of her household, privately,

To bear the tidings to the aged man.”
He spake to speed the swineherd, who took up

His sandals, bound them on, and bent his way

Townward. Not unperceived by Pallas went

Eumaeus from the lodge. She came in shape

A woman beautiful and stately, skilled

In household arts, the noblest. Near the gate

She stood, right opposite. Ulysses saw;

Telemachus beheld her not; the gods

Not always manifest themselves to all.

Ulysses and the mastiffs saw; the dogs

Barked not, but, whimpering, fled from her and sought

The stalls within. She beckoned with her brows;

Ulysses knew her meaning and came forth,

And passed the great wall of the court, and there

Stood near to Pallas, who bespake him thus:—
“Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Speak with thy son; conceal from him the truth

No longer, that, prepared to make an end

Of that vile suitor-crew, ye may go up

Into the royal town. Nor long will I

Be absent; I am ready for the assault.”
Thus spake the goddess. Putting forth a wand

Of gold, she touched the chief. Beneath that touch

His breast was covered with a new-blanched robe

And tunic. To his frame it gave new strength;

His swarthy color came again, his cheeks

Grew full, and the beard darkened on his chin.

This done, she disappeared. Ulysses came

Into the lodge again; his son beheld

Amazed and overawed, and turned his eyes

Away, as if in presence of a god,

And thus bespake the chief with winged words:—
“O stranger, thou art other than thou wert;

Thy garb is not the same, nor are thy looks;

Thou surely art some deity of those

Whose habitation is the ample heaven.

Be gracious to us, let us bring to thee

Such sacrifices as thou wilt accept

And gifts of graven gold; be merciful."
Ulysses, the great sufferer, thus replied:

"I am no god; how am I like the gods?

I am thy father, he for whom thy sighs

Are breathed, and sorrows borne, and wrongs endured."
He spake and kissed his son, and from his lids

Tears fell to earth, that long had been restrained.

And then Telemachus, who could not think

The stranger was his father, answered thus:—
"Nay, thou art not my father, thou art not

Ulysses; rather hath some deity

Sought to deceive me, that my grief may be

The sharper; for no mortal man would do

What has been done, unless some god should come

To aid him, and to make him young or old

At pleasure; for thou wert a moment since

An aged man, and sordidly arrayed,

And now art like the gods of the wide heaven.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“It is not well, Telemachus, to greet

With boundless wonder and astonishment

Thy father in this lodge. Be sure of this,

That no Ulysses other than myself

Will ever enter here. I, who am he,

Have suffered greatly and have wandered far,

And in the twentieth year am come again

To mine own land. Thou hast beheld today

A wonder wrought by Pallas, huntress-queen,

Who makes me what she will, such power is hers—

Sometimes to seem a beggar, and in turn

A young man in a comely garb. The gods

Whose home is in the heavens can easily

Exalt a mortal man, or bring him low.”
He spake and sat him down. Telemachus

Around his glorious father threw his arms,

And shed a shower of tears. Both felt at heart

A passionate desire to weep; they wept

Aloud—and louder were their cries than those

Of eagles, or the sharp-clawed vulture tribe,

Whose young the hinds have stolen, yet unfledged.

Still flowed their tears abundantly; the sun

Would have gone down and left them weeping still

Had not Telemachus at length inquired:—
“Dear father, tell me in what galley came

The mariners who brought thee. Of what race

Claim they to be? For certainly, I think,

Thou cam’st not hither travelling on foot.”
Ulysses, the great sufferer, thus replied:

“My son, thou shalt be answered faithfully.

Men of a race renowned for seamanship,

Phaeacians, brought me hither. They convey

Abroad the strangers coming to their isle,

And, bearing me in one of their swift barques

Across the sea, they landed me asleep

In Ithaca. Rich were the gifts they gave—

Much brass and gold, and garments from the loom;

These, so the gods have counselled, lie concealed

Among the hollow rocks, and I am come,

Obeying Pallas, to consult with thee

How to destroy our enemies. Give now

The number of the suitors; let me know

How many there may be, and who they are,

That with a careful judgment I may weigh

The question whether we shall fall on them—

We two alone—or must we seek allies."
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:

"O father, I have heard of thy great fame

My whole life long—how mighty is thy arm,

How wise thy counsels. Thou hast said great things,

And I am thunderstruck. It cannot be

That two alone should stand before a crowd

Of valiant men. They are not merely ten—

These suitors—nor twice ten, but many more;

Hear, then, their number. From Dulichium come

Fifty and two, the flower of all its youth,

With whom are six attendants. Samos sends

Twice twelve, and twenty more Achaian chiefs

Come from Zacynthus. Twelve from Ithaca;

The noblest of the isle are these—with whom

Medon the herald comes—a bard whose song

Is heavenly—and two servants skilled to spread

The banquet. Should we in the palace halls

Assault all these, I fear lest the revenge

For all thy wrongs would end most bitterly

And grievously for thee. Now, if thy thought

Be turned to some ally, bethink thee who

Will combat for us with a willing heart.”
Again Ulysses, the great sufferer, spake:

“Then will I tell thee; listen, and give heed.

Think whether Pallas and her father, Jove,

Suffice not for us. Need we more allies?”
And then discreet Telemachus rejoined:

“Assuredly the twain whom thou hast named

Are mighty as allies; for though they sit

On high among the clouds, they yet bear rule

Both o’er mankind and o’er the living gods.”
Once more Ulysses, the great sufferer, spake:

“Not long will they avoid the fierce affray

When in my halls the strength of war is tried

Between me and the suitor crew. Now go

With early morning to thy home, and there

Mingle among the suitors. As for me,

The swineherd afterward shall lead me hence

To town, a wretched beggar seemingly,

And very old. If there they scoff at me

In mine own palace, let thy faithful heart

Endure it, though I suffer; though they seize

My feet, and by them drag me to the door,

Or strike at me with weapon-blades, look on

And bear it; yet reprove with gentle words

Their folly. They will never heed reproof;

The day of their destruction is at hand.

And this I tell thee further, and be sure

To keep my words in memory. As soon

As Pallas, goddess of wise counsel, gives

The warning, I shall nod to thee, and thou,

When thou perceivest it, remove at once

All weapons from my halls to a recess

High in an upper chamber. With soft words

Quiet the suitors when they ask thee why.

Say, ‘I would take them where there comes no smoke,

Since now they seem no longer like to those

Left by Ulysses when he sailed for Troy,

But soiled and tarnished by the breath of fire.

This graver reason, also, Saturn’s son

Hath forced upon my mind—that ye by chance,

When full of wine and quarrelling, may wound

Each other, and disgrace the feast, and bring

Shame on your wooing; for the sight of steel

Draws men to bloodshed.’ Say but this, and leave

Two swords for us, two spears, two oxhide shields,

Against the day of combat. Pallas then,

And Jove the All-disposer, will unman

Their hearts. Moreover, let me say to thee—

And keep my words in memory—if thou be

My son, and of my blood, let no man hear

That now Ulysses is within the isle;

Let not Laertes hear of it, nor him

Who keeps the swine, nor any of the train

Of servants, nor Penelope herself,

While thou and I alone search out and prove

The women of the household, and no less

The serving-men, to know who honors us,

And bears us reverence in his heart, and who

Contemns us, and dishonors even thee.”

Then answered his illustrious son and said:

“Father, thou yet wilt know my heart, and find

That of a careless and too easy mood

I am not; but a search like this, I think,

Would profit neither of us, and I pray

That thou wilt well consider it. Long time

Wouldst thou go wandering from place to place,

O’er thy estates, to prove the loyalty

Of everyone, while in thy halls at ease

The suitors wastefully consume thy wealth.

Yet would I counsel that the women’s faith

Be proved, that the disloyal may be marked

And the innocent go free. As for the men,

I would not now inquire from farm to farm;

That may be done hereafter, if indeed

Thou hast a sign from aegis-bearing Jove.”
So talked they with each other. The good ship

Which brought Telemachus and all his friends

From Pylos kept meantime upon its way

To Ithaca. There, entering the deep port,

The seamen hauled the black ship up the beach;

And then the ready servants took away

The arms, and to the house of Clytius bore

The costly gifts. A herald from the ship

Went forward to the palace of the king

With tidings to the sage Penelope

That now her son was come and in the fields,

And that the ship at his command had reached

The city, lest the royal dame might feel

Fear for his safety, and give way to tears.

The herald and the noble swineherd met,

Each bearing the same message to the queen.

Entering the palace of the godlike king,

And standing midst the maids, the herald said:—
"O lady, thy beloved son is come."

But close beside the queen the swineherd stood,

And told her everything which her dear son

Had bid him say; and, having thus fulfilled

His errand, left the palace and its court.
Then were the suitors vexed and sorrowful,

And going from the palace, and without

The great wall that enclosed the court, sat down

Before the gates, and there Eurymachus,

The son of Polybus, harangued the throng:—
"Behold, my friends, Telemachus has done

A marvellous thing; this voyage, which we thought

He could not make, is made. Now let us launch

A ship, the best that we can find, and man

With fishermen the benches, sending it

To find our friends, and hasten their return.”
Scarce had he spoken when Amphinomus,

In turning where he stood, beheld a barque

Enter the port’s deep waters, with a crew

That furled the sails and held the oars in hand.

He laughed, well pleased, and to the suitors said:—
“There needs no message to be sent, for they

Are here already. Haply hath some god

Given them the knowledge, or perchance they saw,

But could not overtake, the prince’s ship.”
He spake; they rose and hastened to the strand,

And quickly drew the galley up the beach.

The ready servants bore the arms away;

Then met they all in council, suffering none

Save of the suitor-train to meet with them—

None, either young or old. Eupeithes' son,

Antinoüs, standing forth, bespake them thus:—
"How strangely do the gods protect this man

From evil! All day long spy after spy

Has sat and watched upon the airy heights,

And when the sun was set we never slept

On land, but ever in our gallant ship

Sailed, waiting for the holy morn, and lay

In constant ambush for Telemachus,

To seize and to destroy him. Yet behold,

Some deity has brought him home. And now

Frame we a plan to cut off utterly

Telemachus, and leave him no escape;

For certainly I think that while he lives

The end we aim at cannot be attained.

Shrewd is the youth in counsel and device,

And we no longer have, as once we had,

The people’s favor. Let us quickly act,

Ere he can call a council of the Greeks.

That he will do without delay, and there

Will rise in wrath to tell them how we planned

His death by violence, and failed; and they

Who hear assuredly will not approve

The plotted mischief. They may drive us forth

With outrage from our country to a land

Of strangers. Let us be the first to strike,

And slay him in the fields or on the way,

And, taking his possessions to ourselves,

Share equally his wealth. Then may we give

This palace to his mother, and the man

Whom she shall wed, whoever he may be.

Or if this plan mislike you, and ye choose

That he should live, and keep the fair estate

That was his father’s, let us not go on

Thronging the palace to consume his wealth

In revelry, but each with liberal gifts

Woo her from his own dwelling; and let him

Who gives most generously, and whom fate

Most favors, take the lady as his bride.”
He spake, and all were mute. Amphinomus,

The illustrious son of royal Nisus, rose.

The grandson of Aretias, it was he

Who led the suitors from Dulichium's fields,

Grassy and rich in corn. Penelope

Liked best his words, for generous was his thought,

And with a generous purpose thus he spake:—
"Nay, friends, not mine is the advice to slay

Telemachus. It is a fearful thing

To take a royal life. Then let us first

Inquire the pleasure of the gods. For if

The oracles of mighty Jupiter

Approve it, I would do the deed myself,

Or bid another do it; but if they

Consent not, 'tis my counsel to forbear."
He spake, and all approved. At once they rose,

And, entering the palace, sat them down

On shining thrones. Meantime Penelope

Had formed the purpose to appear before

The arrogant suitors, for the news was brought

Into her chamber of the plot to slay

Her son; the herald Medon overheard,

And told her all. So to the hall she went

With her attendant maids. The glorious dame

Drew near the suitor-train, and took her stand

Beside a column of the stately pile,

And with a delicate veil before her cheeks

Began to speak, and chid Antinoüs thus:—
"Antinoüs, mischief-plotter, insolent!

The rumor is that thou excellest all

Of thy own age among the Ithacans

In understanding and in speech. Yet such

Thou never wert. Ferocious as thou art,

Why seek the death of my Telemachus,

And treat with scorn the suppliants of whose prayer

Jove is the witness? An unholy thing

It is when men against their fellow-men

Plot mischief. Dost thou then forget that once

Thy father came to us a fugitive,

In terror of the people, who were wroth

Because he joined the Taphian pirate-race,

And plundered the Thesprotians, our allies.

The people would have slain him, and have torn

His heart out, and have pillaged his large wealth;

Ulysses checked their rage, and held them back,

Fierce as they were. Now thou dost waste his goods

Most shamefully, and woo his wife, and slay

His son, and multiply my woes. Cease now,

I charge thee, and persuade the rest to cease.”
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,

Replied: “O daughter of Icarius, sage

Penelope, take heart; let no such thought

Possess thy mind. There is no man on earth,

Nor will there be, who shall lay violent hands

Upon Telemachus, thy son, while I

Am living, and yet keep the gift of sight.

I say, and will perform it—his black blood

Shall flow and bathe my spear. Ulysses oft,

Spoiler of realms, would take me on his knee,

And put the roasted meats into my hands,

And give me ruddy wine. I therefore hold

Telemachus of all mankind most dear,

And I will bid him have no fear of death

From any of the suitors. If it come,

Sent by the gods, he cannot then escape.”
So spake he to appease her, while he planned,

The murder of her son. The queen went up

To the fair upper chambers, and there wept

Ulysses, her dear spouse, till o’er her lids

The blue-eyed Pallas poured the balm of sleep.
At evening to Ulysses and his son

The noble swineherd went, while busily

They made the supper ready, having slain

A porker one year old. Then instantly

Stood Pallas by Ulysses, and put forth

Her wand and touched him, making him again

Old, and clad sordidly in beggar’s weeds,

Lest that the swineherd, knowing at a look

His master, might not keep the knowledge locked

In his own breast, but, hastening forth, betray

The secret to the chaste Penelope.
Then to the swineherd said Telemachus:

“Noble Eumaeus, welcome; what reports

Are in the town? Have those large-minded men,

The suitors, left their ambush and returned,

Or are they waiting yet for me to pass?”
And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

“Of that, indeed, I never thought to ask,

In going through the town. My only care

Was to return, as soon as I had given

My message, with such speed as I could make.

I met a messenger, a herald sent

By thy companions, who was first to tell

Thy mother of thy safe return. Yet this

I know, for I beheld it with my eyes.

When outside of the city, where the hill

Of Hermes stands, I saw a gallant barque

Entering the port, and carrying many men.

Heavy it was with shields and two-edged spears;

'Twas they, I thought, and yet I cannot tell."
He spake; Telemachus the valiant looked

Upon his father with a smile unmarked

By good Eumaeus. When their task was done,

And the board spread, they feasted. No one lacked

His portion of the common meal. Their thirst

And hunger satisfied, they laid them down

To rest, and so received the gift of sleep.

Book XVII

Return of Ulysses to His Palace

Meeting of Telemachus and Penelope, Ulysses conducted by Eumaeus to the palace, where he is known by the dog Argus, who dies on seeing him—Entrance of Ulysses among the suitors—Assault made by Antinoüs upon Ulysses—Ulysses sent for by Penelope.

Now when the rosy-fingered Morn looked forth—

The daughter of the Dawn—Telemachus,

The dear son of the great Ulysses, bound

The shapely sandals underneath his feet,

And took the massive spear that fitted well

His grasp, and, as he stood in act to go

Up to the town, bespake the swineherd thus:—

"Father, I hasten to the town, that there

My mother may behold me; for I think

She will not cease to grieve, and fear, and weep,

Till her eyes rest on me. I leave with thee

The charge of leading our unfortunate guest

Into the city, there to beg his bread.

Whoever will may give him food and drink.

All men I cannot feed, and I have cares

Enough already. If he chafe at this,

The worse for him. I like to speak my mind."
And thus Ulysses, the sagacious, spake:

"Nor do I wish, my friend, to loiter here.

Better it is for one like me to beg

In town than in the country. In the town,

Whoever chooses will bestow his dole;

But here, if I remain about the stalls,

I am no longer of an age to do

All that a master may require. Go thou;

This man, at thy command, will lead me hence,

As soon as I have warmed me at the fire,

And the air grows milder. This keen morning-cold

May end me, and the way, ye say, is long.”
He ended; from the lodge Telemachus

Passed quickly, meditating to destroy

The suitors. Coming to his stately home,

He leaned his spear against a column’s shaft,

And, crossing the stone threshold, entered in.

First Eurycleia, who had been his nurse,

Beheld him, as she spread the beautiful thrones

With skins, and ran to him with weeping eyes;

And round him other handmaids of the house

Of resolute Ulysses thronged. They gave

Fond welcome, kissing him upon the brow

And shoulders. Issuing from her chamber next

The chaste Penelope, like Dian’s self

In beauty, or like golden Venus, came,

And, weeping, threw her arms about her son,

And kissed him on his forehead and on both

His glorious eyes, and said, amidst her tears:—
“Light of my eyes! O my Telemachus!

Art thou, then, come? I never thought again

To see thee, when I heard thou hadst embarked

For Pylos—secretly, and knowing me

Unwilling—in the hope to gather there

Some tidings of thy father. Tell me now

All that has happened, all that thou hast seen.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“Nay, mother, waken not my griefs again,

Nor move my heart to rage. I have just now

Escaped a cruel death. But go and bathe,

And put fresh garments on, and when thou com’st

Into thy chamber with thy maidens, make

A vow to all the gods that thou wilt burn

A sacrifice of chosen hecatombs

When Jupiter shall have avenged our wrongs.

Now must I hasten to the marketplace

In quest of one who came with me a guest

From Pylos. Him, with all my faithful crew,

I sent before me to this port, and bade

Piraeus lead him to his own abode,

There to be lodged and honored till I came.”
He spake, nor flew his words unheeded by.

The princess bathed, and put fresh garments on,

And vowed to all the gods a sacrifice

Of chosen hecatombs when Jupiter

Should punish the wrongdoers. While she prayed,

Telemachus went forth, his spear in hand.

Two fleet dogs followed him. Minerva shed

A godlike beauty o’er his form and face,

And all the people wondered as he came.

The suitors thronged around him with smooth words,

Yet plotting mischief in their hearts. He turned

From their assembly hastily, and took

His place where Mentor sat with Antiphus,

And Halitherses—all his father’s friends

And his from the beginning. While they asked

Of all that he had seen, Piraeus came,

The famous spearman, bringing through the town

The stranger with him to the marketplace.

Nor long Telemachus delayed, but came

To meet his guest, and then Piraeus said:—
"Telemachus, despatch to where I dwell

Thy serving-women; I would send to thee,

At once, the gifts which Menelaus gave."
And then discreet Telemachus replied:

"We know not yet, Piraeus, what may be

The event; and if the suitors privily

Should slay me in the palace, and divide

The inheritance among them, I prefer

That thou, instead of them, shouldst have the gifts;

But should they meet the fate which I have planned,

And be cut off, then shalt thou gladly bring

The treasures, which I gladly will receive."

So spake the prince, and to the palace led
The unhappy man, his guest. When now they reached
The stately pile, they both laid down their cloaks
Upon the benches, and betook themselves
To the well-polished baths. The attendant maids
There ministered and smoothed their limbs with oil,
And each received a tunic at their hands,
And fleecy mantle. Then they left the baths
And took their seats. A damsel came, and poured
Water from a fair ewer wrought of gold
Into a silver basin for their hands,
And spread a polished table near their seats;
And there the matron of the household placed
Bread, and the many dishes which her stores
Supplied. The queen was seated opposite,

Beside a column of the pile, and twirled

A slender spindle, while the son and guest

Put forth their hands and shared the meal prepared.

And when the calls of hunger and of thirst

Had ceased, thus spake the sage Penelope:—
“Telemachus, when I again go up

Into my chamber, I shall lay me down

Upon the couch which, since Ulysses sailed

For Troy with Atreus’ sons, has been to me

A couch of mourning, sprinkled with my tears.

And now thou hast not chosen to reveal,

Ere yet the haughty suitors throng again

Into these halls, what in thy voyage thou

Hast haply heard concerning his return.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“Then, mother, will I truly tell thee all.

We went to Pylos, and saw Nestor there,

The shepherd of the people. Kindly he

Received me in his stately home, as one

Might welcome back a wandering son returned

From foreign lands. Such welcome I received

Both from the king and his illustrious sons.

But he had heard, he said, from living man,

No tidings of the much-enduring chief

Ulysses, whether he were yet alive

Or dead. He therefore sent me with his steeds

And chariot to the court of Atreus’ son,

The warlike Menelaus. There I saw

The Argive Helen, for whose sake the Greeks

And Trojans, by the appointment of the gods,

Suffered so much. The valiant king inquired

What wish of mine had brought me to the town

Of hallowed Lacedaemon. I replied,

And truly told him all, and everything

In order. Then he answered me, and said:—
"'So then! these men, unwarlike as they are,

Aspire to occupy a brave man's bed,

As when a hart hath left two suckling fawns,

Just born, asleep in a strong lion's lair,

And roams for pasturage the mountain slopes

And grassy lawns, the lion suddenly

Comes back, and makes a cruel end of both,

So will Ulysses bring a sudden doom

Upon the suitors. Would to Father Jove,

And Pallas, and Apollo, that the chief,

Returning mighty, as he was when once

In well-built Lesbos, at a wrestling-match,

He rose to strive with Philomelides,

And threw him heavily, and all the Greeks

Rejoiced—would he might come as then he was!

Short-lived would then the suitors be, and taste

A bitter marriage-feast. But now, to come

To what thou hast inquired, I will not seek

To turn from it, and talk of other things,

Nor will deceive. Of all that I was told

By the Ancient of the Deep, whose words are true,

I will not hide a single word from thee.

He saw thy father in an isle, he said,

A prey to wasting sorrows, and detained,

Unwilling, in the palace of the nymph

Calypso. To the country of his birth

He cannot come; no ships are there with oars

And crew to bear him o’er the great wide sea.’
“Thus Menelaus, mighty with the spear,

The son of Atreus, said. And having now

Fulfilled my errand, I returned. The gods

Gave favoring winds, and sent me swiftly home.”
He ended, and the queen was deeply moved.

Then Theoclymenus, the godlike, said:—
“O gracious consort of Laertes’ son,

King Menelaus knew not all. Hear now

What I shall say—for I will prophesy,

And truly, nor will keep back aught from thee.

Let Jupiter, the mightiest of the gods,

And this thy hospitable board, and this

The hearth of great Ulysses, where I find

A refuge, be my witnesses, that now

Ulysses is in his own land again,

And sits or walks observant of the deeds

Of wrong, and planning vengeance, yet to fall

On all the suitors; such the augury

Which I beheld when in the gallant barque

I sat and told it to Telemachus."
And thus the sage Penelope replied:

"O stranger! may thy saying be fulfilled!

Then shalt thou have such thanks and such rewards

That all who greet thee shall rejoice with thee."
So talked they with each other. In the space

Before the palace of Ulysses stood

The suitors, pleased with hurling quoits and spears

On the smooth pavement, where their insolence

So oft was seen. But when the supper-hour

Was near, and from the fields the cattle came,

Driven by the herdsmen, Medon—he whom most

They liked of all the heralds, and who sat

Among them at the feast—bespake them thus:—
"Youths! since ye now have had your pastime here,

Come in, and help prepare the evening meal;

At the due hour a banquet is not ill."
He spake; the suitors hearkened and obeyed,

And rose, and came into the halls, and laid

Their cloaks upon the benches and the thrones,

And slaughtered well-fed sheep and fading goats,

And made a victim of a pampered brawn,

And a stalled ox, preparing for the feast.

Meantime Ulysses and that noble hind

The swineherd hastened to begin their walk

To town, and thus the master swineherd spake:—
“Since, stranger, ’tis thy wish to pass today

Into the city, as my master bade—

Though I by far prefer that thou remain

A guardian of the stalls, yet much I fear

My master, and am sure that he would chide,

And harsh the upbraidings of a master are—

Let us depart; the day is now far spent,

And chill will be the air of eventide.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Enough; I know; thy words are heard by one

Who understands them. Let us then depart.

Lead thou the way; and if thou hast a staff,

Cut from the wood to lean on, give it me,

Since, as thou say’st, we have a slippery road.”

He spake, and o’er his shoulders flung a scrip,

Old, cracked, and hanging by a twisted thong.

Eumaeus gave the staff he asked, and both

Went forth; the dogs and herdsmen stayed to guard

The lodge. The swineherd led his master on

Townward, a squalid beggar to the sight,

And aged, leaning on a staff, and wrapped

In sordid rags. There by the rugged way,

As they drew near the town, they passed a fount

Wrought by the hand of man, and pouring forth

Its pleasant streams, from which the citizens

Drew water. Ithacus and Neritus

Founded it with Polyctor, and a grove

Of alders feeding on the moistened earth

Grew round it on all sides. The ice-cold rill

Gushed from a lofty rock, upon whose brow

An altar stood, at which the passersby

Worshipped, and laid their offerings for the Nymphs.

There did Melanthius, son of Dolius, meet

The twain, as he was driving to the town

The finest goats of all the flocks, to make

A banquet for the suitors; with him went

Two shepherds, following the flock. As soon

As he beheld Eumaeus and his guest,

He railed at them with rude and violent words,

That made the anger of Ulysses rise.
“See that vile fellow lead the vile about!

Thus ever doth some god join like with like.

Thou worthless swineherd! whither wouldst thou take

This hungry, haunting beggar-man, this pest

Of feasts, who at the posts of many a door

Against them rubs his shoulders, asking crusts,

Tripods or cauldrons never. Shouldst thou leave

The wretch to me, to watch my stalls, and sweep

The folds, and bring fresh branches to the kids,

He might by drinking whey get stouter thighs.

But he has learned no good, and will refuse

To work; he better likes to stroll about

With that insatiable stomach, asking alms

To fill it. Let me tell thee what is sure

To happen to him, should he ever come

Into the palace of the glorious chief

Ulysses. Many a footstool will be flung

Around him by the hands of those who sit

As guests, and they will tear the fellow’s sides.”
He spake, and in his folly thrust his heel

Against the hero’s thigh. The blow moved not

Ulysses from his path, nor swerved he aught,

But meditated whether with a blow

Of his good staff to take the fellow’s life,

Or lift him in the air and dash his head

Against the ground. Yet he endured the affront

And checked his wrath. The swineherd spake, and chid

The offender, and thus prayed with lifted hands:—
“Nymphs of the fountain, born to Jupiter!

If e’er in sacrifice Ulysses burned

To you the thighs of lambs and goats, o’erlaid

With fat, be pleased to grant the prayer I make,

That, guided by some deity, the chief

May yet return. Then thy rude boasts would cease.

Melanthius, which thou utterest in thy way

From place to place while wandering through the town.

Unfaithful shepherds make a perishing flock.”
Melanthius, keeper of the goats, rejoined:

“’Tis wonderful how flippant is the cur,

And shrewd! But I shall carry him on board

A good black ship, far off from Ithaca,

And there will sell him for a goodly price.

Would that Apollo of the silver bow

Might in the palace slay Telemachus

This very hour, or that the suitors might,

As certainly as that the day which brings

Ulysses to his home will never dawn!”
He spake, and left them there. They followed on

Slowly. Melanthius hastened, and was soon

At the king’s palace gate, and, entering, took

A seat right opposite Eurymachus,

Whose favorite he was. The attendants there

Brought meats, the matron of the household bread,

And both were set before them. Meantime stopped

Ulysses with the noble swineherd near

The palace, for around them in the air

Came the sweet murmurs of a lyre. Just then

Phemius, the minstrel, had begun his song,

Ulysses took the swineherd’s hand, and said:—
“Eumaeus, this must be the noble pile

In which Ulysses dwelt, for easily

’Tis known among the others that are near.

Rooms over rooms are here; around its court

Are walls and battlements, and folding-doors

Shut fast the entrance; no man may contemn

Its strength. And I perceive that many guests

Banquet within; the smoke of fat goes up,

And the sweet lyre is heard; the gods have given

Its music to accompany the feast."
And then, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

"Thou speakest rightly, and in other things

Thou art not slow of thought. Now let us think

What we shall do. First enter, if thou wilt,

The sumptuous rooms, while I remain without;

Or, if it please thee, I will enter first,

While thou remainest; yet delay not long,

Lest someone, seeing thee, should deal a blow,

Or drive thee hence. I pray thee, think of this."
Ulysses, the great sufferer, answered thus:

“Enough; I know; thy words are heard by one

Who understands them. Go before me, then,

And leave me here. I am not quite unused

To blows and stripes, and patient is my mood,

For greatly have I suffered, both at sea

And in the wars; and I submit to bear

This also. But the stomach’s eagerness

Is desperate, and is not to be withstood,

And many are the mischiefs which it brings

Upon the race of men; it fits out fleets

That cross the barren deep arrayed for war,

And carry death and woe to hostile realms.”
So talked the twain. A dog was lying near,

And lifted up his head and pricked his ears.

’Twas Argus, which the much-enduring man

Ulysses long before had reared, but left

Untried, when for the hallowed town of Troy

He sailed. The young men oft had led him forth

In eager chase of wild goats, stags, and hares;

But now, his master far away, he lay

Neglected, just before the stable doors,

Amid the droppings of the mules and beeves,

Heaped high till carried to the spacious fields

Of which Ulysses was the lord. There lay

Argus, devoured with vermin. As he saw

Ulysses drawing near, he wagged his tail

And dropped his ears, but found that he could come

No nearer to his master. Seeing this,

Ulysses wiped away a tear unmarked

By the good swineherd, whom he questioned thus:—

“Eumaeus, this I marvel at—this dog,

That lies upon the dunghill, beautiful

In form, but whether in the chase as fleet

As he is fairly shaped I cannot tell.

Worthless, perchance, as house-dogs often are,

Whose masters keep them for the sake of show.”

And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

“The dog belongs to one who died afar.

Had he the power of limb which once he had

For feats of hunting when Ulysses sailed

For Troy and left him, thou wouldst be amazed

Both at his swiftness and his strength. No beast

In the thick forest depths which once he saw,

Or even tracked by footprints, could escape.

And now he is a sufferer, since his lord

Has perished far from his own land. No more

The careless women heed the creature’s wants;

For, when the master is no longer near,

The servants cease from their appointed tasks,

And on the day that one becomes a slave

The Thunderer, Jove, takes half his worth away.”
He spake, and, entering that fair dwelling-place,

Passed through to where the illustrious suitors sat,

While over Argus the black night of death

Came suddenly as soon as he had seen

Ulysses, absent now for twenty years.

Telemachus, the godlike, was the first

To mark the swineherd coming through the hall,

And, nodding, called to him. The swineherd looked

About him, and beheld a seat on which

The carver of the feast was wont to sit,

Distributing the meats. He bore it thence

And placed it opposite Telemachus,

And at his table. Then he sat him down,

And thither came the herald, bringing him

A portion of the feast, and gave him bread

From the full canister. Soon after him

Ulysses entered, seemingly an old

And wretched beggar, propped upon a staff,

And wrapped in sordid weeds. He sat him down

On the ashen threshold, just within the doors,

And leaned against a shaft of cypress-wood,

Which some artificer had skilfully

Wrought by a line, and smoothed. Telemachus

Called to the swineherd, bade him come, and took

A loaf that lay in the fair canister,

And all the flesh which his two hands could grasp.
“Bear this to yonder stranger; bid him go

And ask a dole from every suitor here.

No beggar should be bashful in his need.”
He spake, the hind obeyed, and, drawing near

Ulysses, said to him in winged words:—
“These from Telemachus, who bids thee ask

A dole from every suitor, for he says

No beggar should be bashful in his need.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“May Jove, the sovereign, make Telemachus

A happy man among the sons of men,

And grant him all his heart desires in life!”
He spake, and took the gift in both his hands,

And laid it down upon his tattered scrip

Close to his feet. Then, while the poet sang,

He ate, and, just as he had supped, the bard

Closed his divine recital. Then ensued

Great clamor in the hall, but Pallas came

And moved Ulysses to arise, and ask

From every suitor there a dole of bread,

That he might know the better from the worse,

Though none were to be spared. From right to left

He took his way, and asked of every man,

With outstretched hand, as if he had been long

A beggar. And they pitied him, and gave,

And looked at him with wonder, and inquired

One of another who he was, and whence.

Then spake Melanthius, keeper of the goats:—
"Give ear, ye suitors of the illustrious queen.

As to this stranger, I have seen him once.

The swineherd brought him; but I know him not,

And of what race he is I cannot tell."
He spake; Antinoüs chid the swineherd thus:

"Why hast thou brought him, too well known thyself?

Have we not vagabonds enough? enough

Of sturdy beggars, pests of every feast.

Or is it a light matter that they throng

Hither to waste the substance of thy lord,

And therefore thou art with this fellow here?"
And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

"Antinoüs, high as is thy station, thou

Hast spoken ill. What man goes ever forth

To bid a stranger to his house, unless

The stranger be of those whose office is

To serve the people, be he seer, or leech,

Or architect, or poet heaven-inspired,

Whose song is gladly heard? All these are called

To feasts wherever men are found; but none

Call in the poor, to live upon their means.

Antinoüs, thou, of all the suitor-train,

Dost ever with the greatest harshness treat

The servants of Ulysses, chiefly me.

I heed it not while sage Penelope

Dwells in the palace with her godlike son."
Then interposed discreet Telemachus:

"Nay, have no strife of words with him, I pray.

Antinoüs takes delight in bitter words,

And rails, and stirs up railing in the rest."

And then he turned, and thus with winged words

Bespake Antinoüs: "Truly thou dost care

For me as might a father for a son,

Bidding me drive a stranger from my door

With violent words—which God forbid. Take now

Somewhat and give to him. I grudge it not,

Nay, I advise it. Fear not to offend

My mother, or displease a single one

Of all the household of the godlike chief,

Ulysses. But thou hast not thought of this.

It suits thee best to feast and never give."
Antinoüs thus rejoined: "O utterer

Of big and braggart words! Telemachus,

If all the other suitors would bestow

As much as I will, he would not be seen

Within these halls for three months yet to come."
So speaking, he brought forward to the sight,

From underneath the board, a stool, on which

Rested his dainty feet. The others all

Gave somewhat to Ulysses, till his scrip

Was filled with meat and bread. Then as he went

Back to the threshold, there to feast on what

The Greeks had given him in his rounds, he stopped

Beside Antinoüs, and bespake him thus:—
"Give somewhat also, friend. Thou dost not seem

One of the humbler rank among the Greeks,

But of the highest. Kingly is thy look;

It therefore will become thee to bestow

More freely than the rest, and I will sound

Thy praise through all the earth. Mine too was once

A happy lot, for I inhabited

A palace filled with goods, and often gave

To wanderers, whosoever they might be

That sought me out, and in whatever need.

And I had many servants, and large store

Of everything by which men live at ease

And are accounted rich. Saturnian Jove—

Such was his pleasure—brought me low; for, moved

By him, I joined me to a wandering band

Of pirates, and to my perdition sailed

Upon a distant voyage to the coast

Of Egypt. In the river of that land

I stationed my good ships, and bade my men

Remain with them and watch them well. I placed

Sentries upon the heights. Yet confident

In their own strength, and rashly giving way

To greed, my comrades ravaged the fair fields

Of the Egyptians, slew them, and bore off

Their wives and little ones. The rumor reached

The city soon; the people heard the alarm

And came together. With the dawn of day

All the great plain was thronged with horse and foot,

And gleamed with brass, while Jove, the Thunderer, sent

A deadly fear into our ranks, where none

Dared face the foe. On every side was death.

The Egyptians hewed down many with the sword,

And some they led away alive to toil

For them in slavery. Me my captors gave

Into a stranger’s hands, upon his way

To Cyprus, where he reigned, a mighty king,

Demetor, son of Jasus. Thence at last

I came through many hardships to this isle.”
Antinoüs lifted up his voice, and said:

“What god hath sent this nuisance to disturb

The banquet? Take thyself to the mid-hall,

Far from thy table, else expect to see

An Egypt and a Cyprus of a sort

That thou wilt little like. Thou art a bold

And shameless beggar. Thou dost take thy round

And ask from each, and foolishly they give,

And spare not nor consider; well supplied

Is each, and freely gives what is not his.”
Then sage Ulysses said as he withdrew:

“’Tis strange; thy mind agrees not with thy form.

Thou wouldst not give a suppliant even salt

In thine own house—thou who, while sitting here

Fed at another’s table, canst not bear

To give me bread from thy well-loaded board.”
He spake. Antinoüs grew more angry still,

And frowned and answered him with winged words:—
“Dealer in saucy words! I hardly think

That thou wilt leave this palace unchastised.”
He spake, and raised the footstool in his hand,

And smote Ulysses on the lower part

Of the right shoulder. Like a rock he stood,

Unmoved beneath the blow Antinoüs gave,

But shook his head in silence as he thought

Of vengeance. Then, returning, he sat down

Upon the threshold, where he laid his scrip

Well filled, and thus bespake the suitor-train:—
“Hear me, ye suitors of the illustrious queen.

Grief or resentment no man feels for blows

Received by him while fighting for his own—

His beeves or white-woolled sheep. But this man here,

Antinoüs, dealt that blow on me because

I have an empty stomach; hunger brings

Great mischiefs upon men. If there be gods

Or furies who avenge the poor, may death

O'ertake Antinoüs ere his marriage-day!"
He ended. Then again Eupeithes' son,

Antinoüs, spake: "Eat, stranger, quietly;

Sit still, or get thee hence; our young men else

Who hear thy words will seize thee by the feet

Or hands, and drag thee forth and flay thee there."
He spake, and greatly were the rest incensed,

And one of those proud youths took up the word:—
"Antinoüs, it was ill of thee to smite

That hapless wanderer. Madman! what if he

Came down from heaven and were a god! The gods

Put on the form of strangers from afar,

And walk our towns in many different shapes,

To mark the good and evil deeds of men.”
Thus spake the suitors, but he heeded not

Their words. Telemachus, who saw the blow,

Felt his heart swell with anger and with grief,

Yet from his eyelids fell no tear; he shook

His head in silence, pondering to repay

The wrong. Meantime the sage Penelope

Heard of the stranger smitten in her halls,

And thus bespake the maidens of her train:—
“Would that Apollo, mighty with the bow,

Might smite thee also!” Then Eurynomè,

The matron of the household, said in turn:
“O, were our prayers but heard, not one of these

Should look upon the golden morn again!”

Then spake again the sage Penelope:

“Mother, they all are hateful; every one

Plots mischief, but Antinoüs most of all;

And he is like black death, to be abhorred.

A friendless stranger passes through these halls,

Compelled by need, and asks an alms of each,

And all the others give, and fill his scrip;

Antinoüs flings a footstool, and the blow

Bruises the shoulder of the suppliant man.”
So talked they with each other where they sat

In the queen’s chamber, mid the attendant train

Of women, while meantime Ulysses took

The evening meal. The queen then bade to call

The noble swineherd, and bespake him thus:—
“My worthy friend Eumaeus, go and bring

The stranger hither. I would speak with him,

And ask if anywhere he saw or heard

Aught of Ulysses; for he seems like one

Whose wanderings have been in many lands.”
And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst make reply:

“Would that these Greeks, O queen, would hold their peace,

Then might this stranger in thy hearing speak

Words full of consolation. For three nights

I had him with me, for three days I made

My lodge his home—for at the very first

He came to me, escaping from his ship—

Nor when he left me had he told of all

That he had suffered. As a hearer looks

Upon a minstrel whom the gods have taught

To sing the poems that delight all hearts,

And, listening, longs to listen without end;

So, as the stranger sat beneath my roof,

He held me charmed. He was the ancestral friend,

He said, of thy Ulysses, and his home

Was Crete, where dwells the stock of Minos yet.

From Crete he came, and much had suffered since,

Driven on from place to place. And he had heard

Some tidings of Ulysses yet alive—

So he affirmed—in a rich region near

The realm of the Thesprotians, and prepared

To bring much riches to his native isle.”
Then spake the sage Penelope again:

“Go, call him hither, that he may relate

His story in my presence. Let these men,

As it may please them, sitting at our gates

Or in our halls, amuse themselves, for light

Are they of heart. Unwasted in their homes

Lie their possessions, and their bread and wine

Are only for their servants, while themselves

Frequent our palace, day by day, and slay

Our beeves and sheep and fatling goats, and feast,

And drink abundantly the dark red wine,

And all with lavish waste. No man is here,

Such as Ulysses was, to drive away

This pest from our abode. Should he return

To his own land, he and his son would take

Swift vengeance on the men who do him wrong."
She ended. Suddenly Telemachus

Sneezed loudly, so that all the palace rang;

And, laughing as she heard, Penelope

Bespake Eumaeus thus with winged words:—
“Go, call the stranger. Dost thou not perceive

My son has sneezed as to confirm my words.

Not unfulfilled will now remain the doom

That waits the suitors; none will now escape

Death and the Fates. This further let me say,

And thou remember it; if what he tells

Be true, I will bestow on him a change

Of fair attire, a tunic and a cloak.”
She spake, the swineherd went, and, drawing near

Ulysses, said to him in winged words:—
“Stranger and father, sage Penelope,

The mother of the prince, hath sent for thee.

Though sorrowing, she is minded to inquire

What of her husband thou canst haply say;

And should she find that all thy words are true,

She will bestow a tunic and a cloak,

Garments which much thou needest. For thy food,

What will appease thy hunger thou wilt find

Among the people; ask, and each will give.”
Ulysses, much-enduring man, replied:

“Eumaeus, faithfully will I declare

All that I know to sage Penelope,

The daughter of Icarius. Well I knew

Her husband, and with like calamities

We both have suffered. But I greatly dread

This reckless suitor-crew, whose riotous acts

And violence reach to the iron heavens.

Even now, when that man dealt me, as I passed,

A painful blow, though I had done no harm,

None interposed, not even Telemachus,

In my defence. Now, therefore, ask, I pray,

Penelope that she will deign to wait

Till sunset in her rooms, though strong her wish

To hear my history. Of her husband then,

And his return, she may inquire, while I

Sit by the blazing hearth; for scant have been

My garments, as thou knowest, since the day

When first I came, a suppliant, to thy door.”
He spake; the swineherd went, and as he crossed

The threshold of Penelope she said:—
“Thou bringst him not, Eumaeus? What may be

The wanderer’s scruple? Fear of someone here?

Or in a palace is he filled with awe?

To be a bashful beggar is most hard.”
And thus, Eumaeus, thou didst answer her:

“Rightly he speaks, and just as one would think

Who shuns the encounter of disorderly men.

He prays that thou wilt wait till set of sun;

And better were it for thyself, O queen,

To speak with him and hear his words alone.”
Then spake discreet Penelope again:

“Whoe’er may be the stranger, not unwise

He seems; for nowhere among men are done

Such deeds of wrong and outrage as by these.”
She spake, and the good swineherd, having told

The lady all, went forth among the crowd

Of suitors, drawing near Telemachus,

And bowed his head beside him that none else

Might hear, and said to him in winged words:—
“I go, my friend, to tend the swine and guard

What there thou hast, thy sustenance and mine.

The charge of what is here belongs to thee.

Be thy first care to save thyself, and watch

To see that mischief overtake thee not—

For many are the Achaians plotting it,

Whom Jove destroy ere we become their prey!”
Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn:

“So be it, father, and, when thou hast supped,

Depart, but with the morning come, and bring

Choice victims for the sacrifice. The care

Of all things here is with the gods and me.”
He spake; the swineherd sat him down again

Upon his polished seat, and satisfied

His appetite and thirst with food and wine.

Then he departed to his herd, and left

The palace and the court before it thronged

With revellers, who gave the hour to song,

And joined the dance; for evening now was come.

Book XVIII

Combat of Ulysses and Irus

Ulysses insulted by the beggar Irus—Amusement of the suitors, who encourage the quarrel—Victory of Ulysses in the combat with Irus—Manoeuvre of Penelope to obtain presents from the suitors, and its success—Ulysses insulted by Eurymachus—His reply—The cupbearer struck down by a footstool flung at Ulysses by Eurymachus.

There came a common beggar, wont to ask

Alms through the town of Ithaca, well known

For greediness of stomach, gluttonous

And a wine-bibber, but of little strength

And courage, though he seemed of powerful mould.

Arnaeus was the name which at his birth

His mother gave him, but the young men called

The fellow Irus, for it was his wont

To go on errands, as a messenger,

When he was ordered. Coming now, he thought

To drive Ulysses out of his own house,

And railed at him, and said in winged words:—
“Hence with thee! leave the porch, old man, at once,

Lest thou be taken by the foot and dragged

Away from it. Dost thou not see how all

Around us nod, to bid me drag thee out?

I am ashamed to do it. Rise and go,

Else haply we may have a strife of blows.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, frowned and said:

“Wretch! there is nothing that I do or say

To harm thee aught. I do not envy thee

What others give thee, though the dole be large;

And ample is this threshold for us both.

Nor shouldst thou envy others, for thou seemst

A straggler like myself. The gods bestow

Wealth where they list. But do not challenge me

To blows, lest, aged as I am, thou rouse

My anger, and I make thy breast and lips

Hideous with blood. Tomorrow then will be

A quiet day for me, since thou, I trust,

In all the time to come, wilt never more

Enter the palace of Laertes' son."
The beggar Irus angrily rejoined:

"Ye gods! this glutton prattles volubly,

Like an old woman at the chimney-side.

Yet could I do him mischief, smiting him

On both his sides, and dashing from his cheeks

The teeth to earth, as men are wont to deal

With swine that eat the wheat. Now gird thyself,

Let these men see us fighting. How canst thou

Think to contend with one so young as I?”
Thus fiercely did they wrangle as they stood

Beside the polished threshold and before

The lofty gates. The stout Antinoüs heard,

And, laughing heartily, bespake the rest:—
“Here, friends, is what we never yet have had.

Behold the pleasant pastime which the gods

Provide for us. These men—the stranger here,

And Irus—quarrel, and will come to blows.

Let us stand by and bring the combat on.”
He spake. All rose with laughter and came round

The ragged beggars, while Eupeithes’ son,

Antinoüs, in these words harangued the rest:—
“Ye noble suitors, hear me. At the fire

Already lie the paunches of two goats,

Preparing for our evening meal, and both

Are filled with fat and blood. Whoever shows

Himself the better man in this affray,

And conquers, he shall take the one of these

He chooses, and shall ever afterward

Feast at our table, and no man but he

Shall ever come among us asking alms.”
He ended. All approved his words, and thus

Ulysses, craftily dissembling, said:—
“O friends, it is not well that one so old

As I, and broken by calamity,

Should fight a younger man; but hunger bids,

And I may be o’ercome by blows. But now

Swear all a solemn oath, that none of you,

To favor Irus, wickedly will raise

His mighty hand to smite me, and so aid

My adversary to my overthrow.”
He spake; the suitor-train, assenting, took

The oath, and when they all were duly sworn,

The highborn prince Telemachus began:—
“O stranger, if thy manly heart be moved

To drive him hence, fear no one else of all

The Achaians. Whosoever strikes at thee

Has many to contend with. I am here

The host. Antinoüs and Eurymachus,

Wise men and kings, agree with me in this.”
He spake, and all approved. Ulysses drew

And girt his tatters round his waist and showed

His large and shapely thighs. Unclothed appeared

His full broad shoulders, and his manly breast

And sinewy arms. Minerva stood by him,

And with a mighty breadth of limb endued

The shepherd of the people. Earnestly

The suitors gazed, and wondered at the sight,

And each one, turning to his neighbor, said:—
“Irus, poor Irus, on himself has drawn

An evil fate, for what a sinewy thigh

His adversary shows beneath his rags!”
So talked they, while the heart of Irus sank

Within him; yet the attendants girding him

Forcibly drew him forward, sore afraid,

The muscles quivering over every limb.

And then Antinoüs spake, and chid him thus:—
“Now, boaster, thou deservest not to live,

Nay, nor to have been born, if thou dost fear

And quake at meeting one so old as he,

So broken with the hardships he has borne.

And now I tell thee what will yet be done,

Should he approve himself the better man,

And conquer. I will have thee sent on board

A galley to Epirus, and its king,

The foe of all men living, Echetus,

And he will pare away thy nose and ears

With the sharp steel, and, wrenching out the parts

Of shame, will cast them to be torn by dogs.”
He spake, and Irus shook through all his frame

With greater terror, yet they dragged him on

Into the midst. Both champions lifted up

Their arms. The godlike, much-enduring man,

Ulysses, pondered whether so to strike

His adversary that the breath of life

Might leave him as he fell, or only smite

To stretch him on the earth. As thus he mused,

The lighter blow seemed wisest, lest the Greeks

Should know who dealt it. When the hands of both

Were thus uplifted, Irus gave a blow

On his right shoulder, while Ulysses smote

Irus beneath the ear, and broke the bone

Within, and brought the red blood from his mouth.

He fell amid the dust, and shrieked and gnashed

His teeth, and beat with jerking feet the ground.

The suitor-train threw up their hands and laughed

Till breathless, while Ulysses seized his feet

And drew him o’er the threshold to the court

And the porch doors, and there, beside the wall,

Set him to lean against it, gave a staff

Into his hands, and said in winged words:—

“Sit there, and scare away the dogs and swine,

But think not, wretched creature, to bear rule

Over the stranger and the beggar tribe,

Or worse than this may happen to thee yet.”
He spake, and o’er his shoulders threw the scrip

That yawned with chinks, and by a twisted thong

Was fastened; then he turned to take his seat

Upon the threshold, while the suitor-train

Went back into the palace with gay shouts

Of laughter, and bespake him blandly thus:—
“Stranger, may Jove and all the other gods

Grant thee what thou desirest, and whate’er

Is pleasant to thee! Thou hast put an end

To this importunate beggar’s rounds among

The people. We shall send him off at once

Into Epirus, and to Echetus,

Its king, the foe of every living man.”
So talked the suitors, and the omen made

Ulysses glad. Meantime Antinoüs placed

The mighty paunch before the victor, filled

With blood and fat, and from the canister

Amphinomus brought forth two loaves, and raised

A golden cup and drank to him, and said:—
“Hail, guest and father! happy be thy days

Henceforth, though dark with many sorrows now!”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Amphinomus, thou seemest most discreet,

And such thy father is, of whom I hear

A worshipful report, the good and rich

Dulichian Nisus. Thou, as I am told,

Art son to him, and thou art seemingly

A man of pertinent speech. I therefore say

To thee, and bid thee hear and mark me well,

No being whom earth nourishes to breathe

Her air and move upon her face is more

The sport of circumstance than man. For while

The gods give health, and he is strong of limb,

He thinks no evil in the coming days

Will overtake him. When the blessed gods

Visit him with afflictions, these he bears

Impatiently and with a fretful mind.

Such is the mood of man, while yet he dwells

On earth; it changes as the All-Father gives

The sunshine or withholds it. I was once

Deemed fortunate among my fellow-men,

And many things that were unjust I did;

For in my strength and in my father’s power,

And valor of my brothers, I had put

My trust. Let no man, therefore, dare to be

Unjust in aught, but tranquilly enjoy

Whatever good the gods vouchsafe to give.

Yet are these suitors guilty of foul wrong,

Wasting the substance and dishonoring

The wife of one who will not, as I deem,

Remain long distant from his friends and home,

But is already near. O, may some god

Remove thee from this danger to thy home!

Nor mayst thou meet him when he shall return

To his own land. For when he comes once more

Beneath this roof, and finds the suitors here,

Not without bloodshed will their parting be.”

He spake, and, pouring out a part, he drank

The wine, and gave the goblet to the prince,

Who crossed the hall, and sorrowfully shook

His head, for now already did his heart

Forebode the coming evil. Not by this

Did he escape his death. Minerva laid

A snare for him, that he might fall beneath,

The strong arm of Telemachus. He went

And took the seat from which he lately rose.

Then blue-eyed Pallas moved Penelope,

Sage daughter of Icarius, to appear

Before the suitors, that their base intent

Might be more fully seen, and she might win

More honor from her husband and her son.

Wherefore she forced a laugh, and thus began:—

“Eurynomè, I would at length appear,

Though not till now, before the suitor-train,

Detested as they are. I there would speak

A word of timely warning to my son,

And give him counsel not to trust himself

Too much among the suitors, who are fair

In speech, but mean him foully in their hearts.”
Eurynomè, the household matron, said:

“Assuredly, my child, thou speakest well.

Go now, and warn thy son, and keep back naught.

First bathe, and, ere thou go, anoint thy cheeks,

Nor show them stained with tears. It is not well

To sorrow without end. For now thy son

Is grown, and thou beholdest him at length

What thou didst pray the gods, when he was born,

That he might yet become, a bearded man.”
And then the sage Penelope rejoined:

“Though anxious for my sake, persuade me not,

Eurynomè, to bathe, nor to anoint

My cheeks with oil. The gods inhabiting

Olympus took away their comeliness

When in his roomy ships my husband sailed;

But bid Antinoe come, and call with her

Hippodameïa, that they both may stand

Beside me in the hall. I will not go

Alone among the men, for very shame.”
She spake, the aged dame went forth to bear

The message, and to bring the women back.

While blue-eyed Pallas had yet other cares,

She brought a balmy sleep, and shed it o’er

The daughter of Icarius, as she lay

Reclined upon her couch, her limbs relaxed

In rest. The glorious goddess gave a dower

Of heavenly graces, that the Achaian chiefs

Might look on her amazed. She lighted up

Her fair face with a beauty all divine,

Such as the queenly Cytherea wears

When in the mazes of the dance she joins

The Graces. Then she made her to the sight

Of loftier stature and of statelier size,

And fairer than the ivory newly carved.

This having done, the gracious power withdrew,

While from the palace came the white-armed maids,

And prattled as they came. The balmy sleep

Forsook their mistress at the sound. She passed

Her hands across her cheeks, and thus she spake:—
"'Twas a sweet sleep that, in my wretchedness,

Wrapped me just now. Would that, this very hour,

The chaste Diana by so soft a death

Might end me, that my days might be no more

Consumed in sorrow for a husband lost,

Of peerless worth, the noblest of the Greeks."
She spake, and from the royal bower went down,

Yet not alone; two maidens went with her.

And when that most august of womankind

Drew near the suitors, at the door she stopped

Of that magnificent hall, and o'er her cheeks

Let fall the lustrous veil, while on each side

A modest maiden stood. The suitors all

Felt their knees tremble, and were sick with love,

And all desired her. Then the queen bespake

Telemachus, her well-beloved son:—
“Telemachus, thy judgment is not firm,

Nor dost thou think aright. While yet a boy

Thy thought was wiser. Now that thou art grown,

And on the verge of manhood, so that one

Who comes from far and sees thy noble part

And stature well may say thou art the son

Of a most fortunate father, yet to think

And judge discreetly thou art not as then,

For what a deed is this which has been done

Even here! Thou hast allowed a stranger guest

To be assaulted rudely. How is this?

If one who sits a guest beneath our roof

Be outraged thus, be sure it brings to thee

Great shame and rank dishonor among men.”
To this discreet Telemachus replied:

“Mother, I cannot take it ill that thou

Shouldst be offended. But of many things

I have a clear discernment, and can weigh

The good and bad. I was till now a child,

Yet even now I cannot always see

The wiser course. These men bewilder me,

As, sitting side by side, they lay their plots

Against me, and I have no helper here.

When Irus and the stranger fought, the strife

Had no such issue as the suitors wished.

The stranger conquered. Would to Father Jove,

To Pallas and Apollo, that the crew

Of suitors here might sit with nodding heads

Struck down upon the spot, within these halls

Or in the courts, and all with powerless limbs,

As Irus sits beside the gate and nods,

Like one o’ercome with wine, nor can he stand

Upon his feet, nor go to where he dwells,

If home he has, so feeble are his limbs.”
So talked the twain awhile; then interposed

Eurymachus, and thus bespake the queen:—
“Sage daughter of Icarius! if all those

Who in Iäsian Argos have their homes

Should once behold thee, a still larger crowd

Of suitors would tomorrow come and feast

Within thy halls, so much dost thou excel

In mind and form and face all womankind.”
To this the sage Penelope replied:

“Eurymachus, the immortals took away

Such grace of form and face as once was mine,

What time the sons of Argos sailed for Troy,

And with them went Ulysses, my espoused.

Should he return, and take again in charge

My household, greater would my glory be,

And prized more highly. I am wretched now,

Such woes the gods have heaped upon my head.

He, when he left his native island, grasped

My right hand at the wrist, and said to me:

‘Think not, dear wife, that all the well-armed Greeks

Will come back safe from Troy. The Trojan men,

They say, are brave in war, expert to cast

The spear and wing the arrow, skilled to rein

The rapid steeds by which the bloody strife

Of battlefields is hurried to its close;

And therefore whether God will bring me back,

Or I shall fall in Troy, I cannot know.

Take charge of all things here. I leave with thee

My father and my mother in these halls.

Be kind to them as now, nay, more than now,

Since I shall not be here. When thou shalt see

My son a bearded man, take to thyself

A husband, whom thou wilt, and leave thy house.’

Such were his words, and they have been fulfilled.

The night will come in which I must endure

This hateful marriage, wretched that I am,

To whom the will of Jupiter forbids

All consolation, and this bitter thought

Weighs evermore upon my heart and soul.

The custom was not thus in other times;

When suitors wooed a noble wife, the child

Of some rich house, contending for her smile,

They came with beeves and fatling sheep to feast

The damsel’s friends, and gave munificent gifts,

But wasted not the wealth that was not theirs.”
She spake, Ulysses was rejoiced to see

That thus she sought to draw from each a gift,

With fair and artful words. Yet were his thoughts

Intent on other plans. Eupeithes’ son,

Antinoüs, thus made answer to the queen:—
“Sage daughter of Icarius, only deign

To take the gifts which any of the Greeks

Will bring—nor is it gracious to reject

A present—yet be sure we go not hence,

To our estates nor elsewhere, till thou make

A bridegroom of the best Achaian here.”
So spake Antinoüs. All approved his words,

And each sent forth a herald for his gift.

The herald of Antinoüs brought to him

A robe of many colors, beautiful

And ample, with twelve golden clasps, which each

Had its well-fitted eye. Eurymachus

Received a golden necklace, richly wrought,

And set with amber beads, that glowed as if

With sunshine. To Eurydamas there came

A pair of earrings, each a triple gem,

Daintily fashioned and of exquisite grace.

Two servants bore them. From Pisander’s house—

Son of the Prince Polyctor—there was brought

A collar of rare beauty. Thus did each

Bestow a different yet becoming gift.

And then that most august of women went

Back to the upper chambers with her maids,

Who bore the sumptuous presents, while below

The suitors turned them to the dance and song,

Amused till evening came. Its darkness stole

Over their pastime. Then they brought and placed

Three hearths to light the palace, heaping them

With wood, well dried and hard and newly cleft.

With this they mingled flaming brands. The maids

Of the great sufferer, Ulysses, fed

The fire by turns. To them the hero spake:—
"Ye maidens of a sovereign absent long,

Withdraw to where your highborn mistress sits;

There turn the spindle, seeking to amuse

Her lonely hours; there comb with your own hands

The fleece, and I will see that these have light.

Even though they linger till the Morn is here

In her bright car, they cannot overcome

My patience. I am practised to endure.”
So spake he, and the maidens, as they heard,

Cast at each other meaning looks, and laughed,

And one Melantho, of the rosy cheeks,

Railed at him impudently. She was born

To Dolius, but Penelope had reared

The damsel as a daughter of her own,

And given her, for her pleasure, many things;

Yet for the sorrows of Penelope

Melantho little cared. Eurymachus

Had made the girl his paramour. She spake,

And chid Ulysses with unmannerly words:—
“Outlandish wretch! thou must be one whose brain

Is turned, since thou wilt neither go to sleep

Within a smithy, nor in any place

Of public shelter, but wilt stay and prate

Among this company with no restraint

Or reverence. Either wine has stolen away

Thy senses, or thy natural mood, perchance,

Prompts thee to chatter idly. Art thou proud

Of conquering Irus, that poor vagabond?

Beware lest someone of robuster arms

Than Irus seize and thrust thee out of doors

With a bruised head and face begrimed with blood.”
The sage Ulysses frowned on her and said:

“Impudent one, Telemachus shall hear

From me the saucy words which thou hast said,

And he will come and hew thee limb from limb.”
He spake; the damsels, frightened at his words,

Fled through the hall, and shook in every limb

With terror, lest his threat should be fulfilled.

He meantime stood beside the kindled hearths

And fed the flames, and, looking on the crowd

Of suitors, brooded in his secret heart

O’er plans that would not fail to be fulfilled.
But Pallas suffered not the suitors yet

To cease from railing speeches, all the more

To wound the spirit of Laertes’ son.

Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,

Began to scoff at him, and thus he spake

To wake the ready laughter of the rest:—

“Hear me, ye suitors of the illustrious queen.

I speak the thought that comes into my mind.

Led by some god, no doubt, this man has come

Into the palace; for the light we have

Of torches seems to issue from the crown

Of his bald pate, a head without a hair.”
So said Eurymachus, and then bespake

Ulysses, the destroyer of walled towns:—
“Stranger, if I accept thee, wilt thou serve

Upon the distant parts of my estate?

There shalt thou have fair wages, and shalt bring

The stones in heaps together, and shalt plant

Tall trees, and I will feed thee through the year,

And give thee clothes, and sandals for thy feet.

But thou art used, no doubt, to idle ways,

And never dost thou work with willing hands,

But dost prefer to roam the town and beg,

Purveying for thy gluttonous appetite.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:—

“Eurymachus, if we were matched in work

Against each other in the time of spring

When days are long, and both were mowing grass,

And I had a curved scythe in hand and thou

Another, that we might keep up the strife

Till nightfall, fasting, mid the abundant grass;

Or if there were a yoke of steers to drive,

The sturdiest of their kind, sleek, large, well fed,

Of equal age, and equal strength to bear

The labor, and both strong, and if the field

Were of four acres, with a soil through which

The plough could cleave its way—then shouldst thou

see

How evenly my furrow would be turned.

Or should the son of Saturn send today

War from abroad, and I had but a shield,

Two spears, and, fitted to my brows, a helm

Of brass, thou wouldst behold me pressing on

Among the foremost warriors, and would see

No cause to rail at my keen appetite.

But arrogantly thou dost bear thyself,

And pitilessly; thou in thine own eyes

Art great and mighty, since thou dost consort

With few, and those are not the best of men.

Yet should Ulysses come to his own land,

These gates that seem so wide would suddenly

Become too narrow for thee in thy flight.”

He spake. Eurymachus grew yet more wroth,

And frowned on him, and said in winged words:—
"Wretch! I shall do thee mischief. Thou art bold,

And babblest unabashed among us all.

The wine, perhaps, is in thy foolish head,

Or thou art always thus, and ever prone

To prattle impudently. Art thou proud

Of conquering Irus, that poor vagabond?"
Thus having said, he brandished in the air

A footstool; but Ulysses, to escape

The anger of Eurymachus, sat down

Before the knees of the Dulichian prince,

Amphinomus. The footstool flew, and struck

On the right arm the cupbearer. Down fell

The beaker ringing; he who bore it lay

Stretched in the dust. Then in those shadowy halls

The suitors rose in tumult. One of them

Looked at another by his side, and said:—
“Would that this vagabond had met his death

Ere he came hither. This confusion, then,

Had never been. ’Tis for a beggar’s sake

We wrangle, and the feast will henceforth give

No pleasure; we shall go from bad to worse.”
Then rose in majesty Telemachus,

And said: “Ye are not in your senses sure,

Unhappy men, who cannot eat and drink

In peace. Some deity, no doubt, has moved

Your minds to frenzy. Now, when each of you

Has feasted well, let each withdraw to sleep,

Just when he will. I drive no man away.”
He spake; the suitors heard, and bit their lips,

And wondered at Telemachus, who spake

So resolutely. Then Amphinomus,

The son of Nisus Aretiades,

Stood forth, harangued the suitor-crowd, and said:—
“O friends! let no one here with carping words

Seek to deny what is so justly said,

Nor yet molest the stranger, nor do harm

To any of the servants in the halls

Of the great chief Ulysses. Now let him

Who brings the guests their wine begin and fill

The cups, that, pouring to the gods their part,

We may withdraw to sleep. The stranger here

Leave me within the palace, and in charge

Of him to whom he came, Telemachus.”
He ended. All were pleased, and Mutlus then,

Hero and herald from Dulichium’s coast,

And follower of the prince Amphinomus,

Mingled a jar of wine, and went to each,

Dispensing it. They to the blessed gods

Poured first a part, and then they drank themselves

The generous juice. And when the wine was poured,

And they had drunk what each desired, they went

Homeward to slumber, each in his abode.

Book XIX

Ulysses Recognized by Eurycleia

Removal of the weapons from the hall by Ulysses and his son—Interview of Penelope and Ulysses, who tells her that he has seen her husband in Crete, describes his person and dress, and affirms that within a month he will be in Ithaca—The bath administered to Ulysses by Eurycleia, who recognizes him by a scar on his leg—Narrative of the manner in which the scar was caused.

Now was the godlike chief Ulysses left

In his own palace, planning, with the aid

Of Pallas, to destroy the suitor-train,

And thus bespake his son with winged words:—

“Now is the time, Telemachus, to take

The weapons that are here, and store them up

In the inner rooms. Then, if the suitors ask

The reason, answer them with specious words:

Say, ‘I have put them where there comes no smoke.

Since even now they do not seem the arms

Left by Ulysses when he sailed for Troy,

So tarnished are they by the breath of fire;

And yet another reason sways my mind,

The prompting of some god, that ye, when flushed

With wine and in the heat of a dispute,

May smite and wound each other, and disgrace

The banquet and your wooing; for the sight

Of steel doth draw men on to violence.’ ”
He ended, and Telemachus obeyed

His father’s words, and calling forth his nurse,

The aged Eurycleia, said to her:—
“Go, nurse, and see the women all shut up

In their own place, while in our inner room

I lay away my father’s beautiful arms,

Neglected long, and sullied by the smoke,

While he was absent. I was then a child,

But now would keep them from the breath of fire.”
And thus the nurse, Dame Eurycleia, said:

“Would that at length, my child, thou didst exert

Thy proper wisdom here, and take in charge

Thy house and thy possessions. But who goes

With thee to bear a torch, since none of these,

Thy handmaids, are allowed to light thy way?”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“This stranger. No man may be idle here

Who eats my bread, though from a distant land.”
He spake, nor flew his words in vain. The nurse

Closed all the portals of that noble pile.

Ulysses and his glorious son in haste

Bore off the helmets, and the bossy shields,

And the sharp spears, while Pallas held to them

A golden lamp, that shed a fair clear light.

Then to his father spake Telemachus:—
“Father! my eyes behold a marvel. All

The palace walls, each beautiful recess,

The fir-tree beams, the aspiring columns, shine,

Before my eyes, as with a blaze of fire.

Some god is surely here, someone of those

Who make their dwelling in the high broad heaven.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Keep silence; give thy thought no speech, nor ask

Concerning aught. Such is the wont of those

Who dwell upon Olympus. Now withdraw

To rest upon thy couch, while I remain,

For I would move thy mother and her maids

To ask of what concerns me. She, I deem,

Full sadly will inquire of many things.”
He spake; Telemachus departed thence,

By torchlight, to his chamber, there to rest

Where he was wont to lie when gentle sleep

Came over him. There lay he down to wait

The hallowed morning, while Ulysses, left

Within the palace, meditated still

Death to the suitors with Minerva’s aid.
The sage Penelope now left her bower;

Like Dian or like golden Venus came

The queen. Beside the hearth they placed for her

The throne where she was wont to sit, inlaid

With ivory and silver, which of yore

The artisan Icmalius wrought. They laid

Close to the throne a footstool, over which

Was spread an ample fleece. On this sat down

The sage Penelope. Her white-armed train

Of handmaids came with her; they cleared away

The abundant feast, and bore the tables off,

And cups from which those insolent men had drunk;

They laid upon the ground the lighted brands,

And heaped fresh fuel round them, both for light

And warmth. And now Melantho once again

Bespake Ulysses with unmannerly words:—
"Stranger, wilt thou forever be a pest,

Ranging the house at night to play the spy

Upon the women? Leave the hall, thou wretch!

And gorge thyself without, else wilt thou go

Suddenly, driven by blows and flaming brands."
The sage Ulysses frowned on her, and said:

"Pert creature! why so fiercely rail at me?

Is it that I am squalid and ill-clad,

And forced by want to beg from hand to hand?

Such is the fate of poor and wandering men.

I too was opulent once, inhabiting

A plenteous home among my fellow-men,

And often gave the wanderer alms, whoe’er

He might be and in whatsoever need;

And I had many servants, and large store

Of things by which men lead a life of ease

And are called rich. But Jupiter, the son

Of Saturn, put an end to this, for so

It pleased the god. Now, therefore, woman, think

That thou mayst lose the beauty which is now

Thy pride among the serving-women here;

Thy mistress may be wroth, and make thy life

A hard one; or Ulysses may come back—

And there is hope of that. Or if it be

That he has perished, and returns no more,

There still remains his son Telemachus,

Who by Apollo’s grace is now a man,

And no one of the women in these halls

May think to misbehave, and yet escape

His eye, for he no longer is a boy.”
He spake; Penelope, the prudent, heard,

And, calling to her maid, rebuked her thus:—
“O bold and shameless! I have taken note

Of thy behavior; thou hast done a wrong

For which thy head should answer. Well thou know’st,

For thou hast heard me say, that I would ask

The stranger in these halls if aught he knows

Of my Ulysses, for whose sake I grieve.”
Then to the matron of the household turned

The queen, and thus bespake Eurynomè:—
“Bring now a seat, Eurynomè, and spread

A fleece upon it, where the stranger guest

May sit at ease, and hear what I shall say,

And answer me, for I have much to ask.”
She spake; the ancient handmaid brought with speed

A polished seat, and o’er it spread a fleece.

Ulysses, much-enduring chief, sat down,

And thus the sage Penelope began:—
“First will I ask thee who thou art, and whence,

Where is thy birthplace, and thy parents who?”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“O lady, none in all the boundless earth

Can speak of thee with blame. Thy fame has reached

To the great heavens. It is like the renown

Of some most excellent king, of godlike sway

O’er many men and mighty, who upholds

Justice in all his realm. The dark-soiled earth

Brings wheat and barley forth; the trees are bowed

With fruit; the meadows swarm with noble herds,

The sea with fish, and under his wise reign

The people prosper. Therefore ask, I pray,

Of other things, while I am underneath

Thy palace-roof, but of my race and home

Inquire not, lest thou waken in my mind

Unhappy memories. I am a man

Of sorrow, and it would become me ill

To sit lamenting in another’s house

And shedding tears. Besides, a grief indulged

Doth grow in violence. Thy maids would blame,

And thou perhaps, and ye would call my tears

The maudlin tears of one o’ercome with wine.”
Then spake the sage Penelope again:

“Stranger, such grace of feature and of form

As once I had the immortals took away,

What time the Argive warriors sailed for Troy,

And my Ulysses with them. Could he now

Return to rule my household as of yore,

The wider and the brighter were my fame.

But now I lead a wretched life, so great

And many are the evils which some god

Heaps on me. For the chieftains who bear sway

Over the isles—Dulichium, and the fields

Of Samos, and Zacynthus dark with woods,

And those who rule in sunny Ithaca—

Woo me against my will, and waste away

My substance. Therefore have I small regard

For strangers and for suppliants, and the tribe

Of heralds, servants of the public weal,

But, pining for Ulysses, wear away

My life. The suitors urge the marriage rite,

And I with art delay it. Once some god

Prompted me to begin an ample web,

Wide and of subtle texture, in my rooms.

And then I said: 'Youths, who are pressing me

To marriage, since Ulysses is no more,

Urge me no further till I shall complete—

That so the threads may not be spun in vain—

This shroud for old Laertes, when grim fate

And death’s long sleep at last shall overtake

The hero; else among the multitude

Of Grecian women I shall bear the blame,

If one whose ample wealth so well was known

Should lie in death without a funeral robe.’

I spake, and easily their minds were swayed

By what I said, and I began to weave

The ample web, but ravelled it again

By torchlight every evening. For three years

I foiled them thus; but when the fourth year came,

And brought its train of hours and changing moons,

And many days had passed, they came on me,

And through my maidens’ fault, a careless crew,

They caught me at my fraud, and chid me sore.

So, though unwilling, I was forced to end

My task, and cannot longer now escape

The marriage, nor is any refuge left.

My parents both exhort me earnestly

To choose a husband, and my son with grief

Beholds the suitors wasting his estate,

And he already is a man and well

Can rule his household; Jupiter bestows so.

Such honor on him. Now, I pray, declare

Thy lineage, for thou surely art not sprung

From the old fabulous oak, nor from a rock."
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her:

"O royal consort of Laertes' son!

Wilt thou still ask my lineage? I will then

Disclose it, but thou wakest in my heart

New sorrows. So it ever is with one

Who long, like me, is far away from home,

Wandering in many realms, and suffering much;

But since thou dost require it, thou shalt hear.
“Crete is a region lying in the midst

Of the black deep, a fair and fruitful land,

Girt by the waters. Many are the men,

Nay, numberless, who make it their abode,

And ninety are its cities. Different tongues

Are spoken by the dwellers of the isle.

In part they are Achaians, and in part

Are Cretans of the soil, a gallant stock;

There dwell Cydonians, Dorians of three tribes,

And proud Pelasgians. Their great capital

Is Knossos, where the monarch Minos dwelt,

He who at every nine years' end conferred

With Jove almighty; and to him was born

Deucalion, my brave father, who begat

Me and Idomeneus, the King of Crete.

To Ilium in his beaked galleys sailed

Idomeneus with Atreus' sons. My name—

A name well known—is Aethon. 'Twas at Crete

I saw Ulysses, who received from me

The welcome due a guest. A violent wind

Had driven him from Maleia and the course

That led to Ilium, and had carried him

To Crete, and lodged him in the dangerous port

Amnisus, close to Ilithyia's cave,

Where scarce his fleet escaped the hurricane.

Thence came he to the city, and inquired

For King Idomeneus, who was, he said,

His dear and honored guest; but he had sailed

Ten days before, perhaps eleven, for Troy,

In his beaked galleys. To the palace there

I led Ulysses, and with liberal cheer

Welcomed the chief, for plentifully stored

The royal dwelling was. I also gave

Meal from the public magazines to him

And those who followed him, and dark red wine

Brought from the country round, and beeves to slay

In sacrifice, that so their hearts might feel

No lack of aught. Twelve days the noble Greeks

Remained with us. A violent north-wind,

Which scarcely suffered them to stand upright

On shore, withstood them. Some unfriendly power

Had bid it blow; but on the thirteenth day

Its fury ceased, and the fleet put to sea.”
Thus went he on, inventing tales that seemed

Like truth. She listened, melting into tears

That flowed as when on mountain height the snow,

Shed by the west-wind, feels the east-wind’s breath,

And flows in water, and the hurrying streams

Are filled; so did Penelope’s fair cheeks

Seem to dissolve in tears—tears shed for him

Who sat beside her even then. He saw

His weeping wife, and pitied her at heart;

Yet were his eyes like iron or like horn,

And moved not in their lids; for artfully

He kept his tears from falling. When the queen

Had ceased to weep, she answered him and said:—
“Now, stranger, let me prove thee, if in truth

Thou didst receive, as thou hast just declared,

In thine abode, my husband and his train

Of noble friends. Describe the garb he wore;

How looked he, and the friends he brought with him?”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her:

“O lady, hard it is to answer thee,

So long have I been far away from home.

’Tis now the twentieth year since he was there

And left the isle, but, as my memory bids,

So will I speak. A fleecy purple cloak

Ulysses wore, a double web; the clasp

Was golden, with two fastenings, and in front

It showed a work of rare design—a hound

That held in his forepaws a spotted fawn,

Struggling before his open mouth. Although

The figures were of gold, we all admired

The hound intent to break his victim’s neck,

The fawn that, writhing, plied her nimble feet

To free herself. Around the hero’s chest

And waist I saw a lustrous tunic worn,

Soft, like the thin film of the onion dried,

And bright as sunshine; many ladies looked

With wonder on it. Yet consider this;

I know not whether thus attired he left

His home, or whether, in the voyage thence,

Some comrade gave the garments, or perhaps

Some friendly host, for he was very dear

To many; among the Greeks were few like him.

I gave him, from myself, a brazen sword,

And a fair purple cloak, a double web,

Besides a tunic reaching to his feet,

And with due honors sent him on his way

In his good ship. There came and went with him

A herald somewhat older than himself;

Let me portray him—hunchbacked, swarthy skinned,

And curly haired, Eurybates his name.

Ulysses honored him above the rest

Of his companions, for they thought alike.”
He ceased; the queen was moved to deeper grief,

For she remembered all the tokens well

Of which he spake; and when that passionate gust

Of weeping ceased, she spake again and said:—
“Stranger, till now thy presence in these halls

Has only moved my pity; thou henceforth

Art dear and honored. It was I who gave

The garments thou hast told me of; these hands

Folded them in my chamber. I put on

The glittering clasp to be his ornament,

And now I never shall behold him more

Returning to his own dear land and home;

So cruel was the fate that took him hence

To Ilium, in his roomy ship, a town

Of evil omen never to be named."

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

"O gracious consort of Laertes' son!

Let not thy grief for him whom thou hast lost

Wither thy beauty longer, and consume

Thy heart. And yet I blame thee not at all;

For any wife in losing him to whom

She gave herself while yet a maid, and bore

Children, will mourn him, though he be in worth

Below Ulysses, who, as fame declares,

Is like the gods. But cease to grieve, and hear

What I shall say, and I shall speak the truth,

Nor will I hide from thee that I have heard,

But lately from Ulysses, yet alive,

And journeying homeward, in the opulent realm

Of the Thesprotians, whence he brings with him

Much and rare treasure, gathered there among

The people. His beloved friends he lost,

And his good ship; the black deep swallowed them

In coming from Trinacria, for his crew

Had slaughtered there the oxen of the Sun.

The Sun and Jove were angry; therefore all

His comrades perished in the billowy sea;

But him upon his galley’s keel the wind

Drove to the coast where the Phaeacians dwell,

The kinsmen of the gods. They welcomed him,

And honored him as if he were a god,

And gave him many things, and would have sent

The hero safely to his native isle;

And here Ulysses would have been long since,

But that he deemed it wise to travel far,

And gather wealth—for well Ulysses knew,

Beyond all other men, the arts of gain,

And none in these could think to rival him;

So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians said,

Who also, in his palace, swore to me—

As to the gods of heaven he poured the wine—

That even then a galley was drawn down

Into the water, and already manned

With rowers, who should take Ulysses home.

But me he first dismissed, for at the time

A barque of the Thesprotians left the port,

Bound for Dulichium’s cornfields. Ere I went

He showed the treasures of Ulysses stored

In the king’s palace—treasures that might serve

To feed the household of another chief

To the tenth generation. He who owned

That wealth was at Dodona, so the king

Declared, inquiring, at the lofty oak

Of Jupiter, the counsel of the god

How to return to his dear native land,

So long a wanderer—whether openly

Or else by stealth. So he is safe, and soon

Will he be nearer to us; for not long

Can he remain away from all his friends

And fatherland. To this I plight my oath;

Let Jove, the greatest and the best of gods,

Be witness, and this hearth of the good prince

Ulysses, where I sit, that every word

Which I have said to thee will be fulfilled.

Within the year Ulysses will return,

As this month passes and the next comes in."
Then spake the sage Penelope again:

"Would that it might be thus, O stranger guest,

As thou hast said; then shouldst thou have such thanks

And bounty at my hands that everyone

Who meets thee should rejoice with thee. And yet

The thought abides with me, and so indeed

It must be, that Ulysses will no more

Return, nor wilt thou find an escort hence;

For now no master like Ulysses rules—

And what a man was he!—within these walls,

To welcome or dismiss the honored guest.

But now, ye maidens, let the stranger bathe,

And spread his couch with blankets, fleecy cloaks,

And showy tapestries, that he may lie

Warm till the Morning, in her golden car,

Draw near; then with the early morn again

Bathe and anoint him, that he may sit down

Beside Telemachus prepared to take

His morning meal. Ill shall he fare who dares

Molest the stranger; he shall have no place

Or office here, however he may rage.

And how, O stranger, wouldst thou learn that I

In mind and thoughtful wisdom am above

All other women, if I let thee sit

Squalid and meanly clad at banquets here?

Short is the life of man, and whoso bears

A cruel heart, devising cruel things,

On him men call down evil from the gods

While living, and pursue him, when he dies,

With scoffs. But whoso is of generous heart

And harbors generous aims, his guests proclaim

His praises far and wide to all mankind,

And numberless are they who call him good.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“O gracious consort of Laertes’ son!

Such cloaks and splendid coverings please me not,

Since in my long-oared barque I left behind

The snowy peaks of Crete. I still will lie,

As I am wont through many a sleepless night,

On a mean couch to wait the holy Morn

Upon her car of gold. I do not like

This washing of the feet. No maiden here

That ministers to thee may touch my foot;

But if among them be some aged dame

And faithful, who has suffered in her life

As I have suffered, she may touch my feet.”
And thus the sage Penelope rejoined:

“Dear guest—for never to these halls has come

A stranger so discreet or better liked

By me, so wisely thou dost speak, and well—

I have an aged prudent dame, whose care

Reared my unfortunate husband. She received

The nursling when his mother brought him forth,

And she, though small her strength, will wash thy feet.

Rise, prudent Eurycleia, thou shalt wash

The feet of one whose years must be the same

As thy own master’s; such is doubtless now

Ulysses, with such wrinkled feet and hands.

For quickly doth misfortune make men old.”
She spake; the aged handmaid hid her face

With both her hands, and, shedding bitter tears,

Thus sorrowfully to the queen replied:—

“My heart is sad for thee, my son; and yet

I can do nothing. Can it be that Jove

Hates thee beyond all other? though thyself

So reverent to the gods? No man on earth

Has burned so many thighs of fatling beasts

And chosen hecatombs as thou to Jove

The Thunderer, with prayer that thou mayst reach

A calm old age, and rear thy glorious son

To manhood; yet the god hath cut thee off

From thy return forever. Even now

Perchance the women of some princely house

Which he has entered in some distant land

Scoff at him as these wretched creatures scoff

At thee, O stranger, who, to shun their taunts

And insults, wilt not suffer them to wash

Thy feet. The sage Penelope commands,

And I am not unwilling. I will wash

Thy feet, both for her sake and for thy own;

For deeply am I moved at sight of thee.

Hear what I say: of strangers in distress

Come many hither, yet have I beheld

No one who bears, in shape and voice and feet,

Such likeness to our absent lord as thou."
Ulysses, the sagacious, thus replied:

"O aged woman, so has it been said

By all who have beheld both him and me.

They all declare that we are very like

Each other; thou in this hast spoken well."
He spake; she took a shining vase designed

For washing feet, and poured cold water in

In large abundance, and warm water next.

Ulysses, who had sat before the hearth,

Moved to a darker spot, for in his mind

The thought arose that she might find a scar

Upon his limbs in handling them, and thus

His secret would be known. She came and bathed

His feet, and found the scar. ’Twas where a boar

With his white tooth had gashed the limb, as once

He journeyed to Parnassus, where he paid

A visit to Autolycus and his sons,

His mother’s noble father, who excelled

All men in craft and oaths, such was the gift

Conferred on him by Hermes; for to him

Autolycus made grateful offerings,

The thighs of lambs and kids, and evermore

The god was with him. Once Autolycus

Came to the opulent realm of Ithaca,

And found his daughter with a son new born;

There Eurycleia placed upon his knees

The infant, just as he had supped, and said:—
“Give this dear babe, Autolycus, a name—

Thy daughter’s son, vouchsafed to many prayers.”
And thus Autolycus in answer spake:

“Daughter and son-in-law, be his the name

That I shall give. In coming to his isle

I bear the hate of many—both of men

And women—scattered o’er the nourishing earth;

Name him Ulysses therefore, and when, grown

To man’s estate, he visits the proud halls

Reared at Parnassus, where his mother dwelt

And my possessions lie, I will bestow

A share on him, and send him home rejoiced.”
    And therefore went Ulysses to receive

The promised princely gifts. Autolycus

And all his sons received him with kind words,

And friendly grasp of hands. Amphithea there—

His mother’s mother—took him in her arms,

And kissed his brow and both his beautiful eyes.

Then to his noble sons Autolycus

Called to prepare a feast, and they obeyed.

They brought and slew a steer of five years old,

And flayed and dressed it, hewed the joints apart,

And sliced the flesh, and fixed it upon spits,

Roasted it carefully, and gave to each

His part. So all the day till set of sun

They feasted, to the full content of all.

And when the sun had set, and earth grew dark,

They laid them down, and took the gift of sleep.

But when the rosy-fingered Morn appeared,

Born of the Dawn, forth issued the young men,

The children of Autolycus, with hounds,

To hunt, attended by their noble guest,

Ulysses. Up the steeps of that high mount

Parnassus, clothed with woods, they climbed, and soon

Were on its airy heights. The sun, new risen

From the deep ocean’s gently flowing stream,

Now smote the fields. The hunters reached a dell;

The hounds before them tracked the game; behind

Followed the children of Autolycus.

The generous youth Ulysses, brandishing

A spear of mighty length, came pressing on

Close to the hounds. There lay a huge wild boar

Within a thicket, where moist-blowing winds

Came not, nor in his brightness could the sun

Pierce with his beams the covert, nor the rain

Pelt through, so closely grew the shrubs. The ground

Was heaped with sheddings of the withered leaves.

Around him came the noise of dogs and men

Approaching swiftly. From his lair he sprang

And faced them, with the bristles on his neck

Upright, and flashing eyes. Ulysses rushed

Before the others, with the ponderous spear

Raised high in his strong hand intent to smite.

The boar was first to strike; he dealt a blow

Sidelong, and gashed his foe above the knee,

And tore the flesh, but left untouched the bone.

Ulysses, striking with his burnished spear

The boar’s right shoulder, drove the weapon through.

He fell with piercing cries amid the dust,

And the life left him. Then around their guest

The kindly children of Autolycus

Came and bound up with care the wound, and stanched

With spells the dark blood of the blameless youth,

And hastened with him to their father’s home.

And when Autolycus and they his sons

Had seen him wholly healed, they loaded him

With presents, and, rejoicing for his sake,

Sent him rejoicing back to Ithaca.

His father and his gracious mother there

Rejoiced in turn, and asked him of the scar,

And how it came, and he related all—

How by the white tusk of a savage boar

The wound was given on the Parnassian heights,

As he was hunting with her father’s sons.
The aged woman, as she took the foot

Into her hands, perceived by touch the scar,

And, letting fall the limb, it struck the vase.

Loud rang the brass, the vase was overturned,

And poured the water forth. At once a rush

Of gladness and of grief came o’er her heart.

Tears filled her eyes, and her clear voice was choked.

She touched Ulysses on the chin, and said:—
“Dear child! thou art Ulysses, of a truth.

I knew thee not till I had touched the scar.”

So speaking, toward Penelope she turned

Her eyes, about to tell her that her lord

Was in the palace; but the queen saw not,

And all that passed was unperceived by her,

For Pallas turned her thoughts another way.

Meantime, Ulysses on the nurse's throat

Laid his right hand, and with the other drew

The aged woman nearer him, and said:—

"Nurse, wouldst thou ruin me, who drew long since

Milk from thy bosom, and who now return,

After much suffering borne for twenty years,

To mine own land? Now then, since thou hast learned

The truth—by prompting of some god, no doubt—

Keep silence, lest some others in the house

Should learn it also. Else—I tell thee this,

And will perform my word—if God permit

That I o’ercome the arrogant suitor-crew,

Nurse as thou art, I spare not even thee,

When in these halls the other maidens die.”
Then thus the prudent Eurycleia said:

“What words, my son, have passed thy lips? for well

Thou knowest my firm mind; it never yields.

Like solid rock or steel I keep my trust.

This let me tell thee, and, I pray thee, keep

My words in mind. If, by the aid of God,

Thou overcome the arrogant suitor-crew,

Then will I name the handmaids that disgrace

Thy household, and point out the innocent.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, thus rejoined:

“Why name them, nurse? It needs not. I myself

Shall watch them, and shall know them all. Hold thou

Thy peace, and leave the issue with the gods.”
He spake; the aged woman left the place

To bring a second bath, for on the floor

The first was spilled. When she had bathed his feet

And made them smooth with oil, Ulysses drew

Close to the hearth his seat again, to take

The warmth, and with his tatters hid the scar.

And thus the sage Penelope began:—
“Stranger, but little longer will I yet

Inquire; the hour of grateful rest is near

For those who, though unhappy, can receive

The balm of slumber. Yet for me some god

Appoints immeasurable grief. All day

In sorrows and in sighs, my solace is

To oversee my maidens at their tasks

Here in the palace; but when evening comes,

And all betake themselves to rest, I lie

Upon my couch, and sorrows thick and sharp

Awake new misery in my heart. As when,

In the fresh spring, the swarthy Nightingale,

Daughter of Pandarus, among thick leaves

Sings sweetly to the woods, and, changing oft

The strain, pours forth her voice of many notes,

Lamenting the beloved Itylus,

Her son by royal Zethos, whom she smote

Unwittingly, and slew; with such quick change

My mind is tossed from thought to thought. I muse

Whether to keep my place beside my son,

And hold what here is mine, my dower, my maids

And high-roofed halls, as one who still reveres

Her husband’s bed, and heeds the public voice,

Or follow one of the Achaian chiefs,

The noblest of the wooers, and the one

Who offers marriage presents without stint.

My son’s green years, while he was yet a boy,

Unripe in mind, allowed me not to wed,

And leave his father’s home; but he is grown,

And on the verge of manhood. He desires

That I should leave the palace, for his wrath

Is great against the men who waste his wealth.

Hear, and interpret now a dream of mine:

Within these courts are twenty geese that eat

Corn from the water, and I look on them

Pleased and amused. From off a mountain came

A hook-beaked eagle, broke their necks, and left

Their bodies strewn about the palace dead,

And soared again into the air of heaven.

I wept and moaned, although it was a dream;

And round me came the fair-haired Grecian maids,

Lamenting wildly that the bird of prey

Had slain my geese. Then came the eagle back,

And took his perch upon the jutting roof,

And thus bespake me in a human voice:—

"'O daughter of Icarius, the renowned!

Let not thy heart be troubled; this is not

A dream, but a true vision, and will be

Fulfilled. The geese denote the suitor-train,

And I, who was an eagle once, am come,

Thy husband, now to end them utterly.'

“He spake; my slumbers left me, and I looked,

And saw the geese that in the palace still

Were at their trough, and feeding as before.”
And thus Ulysses, the sagacious, said:

“Lady, the dream that visited thy sleep

Cannot be wrested to another sense.

Ulysses has himself revealed to thee

The way of its fulfillment. Death is near

The suitors, and not one escapes his doom.”
Then spake the sage Penelope again:

“Of dreams, O stranger, some are meaningless

And idle, and can never be fulfilled.

Two portals are there for their shadowy shapes,

Of ivory one, and one of horn. The dreams

That come through the carved ivory deceive

With promises that never are made good;

But those which pass the doors of polished horn,

And are beheld of men, are ever true.

And yet I cannot hope that my strange dream

Came through them, though my son and I would both

Rejoice if it were so. This let me say,

And heed me well. Tomorrow brings to us

The hateful morn which takes me from my home,

The palace of Ulysses. I shall now

Propose a contest. In the palace court

Ulysses in a row set up twelve stakes,

Like props that hold a galley up; each stake

Had its own ring; he stood afar, and sent

An arrow through them all. I shall propose

This contest to the suitors. He who bends

The bow with easy mastery, and sends

Through the twelve rings an arrow, I will take

To follow from the palace where I passed

My youthful married life—a beautiful home,

And stored with wealth; a home which I shall long

Remember, even in my nightly dreams.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“O gracious consort of Laertes’ son!

Let not this contest be delayed; the man

Of ready wiles, Ulysses, will be here

Ere, tampering with the hero’s polished bow,

The suitors shall prevail to stretch the cord,

And send an arrow through the rings of steel.”
And thus the sage Penelope rejoined:

“Stranger, if, sitting in the palace here,

Thou still wouldst entertain me as thou dost,

Sleep would not fall upon my lids; and yet

Sleepless the race of mortals cannot be,

So have the gods ordained, who measure out

His lot to man upon the nourishing earth.

I to the upper rooms withdraw, to take

My place upon the couch which has become

To me a place of sorrow and of tears

Since my Ulysses went away to Troy,

That fatal town which should be named no more.

And I will lay me down; but thou remain

Within these walls, and make the floor thy bed,

Or let these maidens spread a couch for thee."
Penelope, thus having spoken, went

Up to her royal bower, but not alone;

Her maids went with her. When they were within

She wept for her dear husband, till at length

The blue-eyed Pallas graciously distilled

Upon her closing lids the balm of sleep.

Book XX

The Last Banquet of the Suitors

Disorderly conduct of the serving-women—Prayer of Ulysses for a favorable omen—Its fulfillment—Preparations for a feast of the suitors in the palace—The feast—Ulysses insulted by Ctesippus, who is reproved by Telemachus—Strange prodigies observed by Theoclymenus, who leaves the hall.

The noble chief, Ulysses, in the porch

Lay down to rest. An undressed bullock’s hide

Was under him, and over that the skins

Of sheep, which for the daily sacrifice

The Achaians slew. Eurynomè had spread

A cloak above him. There he lay awake,

And meditated how he yet should smite

The suitors down. Meantime, with cries of mirth

And laughter, came the women forth to seek

The suitors' arms. Ulysses, inly moved

With anger, pondered whether he should rise

And put them all to death, or give their shame

A respite for another night, the last.

His heart raged in his bosom. As a hound

Growls, walking round her whelps, when she beholds

A stranger, and is eager for the attack,

So growled his heart within him, and so fierce

Was his impatience with that shameless crew.

He smote his breast, and thus he chid his heart:—
"Endure it, heart! thou didst bear worse than this.

When the grim Cyclops of resistless strength

Devoured thy brave companions, thou couldst still

Endure, till thou by stratagem didst leave

The cave in which it seemed that thou must die."

Thus he rebuked his heart, and, growing calm,

His heart submitted; but the hero tossed

From side to side. As when one turns and turns

The stomach of a bullock filled with fat

And blood before a fiercely blazing fire

And wishes it were done, so did the chief

Shift oft from side to side, while pondering how

To lay a strong hand on the multitude

Of shameless suitors—he but one, and they

So many. Meantime Pallas, sliding down

From heaven, in form a woman, came, and there

Beside his bed stood over him, and spake:—

"Why, most unhappy of the sons of men,

Art thou still sleepless? This is thine abode,

And here thou hast thy consort and a son

Whom any man might covet for his own.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Truly, O goddess, all that thou hast said

Is rightly spoken. This perplexes me—

How to lay hands upon these shameless men,

When I am only one, and they a throng

That fill the palace. Yet another thought,

And mightier still—if, by thy aid and Jove’s,

I slay the suitors, how shall I myself

Be safe thereafter? Think, I pray, of this.”
And thus in turn the blue-eyed Pallas said:

“O faint of spirit! in an humbler friend

Than I am, in a friend of mortal birth

And less farseeing, one might put his trust;

But I am born a goddess, and protect

Thy life in every danger. Let me say,

And plainly say, if fifty armed bands

Of men should gather round us, eager all

To take thy life, thou mightest drive away,

Unharmed by them, their herds and pampered flocks.

But give thyself to sleep. To wake and watch

All night is most unwholesome. Thou shalt find

A happy issue from thy troubles yet."
She spake, and, shedding slumber on his lids,

Upward the glorious goddess took her way

Back to Olympus, when she saw that sleep

Had seized him, making him forget all care

And slackening every limb. His faithful wife

Was still awake, and sat upright and wept

On her soft couch, and after many tears

The glorious lady prayed to Dian thus:—
“Goddess august! Diana, child of Jove!

I would that thou wouldst send into my heart

A shaft to take my life, or that a storm

Would seize and hurl me through the paths of air,

And cast me into ocean’s restless streams,

As once a storm, descending, swept away

The daughters born to Pandarus. The gods

Had slain their parents, and they dwelt alone

As orphans in their palace, nourished there

By blessed Venus with the curds of milk,

And honey, and sweet wine, while Juno gave

Beauty and wit beyond all womankind,

And chaste Diana dignity of form,

And Pallas every art that graces life.

Then, as the blessed Venus went to ask

For them, of Jove the Thunderer, on the heights

Of his Olympian mount, the crowning gift

Of happy marriage—for to Jove is known

Whatever comes to pass, and what shall be

The fortune, good or ill, of mortal men—

The Harpies came meantime, bore off the maids,

And gave them to the hateful sisterhood

Of Furies as their servants. So may those

Who dwell upon Olympus make an end

Of me, or fair-haired Dian strike me down,

That, with the image of Ulysses still

Before my mind, I may not seek to please

One of less worth. This evil might be borne

By one who weeps all day, and feels at heart

A settled sorrow, yet can sleep at night.

For sleep, when once it weighs the eyelids down,

Makes men unmindful both of good and ill,

And all things else. But me some deity

Visits with fearful dreams. There lay by me,

This very night, one like him, as he was

When with his armed men he sailed for Troy;

And I was glad, for certainly I deemed

It was a real presence, and no dream."
She spake. Just then, upon her car of gold,

Appeared the Morn. The great Ulysses heard

That voice of lamentation; anxiously

He mused; it seemed to him as if the queen

Stood over him and knew him. Gathering up

In haste the cloak and skins on which he slept,

He laid them in the palace on a seat,

But bore the bull’s hide forth in open air,

And lifted up his hands and prayed to Jove:—
“O Father Jove, and all the gods! if ye

Have led me graciously, o’er land and deep,

Across the earth, and, after suffering much,

To mine own isle, let one of those who watch

Within the palace speak some ominous word,

And grant a sign from thee without these walls.”
So prayed he. All-providing Jupiter

Hearkened, and thundered from the clouds around

The bright Olympian peaks. Ulysses heard

With gladness. From a room within the house,

In which the mills of the king’s household stood,

A woman, laboring at the quern, gave forth

An omen also. There were twelve who toiled

In making flour of barley and of wheat—

The strength of man. The rest were all asleep;

Their tasks were done; one only, of less strength

Than any other there, kept toiling on.

She paused a moment, stopped the whirling stone,

And spake these words—a portent for the king:—
“O Father Jove, the king of gods and men!

Thou hast just thundered from the starry heaven,

And yet there is no cloud. To someone here

It is a portent. O perform for me,

All helpless as I am, this one request!

Let now the suitors in this palace take

Their last and final pleasant feast today—

These men who make my limbs, with constant toil,

In grinding corn for them, to lose their strength,

Once let them banquet here, and then no more.”
She spake; the omen of the woman’s words

And Jove’s loud thunder pleased Ulysses well;

And now he deemed he should avenge himself

Upon the guilty ones. The other maids

Of that fair palace of Ulysses woke

And came together, and upon the hearth

Kindled a steady fire. Telemachus

Rose from his bed in presence like a god,

Put on his garments, hung his trenchant sword

Upon his shoulder, tied to his fair feet

The shapely sandals, took his massive spear

Tipped with sharp brass, and, stopping as he reached

The threshold, spake to Eurycleia thus:—

“Dear nurse, have ye with honor fed and lodged

Our guest, or have ye suffered him to find

A lodging where he might, without your care?

Discerning as she is, my mother pays

High honor to the worse among her guests,

And sends the nobler man unhonored hence.”

And thus the prudent Eurycleia said:

“My child, blame not thy mother; she deserves

No blame. The stranger sat and drank his wine,

All that he would, and said, when pressed to eat,

That he desired no more. And when he thought

Of sleep, she bade her maidens spread his couch;

But he refused a bed and rugs, like one

Inured to misery, and beneath the porch

Slept on an undressed bull’s hide and the skins

Of sheep, and over him we cast a cloak.”
She spake; Telemachus, his spear in hand,

Went forth, his fleet dogs following him. He sought

The council where the well-greaved Greeks were met.

Meantime the noble Eurycleia, child

Of Ops, Pisenor’s son, bespake the maids:—
“Come, some of you, at once, and sweep the floor,

And sprinkle it, and on the shapely thrones

Spread coverings of purple tapestry;

Let others wipe the tables with a sponge,

And cleanse the beakers and the double cups,

While others go for water to the fount,

And bring it quickly, for not long today

The suitors will be absent from these halls.

They will come early to the general feast.”

She spake; the handmaids hearkened and obeyed,

And twenty went to the dark well to draw

The water, while the others busily

Bestirred themselves about the house. Then came

The servants of the chiefs, and set themselves

Neatly to cleave the wood. Then also came

The women from the well. The swineherd last

Came with three swine, the fattest of the herd.

In that fair court he let them feed, and sought

Ulysses, greeting him with courteous words:—
"Hast thou, O stranger, found among these Greeks

More reverence? Art thou still their mark of scorn?"
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

"O that the gods, Eumaeus, would avenge

The insolence of those who meditate

Violent deeds, and make another's house

Their plotting-place, and feel no touch of shame!”
So talked they with each other. Now appeared

Melanthius, keeper of the goats. He brought

Goats for the suitors’ banquet; they were choice

Beyond all others. With him also came

Two goatherds. In the echoing portico

He bound his goats. He saw Ulysses there,

And thus accosted him with railing words:—
“Stranger, art thou still here, the palace pest,

And begging still, and wilt thou ne’er depart?

We shall not end this quarrel, I perceive,

Till thou hast tried the flavor of my fist.

It is not decent to be begging here

Continually; the Greeks have other feasts.”
He spake; Ulysses answered not, but shook

His head in silence, planning fearful things.

Philoetius now, a master-herdsman, came,

And for the banquet of the suitors led

A heifer that had never yeaned, and goats

The fatlings of the flock; they came across

The ferry, brought by those whose office is

To bear whoever comes from shore to shore.

He bound his animals in the sounding porch,

And went and, standing by the swineherd, said:—
"Who, swineherd, is the stranger newly come

To this our palace? of what parents born,

And of what race, and where his native land?

Unhappy seemingly, yet like a king

In person. Sorrowful must be the lot

Of men who wander to and fro on earth,

When even to kings the gods appoint distress."

He spake, and, greeting with his offered hand

Ulysses, said in winged words aloud:—

“Stranger and father, hail! and mayst thou yet

Be happy in the years to come at least,

Though held in thrall by many sorrows now.

Yet thou, All-father Jove! art most austere

Of all the gods, not sparing even those

Who have their birth from thee, but bringing them

To grief and pain. The sweat is on my brow

When I behold this stranger, and my eyes

Are filled with tears when to my mind comes back

The image of Ulysses, who must now,

I think, be wandering, clothed in rags like thee,

Among the abodes of men, if yet indeed

He lives and sees the sweet light of the sun.

But if that he be dead, and in the abode

Of Pluto, woe is me for his dear sake!

The blameless chief, who when I was a boy

Gave to me, in the Cephalenian fields,

The charge of all his beeves; and they are now

Innumerable; the broad-fronted race

Of cattle never would have multiplied

So largely under other care than mine.

Now other masters bid me bring my beeves

For their own feasts. They little heed his son,

The palace-heir; as little do they dread

The vengeance of the gods; they long to share

Among them the possessions of the king,

So many years unheard from. But this thought

Comes to my mind again, and yet again:

Wrong were it, while the son is yet alive,

To drive the cattle to a foreign land,

Where alien men inhabit; yet ’tis worse

To stay and tend another’s beeves, and bear

This spoil. And long ago would I have fled

To some large-minded monarch, since this waste

Is not to be endured, but that I think

Still of my suffering lord, and hope that yet

He may return and drive the suitors hence.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answering, said:

“Herdsman, since thou dost seem not ill inclined,

Nor yet unwise, and I perceive in thee

A well-discerning mind, I therefore say,

And pledge my solemn oath—Jove, first of gods,

Be witness, and this hospitable board

And hearth of good Ulysses, which has here

Received me—while thou art within these halls

Ulysses will assuredly return,

And, if thou choose to look, thine eyes shall see

The suitors slain, who play the master here."
  And thus the master of the herds rejoined:

"Stranger, may Jupiter make good thy words!

Then shalt thou see what strength is in my arm."
  Eumaeus also prayed to all the gods,

That now the wise Ulysses might return.

So talked they with each other, while apart

The suitors doomed Telemachus to death,

And plotted how to take his life. Just then

A bird—an eagle—on the left flew by,

High up; his talons held a timid dove.

And then Amphinomus bespake the rest:—
“O friends, this plan to slay Telemachus

Must fail. And now repair we to the feast.”
So spake Amphinomus, and to his words

They all gave heed, and hastened to the halls

Of the divine Ulysses, where they laid

Their cloaks upon the benches and the thrones,

And slaughtering the choice sheep, and fading goats,

And porkers, and a heifer from the herd,

Roasted the entrails, and distributed

A share to each. Next mingled they the wine

In the large bowls. The swineherd brought a cup

To everyone. Philoetius, chief among

The servants, gave from shapely canisters

The bread to each. Melanthius poured the wine.

Then putting forth their hands, they all partook

The ready banquet. With a wise design,

Telemachus near the stone threshold placed

Ulysses, on a shabby seat, beside

A little table, but within the walls

Of that strong-pillared pile. He gave him there

Part of the entrails, and poured out for him

The wine into a cup of gold, and said:—
"Sit here, and drink thy wine among the rest,

And from the insults and assaults of these

It shall be mine to guard thee. For this house

Is not the common property of all;

Ulysses first acquired it, and for me—

And you, ye suitors, keep your tongues from taunts

And hands from force, lest there be wrath and strife."

He spake; the suitors, as they heard him, bit

Their pressed lips, wondering at Telemachus,

Who uttered such bold words. Antinoüs then,

Eupeithes' son, bespake his fellows thus:—
"Harsh as they are, let us, O Greeks, endure

These speeches of Telemachus. He makes

High threats, but had Saturnian Jove allowed,

We should, ere this, and in these very halls,

Have quieted our loud-tongued orator."
So spake the suitor, but Telemachus

Heeded him not. Then through the city came

The heralds with a hallowed hecatomb,

Due to the gods. The long-haired people thronged

The shady grove of Phoebus, archer-god.
Now when the flesh was roasted and was drawn

From off the spits, and each was given his share,

They held high festival. The men who served

The banquet gave Ulysses, where he sat,

A portion equal to their own, for so

His own dear son Telemachus enjoined.
Yet did not Pallas cause the haughty crew

Of suitors to refrain from stinging taunts,

That so the spirit of Laertes' son

Might be more deeply wounded. One there was

Among the suitors, a low-thoughted wretch;

Ctesippus was his name, and his abode

Was Samos. Trusting in his father's wealth,

He wooed the wife of the long-absent king

Ulysses. To his insolent mates he said:—
"Hear me, ye noble suitors, while I speak.

This stranger has received an equal share,

As is becoming; for it were not just

Nor seemly to pass by, in such a feast,

The guests, whoe’er they may be, that resort

To this fair mansion of Telemachus.

I also will bestow on him a gift

Of hospitality, and he in turn

May give it to the keeper of the bath,

Or any other of the menial train

That serve the household of Ulysses here.”
So speaking, with his strong right hand he flung

A bullock’s foot, which from a canister

Hard by he plucked. Ulysses gently bowed

His head, and shunned the blow, and grimly smiled.

The missile struck the solid wall, and then

Telemachus rebuked the suitor thus:—
“Ctesippus, well hast thou escaped with life,

Not having hit the stranger, who himself

Shrank from the blow; else had I pinned thee through

With my sharp spear. Instead of wedding feast,

Thy father would have celebrated here

Thy funeral rites. Let no man in these halls

Bear himself insolently in my sight

Hereafter, for my reason now is ripe

To know the right from wrong. I was of late

A child, and now it is enough to bear

That ye should slay our sheep, and drink our wine,

And eat our bread—for what can one man do

Against so many? Cease this petty war

Of wrong and hatred; but if ye desire

To take my life, ’tis well; ’twere better so.

And rather would I die by violence

Than live to see these most unmanly deeds—

Guests driven away, and women-servants hauled

Through these fair rooms by brutal wassailers.”
He ended, and the assembly all sat mute

Till Agelaüs spake, Damastor’s son:—
“O friends! let no man here with carping words

Gainsay what is so rightly said, nor yet

Insult the stranger more, nor one of those

Who serve the household of the godlike chief

Ulysses in his palace. I would say

This word in kindness to Telemachus

And to his mother; may it please them both!

While yet the hope was cherished in your hearts

That wise Ulysses would return, no blame

Could fasten on the queen that she remained

Unwedded, and resisted those who came

To woo her in the palace. Better so,

Had he come home again. Yet now, ’tis clear,

He comes no more. Go then, Telemachus,

And, sitting by thy mother, bid her wed

The noblest of her wooers, and the one

Who brings the richest gifts; and thou possess

Thy father’s wealth in peace, and eat and drink

At will, while she shall find another home.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“Nay, Agelaüs, for I swear by Jove,

And by my father’s sufferings, who has died,

Or yet is wandering, far from Ithaca,

That I do nothing to delay the choice

And marriage of my mother. I consent

That she become the wife of whom she list,

And him who offers most. But I should feel

Great shame to thrust her forth against her will,

And with unfilial speeches; God forbid!”
He ended here, and Pallas, as he spake,

To inextinguishable laughter moved

The suitors. There they sat with wandering minds;

They swallowed morsels foul with blood; their eyes

Were filled with tears; their hearts foreboded woe.

Then spake the godlike Theoclymenus:—
“Unhappy men! what may this evil be

That overtakes you? Every brow and face

And each one’s lower limbs are wrapped in night,

And moans arise, and tears are on your cheeks.

The walls and all the graceful cornices

Between the pillars are bedropped with blood,

The portico is full, these halls are full

Of shadows, hastening down to Erebus

Amid the gloom. The sun is blotted out

From heaven, and fearful darkness covers all.”
He spake, and loud they laughed. Eurymachus,

The son of Polybus, in answer said:—
“The stranger prattles idly; he is come

From some far land. Conduct him through the door,

Young men, and send him to the marketplace,

Since all things here are darkened to his eyes.”
Then spake the godlike Theoclymenus:

“Eurymachus, from thee I ask no guide,

For I have eyes and ears, and two good feet,

And in my breast a mind as sound as they,

And by the aid of these I mean to make

My way without; for clearly I perceive

A coming evil, which no suitor here

Will yet escape—no one who, in these halls

Of the great chief, Ulysses, treats with scorn

His fellow-man, and broods o’er guilty plans.”
He spake, and, hastening from that noble pile,

Came to Piraeus, in whose house he found

A welcome. All the suitors, as he went,

Looked at each other, and, the more to vex

Telemachus, kept laughing at his guests.

And thus an insolent youth among them said:—
“No man had ever a worse set of guests

Than thou, Telemachus. For what a wretch

That wandering beggar is, who always wants

His bread and wine, and is unfit for work,

And has no strength; in truth, a useless load

Upon the earth he treads. The other guest

Rises to play the prophet. If thou take

My counsel, which I give thee for thy good,

Let them at once be put on board a barque

Of many oars, and we will send them hence

To the Sicilians; they will bring a price.”
So talked the suitors, but he heeded not

Their words, and, looking toward his father, held

His peace, expecting when he would lay hands

Upon that insolent crew. Penelope,

Sage daughter of Icarius, took her place

Right opposite upon a sumptuous seat,

And heard the words of every man who spake

Within the hall. They held that midday feast

With laughter—a luxurious feast it was,

And mirthful; many victims had been slain

To furnish forth the tables; but no feast

Could be more bitter than the later one,

To which the goddess and that valiant man

Would bid the guilty crew of plotters soon.

Book XXI

The Bending of the Bow of Ulysses

Proposal of Penelope to the suitors to contend for her hand with the bow and arrows of Ulysses—Their ineffectual attempts to bend the bow—Management of Ulysses to obtain the bow, which he bends with ease, and sends an arrow through the twelve rings set up in a row for the purpose.

Pallas, the goddess of the azure eyes,

Woke in the mind of sage Penelope,

The daughter of Icarius, this design—

To put into the suitors' hands the bow

And gray steel rings, and to propose a game

That in the palace was to usher in

The slaughter. So she climbed the lofty stair,

Up from the hall, and took in her plump hand

The fair carved key; its wards were wrought of brass,

And ivory was the handle. Soon she reached

The furthest room with her attendant maids.

There lay the treasures of Ulysses—brass

And gold, and steel divinely wrought. There lay

His bow unstrung; there lay his quiver charged

With arrows; many were the deadly shafts

It held, a stranger’s gift, who met him once

In Lacedaemon, Iphitus by name,

The son of Eurytus, and like the gods

In presence. In Messenè met the twain,

And in the mansion of Orsilochus,

The warlike. Thither had Ulysses come

To claim a debt from all the region round;

For rovers from Messenè to their ships

Had driven and carried off from Ithaca

Three hundred sheep and those who tended them.

For this Ulysses, though a stripling yet,

Came that long voyage, on an embassy,

Sent by his father and the other chiefs.

And Iphitus had come in search of steeds

Which he had lost—twelve mares, and under them

Twelve hardy mules, their foals. That errand brought

The doom of death upon him. For he came,

In journeying, to the abode of Hercules,

The mighty hero-son of Jupiter,

Famed for his labors, who, in his own house,

Slew Iphitus, the stranger. Cruel wretch!

Who reverenced not the vengeance of the gods,

Nor what was due to his own board, at which

He placed his guest, and slew him afterward,

And in his stables kept the goodly mares.

’Twas when this guest was seeking for his steeds

He met Ulysses, and bestowed on him

The bow, which mighty Eurytus once bore,

And dying in his lofty palace left

The weapon to his son. Ulysses gave

In turn a trenchant sword and massive lance,

A pledge of kindly hospitality,

Begun, but not continued till they sat

Each at the other’s table; for the son

Of Jove first took the life of him who gave

The bow, the godlike son of Eurytus.

That bow Ulysses, when he went to war

In his black galleys, never took with him,

But left it in his palace, to be kept

In memory of a beloved friend,

And only bore it in his own domain.
Now when the glorious lady reached the room,

And stood upon the threshold, wrought of oak

And polished by the workman’s cunning hand,

Who stretched the line upon it, and set up

Its posts, and hung its shining doors, she loosed

With a quick touch the thong that held the ring,

Put in the key, and with a careful aim

Struck back the sounding bolts. As when a bull

Roars in the field, such sound the beautiful doors,

Struck with the key, gave forth, and instantly

They opened to her. Up the lofty floor

She stepped, where stood the coffer that contained

The perfumed garments. Reaching forth her hand,

The queen took down the bow, that hung within

Its shining case, and sat her down, and laid

The case upon her knees, and, drawing forth

The monarch’s bow, she wept aloud. As soon

As that new gush of tears had ceased to fall,

Back to the hall she went, and that proud throng

Of suitors, bearing in her hand the bow

Unstrung, and quiver, where the arrows lay

Many and deadly. Her attendant maids

Brought also down a coffer, where were laid

Much brass and steel, provided by the king

For games like these. The glorious lady then,

In presence of the suitors, stood beside

The columns that upheld the stately roof.

She held a lustrous veil before her cheeks,

And, while on either side of her a maid

Stood modestly, bespake the suitors thus:—
“Hear, noble suitors! ye who throng these halls,

And eat and drink from day to day, while long

My husband has been gone; your sole excuse

For all this lawlessness the claim ye make

That I become a bride. Come then, for now

A contest is proposed. I bring to you

The mighty bow that great Ulysses bore.

Whoe’er among you he may be whose hand

Shall bend this bow, and send through these twelve rings

An arrow, him I follow hence, and leave

This beautiful abode of my young years,

With all its plenty—though its memory,

I think, will haunt me even in my dreams.”
She spake, and bade the master of the swine,

The good Eumaeus, place the bow and rings

Of hoary steel before the suitor-train.

In tears he bore the bow and laid it down.

The herdsman also wept to see again

His master’s bow. Antinoüs called to both

With a loud voice, and chid them angrily:—
“Ye silly rustics, who can never see

Beyond the hour, why trouble with your tears

The lady who had grief enough besides

For her lost husband? Sit and share the feast

In silence, or go forth and leave the bow;

A difficult contest it will be for us,

Nor, as I think, will this fair bow be bent

With ease, since surely there is no man here

Such as Ulysses was. I saw him once,

While but a child, and still remember him.”
He spake, yet in his secret heart believed

That he should bend the bow, and send a shaft

Through all the rings. And yet he was the first

To taste the steel—an arrow from the hand

Of the great chief Ulysses—whom he wronged

In his own palace, and to equal wrong

Encouraged others. Then Telemachus

Rose in his sacred might, and thus began:—
“Alas! it must be that Saturnian Jove

Has made me lose my wits. Wise as she is,

My mother promises to leave her home

And follow someone else, and yet I laugh,

And am delighted in my foolish heart.

Come then, since such a contest is proposed,

Ye suitors! and for such a woman too.

The like is not in all the lands of Greece,

Argos, Mycenae, or the hallowed shore

Of Pylos, or in Ithaca itself,

Or the dark mainland coast. Ye know it well;

Why should I praise my mother? Come then, all;

Let there be no excuses for delay,

Nor longer leave the bow untried, that we

May see the event. I too am moved to try;

And if I bend the bow, and send a shaft

Through all the rings, my gracious mother then

Will not, to my great grief, renounce her home,

And, following another, leave me here,

Although my prowess even now might win

The glorious prizes that my father won.”
He spake and, rising, from his shoulders took

The purple cloak, and laid the trenchant sword

Aside; and first he placed the rings of steel

In order, opening for them in the ground

A long trench by a line, and stamping close

The earth around them. All admired the skill

With which he ranged them, never having seen

The game before. And then he took his place

Upon the threshold, and essayed the bow;

And thrice he made the attempt, and thrice gave o’er,

Yet hoping still to draw the cord, and send

An arrow through the rings. He would have drawn

The bow at the fourth trial, but a nod

Given by his father caused him to forbear,

Though eager for the attempt. And then again

The princely youth bespake the suitors thus:—
“Well, this is strange! I may hereafter prove

A craven and a weakling, or perchance

Am yet too young, and cannot trust my arm

To do me right against the man who first

Assaults me. Come then, ye whose strength excels

My own, and try the bow, and end the strife.”
He spake, and setting down the bow to lean

Against the firm smooth panels of the wall,

And the swift shaft against the bow’s fair curve,

He took again his seat upon the throne

From which he rose. And then Eupeithes’ son,

Antinoüs, to the crowd of suitors said:—

“Rise one by one, my friends, from right to left.

Begin where he begins who pours the wine.”
So spake Antinoüs, and the rest approved.

Then rose Leiodes, son of Oenops, first.

He was their seer, and always had his seat

Beside the ample bowl. From deeds of wrong

He shrank with hatred, and was sore incensed

Against the suitors all. He took the bow

And shaft, and, going to the threshold, stood

And tried the bow, yet bent it not; it galled

His hands, for they were soft, and all unused

To such a task; and thus at length he spake:—
“O friends, I bend it not; another hand

Must try. This bow, upon this very spot,

Will take from many a prince the breath of life.

And better were it thus to die, by far,

Than, living, fail of that intent for which

We haunt this place, and still from day to day

Assemble. There is many a one whose wish

And hope are strong to wed Penelope,

The consort of Ulysses; but so soon

As he shall see and try the hero’s bow

Let him with marriage presents seek to gain

Some other bride among the long-robed dames,

Achaia’s daughters. Let him leave the queen

To wed the suitor who shall bring to her

The richest gifts, and him whom fate appoints.”
He spake, and setting down the bow to lean

Against the firm smooth panels of the wall,

And the swift shaft against the bow’s fair curve,

He took again his seat upon the throne

From which he rose. Antinoüs then took up

The word and answered, and reproached him thus:—
“What words are these, Leiodes, that have passed

Thy lips? harsh words and fearful—that this bow

Shall take from many princes here the breath

Of life, and all because thou hast no power

To bend it? Thy good mother bore thee not

To draw the bow and send the arrow forth,

But others of the noble suitor-train

Are here, by whom this bow shall yet be bent.”
Then to Melanthius, keeper of the goats,

Antinoüs gave this bidding. “Light a fire

With speed, Melanthius, in the palace here,

And place a seat before it. Lay a fleece

Upon the seat, and bring us from within

An ample roll of fat, that we young men

By warming and anointing may make soft

The bow, and draw the cord, and end the strife.”
He spake; Melanthius kindled instantly

A glowing fire, and near it placed a seat,

And on the seat a fleece, and from within

Brought forth an ample roll of fat, with which

The young men, having warmed it, smeared the bow

And tried, but bent it not, too weak by far

For such a feat. Antinoüs kept aloof,

He and the godlike youth Eurymachus

Two princes who in might excelled the rest.
The herdsman of Ulysses meantime left

The palace, and with him the swineherd went,

And after them Ulysses. When they all

Were now without the gate and palace court,

Ulysses spake to them, and blandly said:—
“Herdsman and swineherd, shall I say to you

Somewhat, or shall I keep it back? My heart

Moves me to say it. Should Ulysses come,

Led by some god, and suddenly, what aid

Would he receive from you? Would ye take part

With him, or with the suitors? Frankly speak;

And tell me what your hearts would bid you do.”
Then answered thus the keeper of the herds:

“O Father Jove! wouldst thou but grant my wish,

And let some god conduct him hither, then

Shall it be seen what might is in these hands!”
So also did Eumaeus offer prayer

To all the deities, that speedily

The wise Ulysses might return; and when

The chief perceived in all its truth the thought

And purpose of their hearts, he spake and said:—
“Know, then, that I myself am he, at home

Again, returning in the twentieth year,

And after many sufferings, to the land

That saw my birth. I know that I am come

Welcome to you alone of all my train

Of servants, since I hear no others pray

For my return. Hear, then, what I engage

Shall be hereafter. If some god o’ercome

For me these arrogant suitors, I will give

To each of you a wife and lands, and build

For each a house near mine, and ye shall be

The friends and brothers of Telemachus

Thenceforth. And now, that ye may surely know

And trust me, I will show a token here—

A scar which once the white tooth of a boar

Made, when long since, on the Parnassian mount,

I hunted with Autolycus’s sons.”
Thus having said, he drew from the broad scar

The covering rags; they looked and knew it well,

And wept, and round Ulysses threw their arms,

And kissed in that embrace the hero’s head

And shoulders, while Ulysses also kissed

Their heads and hands. The sun would have gone down

Upon their weeping, but for him. He said:—
“Cease now from tears, lest someone from the hall

Should see us, and report of us within.

Now let us enter, not in company—

I first, and ye thereafter, one by one,

And let the sign be this: the others all—

The haughty suitors—will refuse to me

The bow and quiver. When thou bearest it,

My noble friend Eumaeus, through the halls,

Bring it and place it in my hands, and charge

The women to make fast the solid doors;

And then if any one of them should hear

A groan or other noise of men within,

Let her not issue forth, but silently

Pursue her task. Meantime be it thy care,

My good Philoetius, with a key to lock

The portals of the court and fix the chain."
Thus having said, into that noble pile

He passed again, and took the seat from which

He lately rose, and afterward, in turn,

Entered the servants of the godlike chief.

Eurymachus was busy with the bow,

Turning and warming it before the blaze

On both its sides. He could not bend it thus.

There came a deep sigh from his boastful heart,

And greatly was he vexed, and sadly said:—

"Alas! great cause of grief indeed is here

For me and all. 'Tis not that I lament

So much the losing of the bride, although

That also vexes me—there yet remain

Many fair ladies of the Achaian stock,

Both in the seagirt lands of Ithaca

And other regions—yet if we be found

To fall in strength of arm so far below

The great Ulysses that we cannot bend

His bow, our sons will hear of it with shame."

Eupeithes’ son, Antinoüs, answered thus:

“Not so, Eurymachus, as thou thyself

Shouldst know. This day is held a solemn feast

Of Phoebus by the people. Who would draw

The bow today? Nay, lay it by in peace,

And suffer all the rings to stand as now;

For no man, as I think, will dare to come

Into the palace of Laertes’ son

And take them hence. Let him who bears the cup

Begin to serve the wine, that, having poured

Part to the gods, we may lay down the bow,

And with the morning let Melanthius come—

The goatherd—bringing with him from the flock

The choicest goats, that we may burn the thighs,

An offering to the god of archery,

Apollo. Then will we again essay

The bow, and bring the contest to an end.”
So spake Antinoüs, and they all approved.

Then heralds came, and on the suitors’ hands

Poured water; youths filled up the cups with wine,

Beginning at the right, and gave to each

His share; and when they all had poured a part,

And each had drunk, the shrewd Ulysses thus

With artful speech bespake the suitor-train:—
“Hearken, ye suitors of the illustrious queen,

To what my heart is prompting me to say;

But chiefly to Eurymachus I make

My suit, and to Antinoüs, who so well

Hath counselled to lay by the bow and trust

The gods. Tomorrow Phoebus will bestow

The needed strength on whomsoe’er he will;

But let me take that polished bow, and try

Among you, whether still the power that dwelt

In these once pliant limbs abides in them,

Or whether happily it has passed from me

Amid my wanderings and a life of want.”
He spake, and all were vehemently moved

With anger, for they feared that he would bend

The bow, and thus Antinoüs, railing, spake:—
“Thou worthless vagabond, without a spark

Of reason, art thou not content to sit

And banquet with the proudest, where no part

Of all the feast escapes thee, hearing all

That we are saying, which no other man,

Stranger and beggar, is allowed to hear!

This good wine makes thee foolish, as wine oft

Makes those who swallow it too greedily,

And drink not with due stint. It maddened once

Eurytion, the famed Centaur, in the halls

Of the large-souled Pirithoüs. He had come

Among the Lapithae, and when inflamed

With wine to madness, in those very halls

Did lawless deeds. The heroes were incensed.

They rushed upon him, dragged him through the porch

And out of doors, and there cut off his nose

And ears, and he departed, frenzied still,

And bearing in bewilderment of mind

His punishment, whence war arose between

Centaurs and men; yet surely he had brought

The evil on himself, when overcome

With wine. Such fearful mischief I foretell

Will light on thee, if thou shouldst bend this bow,

Nor canst thou hope for favor here among

The people. We will send thee speedily,

In a black galley, to King Echetus,

The enemy of human kind, from whom

Thou shalt find no escape. Drink, then, in peace

Thy wine, and seek no strife with younger men."
Then spake the sage Penelope again:

"Truly, Antinoüs, it becomes thee not,

Nor is it just, to vex the stranger guests

Who seek the palace of Telemachus.

Dost thou, then, think that, should this stranger bend,

Proud as he is of his great strength of arm,

The mighty bow that once Ulysses bore,

He leads me hence a bride? No hope of that

Is in his heart, and let no one of you

Who banquet here allow a thought like that

To vex him; ’tis a thing that cannot be.”
Then to the queen, Eurymachus, the son

Of Polybus, replied: “We do not fear,

Sage daughter of Icarius, that this man

Will lead thee hence a bride; it cannot be.

We fear the speech of men and women both.

The very meanest of the Achaian race

Will say: ‘Degenerate men are these, who seek

To wed the consort of a glorious chief,

Not one of whom can draw the bow he bore;

And now there comes a wandering beggar-man,

Who draws the bow with ease, and sends a shaft

Through all the rings of steel.’ Thus will they speak,

And this will be to us a cause of shame!”
And then the sage Penelope rejoined:

“Eurymachus, it cannot be that those

Should earn the general praise who make the wealth

Of a most worthy man their spoil, and bring

Dishonor on his house. The stranger’s frame

Is powerful and well knit; he claims to be

Of noble parentage. Now let him take

The bow, and we will see the event; but this

I promise, and will make my promise good,

If he should bend it—if Apollo give

To him that glory—he shall have from me

A tunic and a cloak, fair garments both,

And a keen javelin, his defence against

Both dogs and men, a two-edged sword besides,

And sandals for his feet, and I engage

To send him whither he desires to go."
Then spake discreet Telemachus again:

"Mother, in all Achaia there is none

Who has more power than I can claim, to grant

Or to deny the bow to whom I will.

No one of those who rule the rugged coast

Of Ithaca, or isles where Elis breeds

Her mares, may interpose to thwart my will,

If on the stranger I bestow the bow

To be his own, and bid him take it hence.

Withdraw, O queen, into thy bower; direct

Thy household tasks, the distaff and the web,

And bid thy maidens speed the work. The bow

Belongs to men, and most to me; for here,

Within these walls, the authority is mine.”
The queen, astonished, heard him and withdrew,

But kept her son’s wise sayings in her heart.

And then ascending to her bower, among

Her maids, she wept her well-beloved lord,

Ulysses, till the blue-eyed Pallas came,

And poured upon her lids the balm of sleep.
Meantime the worthy swineherd bore the bow

In hand, and all along the palace-halls

The suitor-crew were chiding him aloud,

And thus an insolent youth among them spake:—
“Thou awkward swineherd, whither goest thou

With the curved bow? Thy own fleet dogs which thou

Hast reared shall soon devour thee, far from men

And midst thy herds of swine, if we find grace

With Phoebus and the other deathless gods.”
Such were their words; the swineherd where he stood

Set down the bow in fear, for many a voice

Called to him in the hall. On the other side

Shouted Telemachus with threatening words:—
“Nay, father, carry on the bow, nor think

To stop at every man’s command; lest I,

Though younger than thyself, cast stones at thee,

And chase thee to the fields, for I in strength

Excel thee. Would that I excelled as far

In strength of arm the suitors in these halls,

Then would I roughly through the palace-gates

Drive many who are plotting mischief now.”
He spake, and all with hearty laughter heard

His words, and for their sake allowed their wrath

Against the prince to cool. The swineherd went

Forward, along the hall, and, drawing near

The wise Ulysses, gave into his hands

The bow; and then he called the nurse aside,

Dame Eurycleia, and bespake her thus:—
“Sage Eurycleia, from Telemachus

I charge thee to make fast the solid doors,

And then, if any of the maids should hear

A groan or other noise of men within,

Let her not issue forth, but silently

Pursue the task in hand, and keep her place.”
He spake, nor were his words in vain. The dame

Made fast the doors of that magnificent hall,

While silently Philoetius hastened forth

And locked the portals of the high-walled court.

A cable of the barque of Byblos lay

Beneath the portico—it once had served

A galley—and with this the herdsman tied

The portals, and, returning, took the seat

Whence he had risen, but ever kept his eye

Fixed on his lord. Ulysses, meantime, held

The bow, and, turning it, intently eyed

Side after side, and tried each part in turn,

For fear that worms, while he was far away,

Had pierced the horn. At this, a youth among

The suitors, turning to his neighbor, said:—
"Lo an inspector and a judge of bows!

Perhaps he has a bow like that at home,

Or else would make one like it. How he shifts

The thing with busy hands from side to side—

The vagabond, well trained in knavish tricks!"

Then also said another insolent youth:

“May he in all things be as fortunate

As now, when he shall try to bend that bow!”
Such was their talk; but when the wary chief

Had poised and shrewdly scanned the mighty bow,

Then, as a singer, skilled to play the harp,

Stretches with ease on its new fastenings

A string, the twisted entrails of a sheep,

Made fast at either end, so easily

Ulysses bent that mighty bow. He took

And drew the cord with his right hand; it twanged

With a clear sound as when a swallow screams.

The suitors were dismayed, and all grew pale.

Jove in loud thunder gave a sign from heaven.

The much-enduring chief, Ulysses, heard

With joy the friendly omen, which the son

Of crafty Saturn sent him. He took up

A winged arrow, that before him lay

Upon a table, drawn; the others still

Were in the quiver’s womb; the Greeks were yet

To feel them. This he set with care against

The middle of the bow, and toward him drew

The cord and arrow-notch, just where he sat,

And, aiming opposite, let fly the shaft.

He missed no ring of all; from first to last

The brass-tipped arrow threaded every one.

Then to Telemachus Ulysses said:—
“Telemachus, the stranger sitting here

Hath not disgraced thee. I have neither missed

The rings, nor found it hard to bend the bow;

Nor has my manly strength decayed, as these

Who seek to bring me to contempt pretend;

And now the hour is come when we prepare

A supper for the Achaians, while the day

Yet lasts, and after supper the delights

Of song and harp, which nobly grace a feast.”
He spake, and nodded to Telemachus,

His well-beloved son, who girded on

His trenchant sword, and took in hand his spear,

And, armed with glittering brass for battle, came

And took his station by his father’s seat.

Book XXII

Death of the Suitors

Antinoüs slain by an arrow from the bow of Ulysses, who now declares himself, and begins the slaughter—Arms brought to him and to Eumaeus and Philoetius by Telemachus—Arms brought to the suitors by Melanthius the goatherd—Appearance of Pallas in the shape of Mentor—Death of all the suitors—Medon and Phemius spared—The unfaithful serving-women hanged.

Then did Ulysses cast his rags aside,

And, leaping to the threshold, took his stand

On its broad space, with bow and quiver filled

With arrows. At his feet the hero poured

The winged shafts, and to the suitors called:—

"That difficult strife is ended. Now I take

Another mark, which no man yet has hit.

Now shall I see if I attain my aim,

And, by the aid of Phoebus, win renown."

He spake; and, turning, at Antinoüs aimed

The bitter shaft—Antinoüs, who just then

Had grasped a beautiful two-eared cup of gold,

About to drink the wine. He little thought

Of wounds and death; for who, when banqueting

Among his fellows, could suspect that one

Alone against so many men would dare,

However bold, to plan his death, and bring

On him the doom of fate? Ulysses struck

The suitor with the arrow at the throat.

The point came through the tender neck behind,

Sideways he sank to earth; his hand let fall

The cup; the dark blood in a thick warm stream

Gushed from the nostrils of the smitten man.

He spurned the table with his feet, and spilled

The viands; bread and roasted meats were flung

To lie polluted on the floor. Then rose

The suitors in a tumult, when they saw

The fallen man; from all their seats they rose

Throughout the hall, and to the massive walls

Looked eagerly; there hung no buckler there,

No sturdy lance for them to wield. They called

Thus to Ulysses with indignant words:—
“Stranger! in evil hour hast thou presumed

To aim at men; and thou shalt henceforth bear

Part in no other contest. Even now

Is thy destruction close to thee. Thy hand

Hath slain the noblest youth in Ithaca.

The vultures shall devour thy flesh for this.”
So each one said; they deemed he had not slain

The suitor wittingly; nor did they see,

Blind that they were, the doom which in that hour

Was closing round them all. Then with a frown

The wise Ulysses looked on them, and said:—
“Dogs! ye had thought I never would come back

From Ilium’s coast, and therefore ye devoured

My substance here, and offered violence

To my maidservants, and pursued my wife

As lovers, while I lived. Ye dreaded not

The gods who dwell in the great heaven, nor feared

Vengeance hereafter from the hands of men;

And now destruction overhangs you all.”
He spake, and all were pale with fear, and each

Looked round for some escape from death. Alone

Eurymachus found voice, and answered thus:—
“If thou indeed be he, the Ithacan

Ulysses, now returned to thine old home,

Well hast thou spoken of the many wrongs

Done to thee by the Achaians in thy house

And in thy fields. But there the man lies slain

Who was the cause of all. Antinoüs first

Began this course of wrong. Nor were his thoughts

So much of marriage as another aim—

Which Saturn’s son denied him—to bear rule

Himself o’er those who till the pleasant fields

Of Ithaca, first having slain thy son

In ambush. But he now has met his fate.

Spare, then, thy people. We will afterward

Make due amends in public for the waste

Here in thy palace of the food and wine.

For each of us shall bring thee twenty beeves,

And brass and gold, until thy heart shall be

Content. Till then we cannot blame thy wrath.”
Sternly the wise Ulysses frowned, and said:

“Eurymachus, if thou shouldst offer me

All that thou hast, thy father’s wealth entire,

And add yet other gifts, not even then

Would I refrain from bloodshed, ere my hand

Avenged my wrongs upon the suitor-crew.

Choose then to fight or flee, whoever hopes

Escape from death and fate; yet none of you

Will now, I think, avoid that bitter doom.”
He spake. At once their knees and head grew faint,

And thus Eurymachus bespake the rest:—
“This man, O friends, to his untamable arm

Will give no rest, but with that bow in hand,

And quiver, will send forth from where he stands

His shafts, till he has slain us all. Prepare

For combat then, and draw your swords, and hold

The tables up against his deadly shafts,

And rush together at him as one man,

And drive him from the threshold through the door.

Then, hurrying through the city, let us sound

The alarm, and soon he will have shot his last."
He spake, and, drawing his keen two-edged sword

Of brass, sprang toward him with a dreadful cry,

Just as the great Ulysses, sending forth

An arrow, smote the suitor on the breast,

Beside the nipple. The swift weapon stood

Fixed in his liver; to the ground he flung

The sword, and, reeling giddily around

The table, fell; he brought with him to earth

The viands and the double cup, and smote

The pavement with his forehead heavily,

And in great agony. With both his feet

He struck and shook his throne, and darkness came

Over his eyes. Then rushed Amphinomus

Against the glorious chief, and drew his sword

To thrust him from the door. Telemachus

O’ertook him, and between his shoulders drove

A brazen lance. Right through his breast it went,

And he fell headlong, with his forehead dashed

Against the floor. Telemachus drew back,

And left his long spear in Amphinomus,

Lest, while he drew it forth, someone among

The Achaians might attack him with the sword,

And thrust him through or hew him down. In haste

He reached his father’s side, and quickly said:—
“Now, father, will I bring to thee a shield,

Two javelins, and a helmet wrought of brass,

Well fitted to the temples. I will case

Myself in armor, and will also give

Arms to the swineherd, and to him who tends

The beeves; for men in armor combat best.”
And wise Ulysses answered: “Bring them then,

And quickly, while I yet have arrows here

For my defence, lest, when I am alone,

They drive me from my station at the door.”
He spake. Obedient to his father’s word,

Telemachus was soon within the room

In which the glorious arms were laid. He took

Four bucklers thence, eight spears, and helmets four

Of brass, each darkened with its horsehair crest,

And bore them forth, and quickly stood again

Beside his father. But he first encased

His limbs in brass; his followers also put

Their shining armor on, and took their place

Beside the wise Ulysses, eminent

In shrewd devices. He, while arrows yet

Were ready to his hand, with every aim

Brought down a suitor; side by side they fell.

But when the shafts were spent, the archer-king

Leaned his good bow beside the shining wall,

Against a pillar of the massive pile,

And round his shoulders slung a fourfold shield,

And crowned his martial forehead with a helm

Wrought fairly, with a heavy horsehair crest

That nodded gallantly above, and took

In hand the two stout lances tipped with brass.
In the strong wall there was a postern door,

And, near the outer threshold of the pile,

A passage from it to a narrow lane,

Closed with well-fitting doors. Ulysses bade

The noble swineherd take his station there.

And guard it well, as now the only way

Of entrance. Agelaüs called aloud

To all his fellows, and bespake them thus:—
“Friends! will no one among you all go up

To yonder postern door, and make our plight

Known to the people? Then the alarm would spread,

And this man haply will have shot his last.”
Melanthius, keeper of the goats, replied:

“Nay, noble Agelaüs; ’tis too near

The palace gate; the entrance of the lane

Is narrow, and a single man, if brave,

Against us all might hold it. I will bring

Arms from the chamber to equip you all;

For there within, and nowhere else, I deem,

Ulysses and his son laid up their arms.”
Thus having said, the keeper of the goats,

Melanthius, climbed the palace stairs, and gained

The chamber of Ulysses. Taking thence

Twelve shields, as many spears, as many helms

Of brass, with each its heavy horsehair plume,

He came, and gave them to the suitors’ hands.

Then sank the hero’s heart, and his knees shook

As he beheld the suitors putting on

Their armor, and uplifting their long spears.

The mighty task appalled him, and he thus

Bespake Telemachus with winged words:—
“Telemachus, some woman here, or else

Melanthius, makes the battle hard for us.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“Father, I erred in this. I was the cause,

And no one else; I left the solid door

Ajar; the spy was shrewder far than I.

Now, good Eumaeus, shut the chamber door,

And see if any of the palace-maids

Have brought these arms, or if I rightly fix

The guilt upon Melanthius, Dolius’ son.”
So talked they with each other, while again

Melanthius, stealing toward the chamber, thought

To bring yet other shining weapons thence.

The noble swineherd marked him as he went,

And quickly drawing near Ulysses said:—
“Son of Laertes! nobly born and wise!

The knave whom we suspect is on his way

Up to thy chamber. Tell me now, I pray,

And plainly, shall I make an end of him,

If I may prove the stronger man, or bring

The wretch into thy presence, to endure

The vengeance due to all the iniquities

Plotted by him against thee in these halls?”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Telemachus and I will keep at bay

The suitors in this place, however fierce

Their onset, while ye two bind fast his hands

And feet behind his back, and bringing him

Into the chamber, with the door made fast

Behind you, tie him with a double cord,

And draw him up a lofty pillar close

To the timbers of the roof, that, swinging there,

He may live long and suffer grievous pain.”
    He spake; they hearkened and obeyed, and went

Up to the chamber unperceived by him

Who stood within and searched a nook for arms.

On each side of the entrance, by its posts,

They waited for Melanthius. Soon appeared

The goatherd at the threshold of the room,

Bearing a beautiful helmet in one hand,

And in the other a broad ancient shield,

Defaced by age and mould. Laertes once,

The hero, bore it when a youth, but now

Long time it lay unused, with gaping seams.

They sprang and seized the goatherd, dragging him

Back to the chamber by the hair; and there

They cast him, in an agony of fear,

Upon the floor, and bound his hands and feet

With a stout cord behind his back, as bade

The great Ulysses, much-enduring son

Of old Laertes. Round him then they looped

A double cord, and swung him up beside

A lofty pillar, till they brought him near

The timbers of the roof. And then didst thou,

Eumaeus, say to him in jeering words:—

“Melanthius, there mayst thou keep watch all night

On a soft bed, a fitting place for thee;

And when the Mother of the Dawn shall come

Upon her golden seat from ocean’s streams,

Thou wilt not fail to see her. Thou mayst then

Drive thy goats hither for the suitors' feast."
They left him in that painful plight, and put

Their armor on, and closed the shining door,

And went, and by Ulysses, versed in wiles,

Stood breathing valor. Four were they who stood

Upon that threshold, while their foes within

Were many and brave. Then Pallas, child of Jove,

Drew near, like Mentor both in shape and voice.

Ulysses saw her, and rejoiced and said:—
"Come, Mentor, to the aid of one who loves

And has befriended thee, thy peer in age."
Thus said Ulysses, but believed he spake

To Pallas, scatterer of hosts. Fierce shouts

Came from the suitors in the hall, and first,

Thus Agelaüs railed, Damastor's son:—

“Mentor, let not Ulysses wheedle thee

To join him, and make war on us, for this

Our purpose is, and it will be fulfilled:

When by our hands the father and the son

Are slain, thou also shalt be put to death

For this attempt, and thy own head shall be

The forfeit. When we shall have taken thus

Thy life with our good weapons, we will seize

On all thou hast, on all thy wealth within

Thy dwelling or without, and, mingling it

With the possessions of Ulysses, leave

Within thy palaces no son of thine

Or daughter living, and no virtuous wife

Of thine, abiding here in Ithaca.”

He spake, and woke new anger in the heart

Of Pallas, and she chid Ulysses thus:—
“Ulysses, thou art not, in might of arm

And courage, what thou wert when waging war

Nine years without a pause against the men

Of Troy for Helen’s sake, the child of Jove,

And many didst thou slay in deadly strife,

And Priam’s city, with its spacious streets,

Was taken through thy counsels. How is it

That, coming to thy own possessions here

And thy own palace, thou dost sadly find

Thy ancient valor fail thee in the strife

Against the suitors? Now draw near, my friend,

And stand by me, and see what I shall do,

And own that Mentor, son of Alcimus,

Amid a press of foes requites thy love.”
She spake, but gave not to Ulysses yet

The certain victory; for she meant to put

To further proof the courage and the might

Both of Ulysses and his emulous son.

To the broad palace roof she rose, and sat

In shape a swallow. Agelaüs now,

Damastor’s son, cheered on with gallant words

His friends; so also did Amphimedon,

Eurynomus, and Demoptolemus,

Polyctor’s son, Peisander, and with these

Sagacious Polybus. These six excelled

In valor all the suitors who survived,

And they were fighting for their lives. The bow

And the fleet shafts had smitten down their peers.

Thus to his fellows Agelaüs spake:—
“O friends, this man will now be forced to stay

His fatal hand. See, Mentor leaves his side,

After much empty boasting, and those four

Are at the entrance gate alone. Now aim

At him with your long spears—not all at once,

Let six first hurl their weapons, and may Jove

Grant that we strike Ulysses down, and win

Great glory! For the others at his side

We care but little, if their leader fail.”
He spake; they hearkened. Eagerly they cast

Their lances. Pallas made their aim to err.

One struck a pillar of the massive pile;

One struck the panelled door; one ashen shaft,

Heavy with metal, rang against the wall.

And when they had escaped that flight of spears,

Hurled from the crowd, the much-enduring man,

Ulysses, thus to his companions said:—
“Now is the time, my friends, to send our spears

Into the suitor-crowd, who, not content

With wrongs already done us, seek our lives.”
He spake, and, aiming opposite, they cast

Their spears. The weapon which Ulysses flung

Slew Demoptolemus; his son struck down

Euryades; the herdsman smote to death

Peisander, and the swineherd Elatus.

These at one moment fell, and bit the dust

Of the broad floor. Back flew the suitor-crowd

To a recess; and after them the four

Rushed on, and plucked their weapons from the dead.
Again the suitors threw their spears; again

Did Pallas cause their aim to err. One struck

A pillar of the massive pile, and one

The panelled door; another ashen shaft,

Heavy with metal, rang against the wall.

Yet did the weapon of Amphimedon

Strike lightly on the wrist Telemachus.

The brass just tore the skin. Ctesippus grazed

The shoulder of Eumaeus with his spear,

Above the shield; the spear flew over it

And fell to earth. Then they who stood beside

The sage Ulysses, versed in wiles, once more

Flung their keen spears. The spoiler of walled towns,

Ulysses, slew Eurydamas; his son

Struck down Amphimedon; the swineherd took

The life of Polybus; the herdsman smote

Ctesippus, driving through his breast the spear,

And called to him, and gloried o’er his fall:—
“O son of Polytherses, prompt to rail!

Beware of uttering, in thy foolish pride,

Big words hereafter; leave it to the gods,

Mightier are they than we. See, I repay

The hospitable gift of a steer’s foot,

Which once the great Ulysses from thy hand

Received, as he was passing through this hall.”
Thus spake the keeper of the horned herd.

Meantime, Ulysses slew Damastor’s son

With his long spear, in combat hand to hand.

Telemachus next smote Evenor’s son,

Leiocritus. He sent the brazen spear

Into his bowels; through his body passed

The weapon, and he fell upon his face.

His forehead struck the floor. Then Pallas held

On high her fatal aegis. From the roof

She showed it, and their hearts grew wild with fear.

They fled along the hall as flees a herd

Of kine, when the swift gadfly suddenly

Has come among them, and has scattered them

In springtime, when the days are growing long.

Meantime, like falcons with curved claws and beaks,

That, coming from the mountain summits, pounce

Upon the smaller birds, and make them fly

Close to the fields among the snares they dread,

And seize and slay, nor can the birds resist

Or fly, and at the multitude of prey

The fowlers’ hearts are glad; so did the four

Smite right and left the suitors hurrying through

The palace-hall, and fearful moans arose

As heads were smitten by the sword, and all

The pavement swam with blood. Leiodes then

Sprang forward to Ulysses, clasped his knees,

And supplicated him with winged words:—
"I come, Ulysses, to thy knees. Respect

And spare me. Never have I said or done,

Among the women of thy household, aught

That could be blamed, and I essayed to check

The wrongs of other suitors. Little heed

They gave my counsels, nor withheld their hands

From evil deeds, and therefore have they drawn

Upon themselves an evil fate. But I,

Who have done nothing—I their soothsayer—

Must I too die? Then is there no reward

Among the sons of men for worthy deeds.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, frowned and said:

“If then, in truth, thou wert as thou dost boast,

A soothsayer among these men, thy prayer

Within these palace-walls must oft have been

That far from me might be the blessed day

Of my return, and that my wife might take

With thee her lot, and bring forth sons to thee,

And therefore shalt thou not escape from death.”
He spake, and seizing with his powerful hand

A falchion lying near, which from the grasp

Of Agelaüs fell when he was slain,

Just at the middle of the neck he smote

Leiodes, while the words were on his lips,

And the head fell, and lay amid the dust.
Phemius, the son of Terpius, skilled in song,

Alone escaped the bitter doom of death.

He by constraint had sung among the train

Of suitors, and was standing now beside

The postern door, and held his sweet-toned lyre,

And pondered whether he should leave the hall,

And sit before the altar of the great

Herceian Jove, where, with Laertes, once

Ulysses oft had burned the thighs of beeves,

Or whether he should fling himself before

Ulysses, as a suppliant, at his knees.

This to his thought seemed wisest—to approach

Laertes' son, and clasp his knees. He placed

His sweet harp on the floor, between the cup

And silver-studded seat, and went and clasped

The hero’s knees, and said in winged words:—
“I come, Ulysses, to thy knees. Respect

And spare me. It will be a grief to thee,

Hereafter, shouldst thou slay a bard, who sings

For gods and men alike. I taught myself

This art; some god has breathed into my mind

Songs of all kinds, and I could sing to thee

As to a god. O, seek not then to take

My life! Thy own dear son Telemachus

Will bear me witness that not willingly

Nor for the sake of lucre did I come

To sing before the suitors at their feasts

And in thy palace, but was forced to come

By numbers and by mightier men than I.”

He ceased; Telemachus, the mighty, heard

And thus bespake his father at his side:—
“Refrain; smite not the guiltless with the sword;

And be the herald, Medon, also spared,

Who in our palace had the care of me

Through all my childhood; if he be not slain

Already by Philoetius, or by him

Who tends the swine, or if he have not met

Thyself, when thou wert ranging through the hail.”
He spake, and the sagacious Medon heard,

As crouching underneath a throne he lay,

Wrapped in the skin just taken from a steer,

To hide from the black doom of death. He came

From where he lay, and quickly flung aside

The skin, and, springing forward, clasped the knees

Of the young prince, and said in winged words:—

“Dear youth, behold me here; be merciful;

Speak to thy father, that he put not forth

His sword to slay me, eager as he is

For vengeance, and incensed against the men

Who haunt these halls to make his wealth a spoil,

And in their folly hold thyself in scorn.”
He spake; the sage Ulysses smiled and said:

“Be of good cheer, since this my son protects

And rescues thee. Now mayst thou well perceive,

And say to other men, how much more safe

Is doing good than evil. Go thou forth

Out of this slaughter to the open court,

Thou and the illustrious bard, and sit ye there,

While here within I do what yet I must.”
He spake; they moved away and left the hall,

And by the altar of almighty Jove

Sat looking round them, still in fear of death.
Meantime, Ulysses passed with searching look

O’er all the place, to find if yet remained

A single one of all the suitor-crew

Alive, and skulking from his bitter doom.

He saw that all had fallen in blood and dust,

Many as fishes on the shelving beach

Drawn from the hoary deep by those who tend

The nets with myriad meshes. Poured abroad

Upon the sand, while panting to return

To the salt sea they lie, till the hot sun

Takes their life from them; so the suitors lay

Heaped on each other. Then Ulysses took

The word, and thus bespake Telemachus:—
“Go now, Telemachus, and hither call

The nurse, Dame Eurycleia. I would say

Somewhat to her that comes into my thought.”
So spake the chief. Telemachus obeyed

The word, and smote the door, and called the nurse:—
“Come hither, ancient dame, who hast in charge

To oversee the women in their tasks;

My father calls thee, and would speak with thee.”
He spake; nor flew the word in vain; she flung

Apart the portals of those stately rooms,

And came in haste. Before her went the prince.

Among the corpses of the slain they found

Ulysses, stained with blood, and grimed with dust.

As when a lion, who has just devoured

A bullock of the pasture, moves away,

A terror to the sight, with breast and cheeks

All bathed in blood; so did Ulysses seem,

His feet and hands steeped in the blood of men.

She, when she saw the corpses and the pools

Of blood, and knew the mighty task complete,

Was moved to shout for joy. Ulysses checked

Her eager zeal, and said in winged words:—
"Rejoice in spirit, dame, but calm thyself,

And shout not. To exult aloud o'er those

Who lie in death is an unholy thing.

The pleasure of the gods, and their own guilt,

Brought death on these; for no respect had they

To any of their fellow-men—the good

Or evil—whosoever he might be

That came to them, and thus on their own heads

They drew this fearful fate. Now name to me

The women of the palace; let me know

Who is disloyal, and who innocent."
Then thus the well-beloved nurse replied:

"My son, I will declare the truth. There dwell

Here in thy palace fifty serving-maids,

Whom we have taught to work, to comb the fleece

And serve the household. Twelve of these have walked

The way of shame. To me they give no heed,

Nor to Penelope herself. Thy son

Has just now grown to manhood, and the queen

Has never suffered him to rule the maids;

But let me now, ascending to her room—

The royal bower—apprise thy wife, to whom

Some deity has sent the gift of sleep."
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

"Wake her not yet, but go and summon all

The women who have wrought these shameful deeds.”
He spake; the matron through the palace went

To seek the women, and to bid them come.

Meanwhile, Ulysses called Telemachus,

The herdsman and the swineherd to his side,

And thus commanded them with winged words:—
“Begin to carry forth the dead, and call

The women to your aid; and next make clean,

With water and with thirsty sponges, all

The sumptuous thrones and tables. When ye thus

Have put the hall in order, lead away

The serving-maids, and in the space between

The kitchen vault and solid outer wall

Smite them with your long swords till they give up

The ghost, and lose the memory evermore

Of secret meetings with the suitor-train.”
He spake; the women came, lamenting loud

With many tears, and carried forth the dead,

Leaning upon each other as they went,

And placed them underneath the portico

Of the walled court. Ulysses gave command,

Hastening their task, as all unwillingly

They bore the corpses forth. With water next,

And thirsty sponges in their hands, they cleansed

The sumptuous thrones and tables. Then the prince,

Telemachus, with shovels cleared the floor,

The herdsman and the swineherd aiding him,

And made the women bear the rubbish forth.

And now when all within was once again

In seemly order, they led forth the maids

From that fair pile into the space between

The kitchen vault and solid outer wall,

A narrow space from which was no escape,

And thus discreet Telemachus began:—
“I will not take away these creatures’ lives

By a pure death—these who so long have heaped

Reproaches on my mother’s head and mine,

And played the wanton with the suitor-crew.”
He spake, and made the hawser of a ship

Fast to a lofty shaft; the other end

He wound about the kitchen vault. So high

He stretched it that the feet of none who hung

On it might touch the ground. As when a flock

Of broad-winged thrushes or wild pigeons strike

A net within a thicket, as they seek

Their perch, and find unwelcome durance there,

So hung the women, with their heads a-row,

And cords about their necks, that they might die

A miserable death. A little while,

And but a little, quivered their loose feet

In air. They led Melanthius from the hall

And through the porch, cut off his nose and ears,

Wrenched out the parts of shame, a bloody meal

For dogs, and in their anger from the trunk

Lopped hands and feet. Then having duly washed

Their feet and hands, they came into the hall,

And to Ulysses; they had done their work.

And then to the dear nurse Ulysses said:—
"Bring sulphur, dame, the cure of noxious air,

And fire, that I may purge the hall with smoke;

And go, and bid Penelope come down,

With her attendant women, and command

That all the handmaids of the household come."
  And thus in turn Dame Eurycleia spake:

"Well hast thou said, my son, but suffer me

To bring thee clothes, a tunic and a cloak,

Nor with those rags on thy broad shoulders stand

In thine own palace; it becomes thee not."
  Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

"First let a fire be kindled in this hall."
  He spake, and Eurycleia, the dear nurse,

Obeyed, and brought the sulphur and the fire.

Ulysses steeped in smoke the royal pile.

Both hall and court. The matron, passing through

The stately palace of Ulysses, climbed

The stair to find and summon all the maids.

And forth they issued, bearing in their hands

Torches, and, crowding round Ulysses, gave

Glad greeting, seized his hands, embraced him, kissed

His hands and brow and shoulders. The desire

To weep for joy o’ercame the chief; his eyes

O’erflowed with tears; he sobbed; he knew them all.

Book XXIII

Ulysses and Penelope After the Slaughter

Descent of Penelope to the hall—Her doubts of the identity of Ulysses removed by evident tokens given by Ulysses—Her transport at their removal—His narrative of his adventures—Departure of Ulysses with his son, the herdsman, and the swineherd, to the country.

Up to the royal bower the matron went

With an exulting heart, to tell the queen

That her beloved husband was within.

With knees that faltered not, and quick light step

She went, and, standing by her mistress, said:—

"Awake, Penelope, dear child, and see

With thine own eyes what thou hast pined for long.

Ulysses has returned; thy lord is here,

Though late, and he has slain the arrogant crew

Of suitors, who disgraced his house, and made

His wealth a spoil, and dared insult his son.”
And thus discreet Penelope replied:

“The gods, dear nurse, have made thee mad; for they

Have power to change the wisest men to fools,

And make the foolish wise, and they have warped

Thy mind once sound. How canst thou mock me thus,

Amidst my sorrows, with such idle tales?

Why wake me from the pleasant sleep that closed

My lids so softly? Never have I slept

So sweetly since Ulysses went from me

To that bad city, which no tongue should name.

Go, then; return into the lower rooms.

Had any of my women save thyself

Brought such a message to disturb my sleep,

I would have sent her back into the hall

With angry words; thy years are thy excuse.”
But Eurycleia, the dear nurse, rejoined:

“Nay, my dear child, I mock thee not. Most true

It is that thy Ulysses has returned,

And here he is at home, as I have said.

The stranger whom they scoffed at in the hall

Is he; and long Telemachus has known

That he was here, but wisely kept from all

His father’s secret, till he should avenge

Upon those violent men their guilty deeds.”
She ended, and her mistress, overjoyed,

Sprang from her couch, embraced the aged dame,

And wept, and said to her in winged words:—
“Tell me, dear nurse, and truly, if indeed

Ulysses have returned as thou hast said.

How smote he those proud suitors?—he alone,

And they so many, gathered in the hall.”
And thus the well-beloved nurse replied:

“I saw it not, nor knew of it. I heard

Only the moanings of the slain, while we

The maids, affrighted, sat in a recess

Of that well-vaulted chamber; the firm doors

Closed us all in, until at length thy son,

Sent by his father, called me forth. I found

Ulysses standing midst the dead that lay

Heaped on each other, everywhere along

The solid pavement. Thou wouldst have rejoiced

To see him like a lion with the stains

Of slaughter on him. Now the suitors lie

Before the portals of the palace-court,

And he has kindled a great fire, and steeps

In smoke the noble hall. He bade me come

To call thee. Follow me, that ye may give

Your hearts to gladness—for ye have endured

Great sorrows both, and your long-cherished hope

Is now fulfilled. He hath returned alive

To his dear home, and finds thee and his son

Yet in his palace, and hath terribly

Avenged himself upon the guilty men

Who under his own roof have done him wrong.”
Then spake the sage Penelope again:

“Beloved nurse, exult not overmuch,

Nor rashly boast. Well is it known to thee,

Were he to come beneath this roof again,

How welcome he would be to all, but most

To me and to the son to whom we gave

His being. Yet thy tidings are not true.

Someone of the immortals must have slain

The arrogant suitors, angry to behold

Their foul injustice and their many crimes;

For no respect had they to mortal man,

Good he might be, or bad, whome’er they met;

And therefore have they made an evil end.

But my Ulysses must have perished far

From Ithaca, cut off from his return.”
Then Eurycleia, the dear nurse, rejoined:

“What words are these, my child, that pass thy lips?

Sayst thou, then, that thy husband, who now stands

Upon thy hearthstone, never will return?

O slow of faith! but thou wert ever thus.

Come, then, I give a certain proof. I saw

Myself, when he was at the bath, the scar

Left on him by the white tusk of a boar,

And would have told thee, but he laid his hands

Upon my mouth, and would not suffer me

To bear the tidings, such his forecast was.

Now follow me; I give my life in pledge.

If I deceive thee, slay me ruthlessly."
Then spake discreet Penelope again:

"Dear nurse, though thou in many things art wise,

Think not to scan the counsels of the gods,

Who live forever. Yet will we descend,

And meet my son, and look upon the slain,

And see the avenger by whose hand they fell."
She spake, and from the royal bower went down,

Uncertain whether she should stand aloof

And question there her lord, or haste to him

And clasp his hands in hers and kiss his brow.

But having passed the threshold of hewn stone,

Entering she took her seat right opposite

Ulysses, in the full glow of the fire,

Against the other wall. Ulysses sat

Beside a lofty column with his eyes

Cast down, and waiting for his highborn wife

To speak when she had seen him. Long she sat

In silence, for amazement overpowered

Her senses. Sometimes, looking in his eyes,

She saw her husband there, and then again,

Clad in those sordid weeds, she knew him not.

Then spake Telemachus, and chid her thus:—
“Mother, unfeeling mother! hard of heart

Art thou; how else couldst thou remain aloof?

How keep from taking, at my father's side,

Thy place, to talk with him, and question him?

No other wife could bring herself to bear

Such distance from a husband, just returned

After long hardships, in the twentieth year

Of absence, to his native land and her.

Mother! thy heart is harder than a stone."
And thus the sage Penelope replied:

"Dear child, my faculties are overpowered

With wonder, and I cannot question him,

Nor even speak to him, nor fix my looks

Upon his face. But if it be indeed

Ulysses, and he have returned, we soon

Shall know each other; there are tokens known

To both of us, to none but him and me.”
She ended, and the much-enduring chief

Ulysses, smiling at her words, bespake

Telemachus at once, in winged words:—
“Suffer thy mother, O Telemachus,

To prove me; she will know me better soon.

My looks are sordid, and my limbs are wrapped

In tattered raiment, therefore does she think

Meanly of me, and cannot willingly

Believe that I am he. But let us now

Consider what most wisely may be done.

He who hath slain, among a tribe of men,

A single one with few to avenge his death,

Flees from his kindred and his native land;

But we have slain the champions of the realm,

The flower of all the youth of Ithaca.

Therefore, I pray thee, think what shall be done.”
And then discreet Telemachus replied:

“Look thou to that, dear father; for they say

That thou of all mankind wert wont to give

The wisest counsels. None of mortal birth

In this was deemed thy peer. We follow thee

With cheerful hearts; nor will our courage fail,

I think, in aught that lies within our power.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Then will I tell thee what I deem most wise.

First take the bath, and then array yourselves

In tunics, bid the palace-maidens choose

Fresh garments; let the godlike bard, who bears

The clear-toned harp, be leader, and strike up

A melody to prompt the festive dance,

That all may say who hear it from without—

Whether the passers by or dwellers near—

‘It is a wedding.’ Else throughout the land

The rumor of the slaughter we have wrought

Among the suitors may have spread before

We reach our wooded farm, and there consult

Beneath the guidance of Olympian Jove.”
He spake; they hearkened and obeyed. They took

The bath, and then they put their garments on.

The maids arrayed themselves; the godlike bard

Took the curved harp, and woke in all the love

Of melody, and of the graceful dance.

The spacious pile resounded to the steps

Of men and shapely women in their mirth,

And one who stood without was heard to say:—

“Someone, no doubt, has made the long-wooed queen

His bride at last; a worthless woman she,

Who could not, for the husband of her youth,

Keep his fair palace till he came again.”
Such words were said, but they who uttered them

Knew little what had passed. Eurynomè,

The matron of the palace, meantime took

Magnanimous Ulysses to the bath

In his own dwelling, smoothed his limbs with oil,

And threw a gorgeous mantle over him

And tunic. Pallas on the hero’s head

Shed grace and majesty; she made him seem

Taller and statelier, made his locks flow down

In curls like blossoms of the hyacinth,

As when a workman skilled in many arts,

And taught by Pallas and Minerva, twines

A golden border round the silver mass,

A glorious work; so did the goddess shed

Grace o’er his face and form. So from the bath

He stepped, like one of the immortals, took

The seat from which he rose, right opposite

Penelope, and thus addressed the queen:—
“Lady, the dwellers of the Olympian heights

Have given thee an impenetrable heart

Beyond all other women. Sure I am

No other wife could bring herself to bear

Such distance from a husband just returned

After long hardships, in the twentieth year

Of absence, to his native land and her.

Come, nurse, prepare a bed, where by myself

I may lie down; an iron heart is hers.”
To this the sage Penelope replied:

“Nay, sir, ’tis not through pride or disregard,

Or through excess of wonder, that I act

Thus toward thee. Well do I remember thee

As thou wert in the day when thy good ship

Bore thee from Ithaca. Bestir thyself,

Dame Eurycleia, and make up with care

A bed without the chamber, which he framed

With his own hands; bear out the massive bed,

And lay upon it seemly coverings,

Fleeces and mantles for his nightly rest.”
She spake to try her husband; but, displeased,

Ulysses answered thus his virtuous queen:—
“O woman, thou hast said unwelcome words.

Who hath displaced my bed? That task were hard

For long-experienced hands, unless some god

Had come to shift its place. No living man,

Even in his prime of years, could easily

Have moved it, for in that elaborate work

There was a mystery; it was I myself

Who shaped it, no one else. Within my court

There grew an olive-tree with full-leaved boughs,

A tall and flourishing tree; its massive stem

Was like a column. Round it I built up

A chamber with cemented stones until

The walls were finished; then I framed a roof

Above it, and put on the well-glued doors

Close fitting. Next I lopped the full-leaved boughs,

And, cutting off the trunk above the root,

Smoothed well the stump with tools, and made of it

A post to bear the couch. I bored the wood

With wimbles, placed on it the frame, and carved

The work till it was done, inlaying it

With silver, gold, and ivory. I stretched

Upon it thongs of oxhide brightly dyed

In purple. Now, O wife, I cannot know

Whether my bed remains as then it was,

Or whether someone from the root has hewn

The olive trunk, and moved it from its place.”
He spake, and her knees faltered and her heart

Was melted as she heard her lord recount

The tokens all so truly; and she wept,

And rose, and ran to him, and flung her arms

About his neck, and kissed his brow, and said:—

“Ulysses, look not on me angrily,

Thou who in other things art wise above

All other men. The gods have made our lot

A hard one, jealous lest we should have passed

Our youth together happily, and thus

Have reached old age. I pray, be not incensed,

Nor take it ill that I embraced thee not

As soon as I beheld thee, for my heart

Has ever trembled lest someone who comes

Into this isle should cozen me with words;

And they who practise fraud are numberless.

The Argive Helen, child of Jupiter,

Would ne’er have listened to a stranger’s suit

And loved him, had she known that in the years

To come the warlike Greeks would bring her back

To her own land. It was a deity

Who prompted her to that foul wrong. Her thought

Was never of the great calamity

Which followed, and which brought such woe on us.

But now, since thou, by tokens clear and true,

Hast spoken of our bed, which human eye

Has never seen save mine and thine, and those

Of one handmaiden only, Actoris—

Her whom my father gave me when I came

To this thy palace, and who kept the door

Of our close chamber—thou hast won my mind

To full belief, though hard it was to win."
She spake, and he was moved to tears; he wept

As in his arms he held his dearly loved

And faithful wife. As welcome as the land

To those who swim the deep, of whose stout barque

Neptune has made a wreck amidst the waves,

Tossed by the billow and the blast, and few

Are those who from the hoary ocean reach

The shore, their limbs all crested with the brine,

These gladly climb the sea-beach, and are safe—

So welcome was her husband to her eyes.

Nor would her fair white arms release his neck,

And there would rosy-fingered Morn have found

Both weeping, but the blue-eyed Pallas planned

That thus it should not be; she stayed the night

When near its close, and held the golden Morn

Long in the ocean deeps, nor suffered her

To yoke her steeds that bring the light to men—

Lampas and Phaëthon, swift steeds that bear

The Morning on her way. Ulysses then,

The man of forecast, thus bespake his queen:—
“Not yet, O wife, have we attained the close

Of all our labors. One remains which yet

I must achieve, toilsome, and measureless

In difficulty; for so prophesied

The spirit of Tiresias, on the day

When to the abode of Pluto I went down

To ask the seer concerning the return

Of my companions, and my own. But now

Seek we our couch, dear wife, that, softly laid,

We may refresh ourselves with welcome sleep.”
Then spake in turn the sage Penelope:

“Whenever thou desirest it thy couch

Shall be made ready, since the gods vouchsafe

To bring thee back into thy pleasant home

And to thy native land. But now that thou

Hast spoken of it, and some deity

Is prompting thee, declare what this new task

May be. Hereafter I shall hear of it,

No doubt, nor were it worse to know it now.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Dear wife, why wilt thou ask? why press me thus?

Yet will I tell thee truly, nor will keep

Aught from thee, though thou wilt not gladly hear,

Nor I relate. Tiresias bade me pass

Through city after city, till I found

A people who know not the sea, nor eat

Their food with salt, who never yet beheld

The red-prowed galley, nor the shapely oars,

Which are the wings of ships. And this plain sign

He gave, nor will I keep it back from thee,

That when another traveller whom I meet

Shall say it is a winnowing-fan I bear

On my stout shoulder, there he bade me plant

The oar upright in earth, and offer up

To monarch Neptune there a ram, a bull,

And sturdy boar, and then, returning home,

Burn hallowed hecatombs to all the gods

Who dwell in the broad heaven, each one in turn.

At last will death come over me, afar

From ocean, such a death as peacefully

Shall take me off in a serene old age,

Amid a people prosperous and content.

All this, the prophet said, will come to pass.”
And then the sage Penelope rejoined:

“If thus the immortals make thy later age

The happier, there is hope that thou wilt find

Escape from evil in the years to come.”
So talked they with each other. Meantime went

Eurynomè, attended by the nurse,

And in the light of blazing torches dressed

With soft fresh drapery a bed; and when

Their busy hands had made it full and high,

The aged dame withdrew to take her rest

In her own chamber, while Eurynomè,

Who kept the royal bower, upheld a torch

And thither led the pair, and, when they both

Were in the chamber, went her way. They took

Their place delighted in the ancient bed.

The prince, the herdsman, and the swineherd ceased

Meantime to tread the dance, and bade the maids

Cease also, and within the palace-rooms

Dark with night’s shadow, sought their place of rest.

Then came the time of pleasant mutual talk,

In which that noblest among women spake

Of wrongs endured beneath her roof from those

Who came to woo her—an insatiate crew—

Who made of beeves and fatlings of the flock

Large slaughter, and drained many a wine-cask dry.

Then nobly born Ulysses told what woes

His valor brought on other men; what toils

And suffering he had borne; he told her all,

And she, delighted, heard him, nor did sleep

Light on her eyelids till his tale was done.
    And first he told her how he overcame

The people of Ciconia; how he passed

Thence to the rich fields of the race who feed

Upon the lotus; what the Cyclops did,

And how upon the Cyclops he avenged

The death of his brave comrades, whom the wretch

Had piteously slaughtered and devoured.

And how he came to Aeolus, and found

A friendly welcome, and was sent by him

Upon his voyage; yet ’twas not his fate

To reach his native land; a tempest caught

His fleet, and far across the fishy deep

Bore him away, lamenting bitterly.

And how he landed at Telepylus,

Among the Laestrigonians, who destroyed

His ships and warlike comrades, he alone

In his black ship escaping. Then he told

Of Circè, her deceit and many arts,

And how he went to Pluto’s dismal realm

In his good galley, to consult the soul

Of him of Thebes, Tiresias, and beheld

All his lost comrades and his mother—her

Who brought him forth, and trained him when a child.

And how he heard the Sirens afterward,

And how he came upon the wandering rocks,

The terrible Charybdis, and the crags

Of Scylla—which no man had ever passed

In safety; how his comrades slew for food

The oxen of the Sun; how Jupiter,

The Thunderer, with a bolt of fire from heaven

Smote his swift barque; and how his gallant crew

All perished, he alone escaped with life.

And how he reached Ogygia’s isle, he told,

And met the nymph Calypso, who desired

That he would be her husband, and long time

Detained and fed him in her vaulted grot,

And promised that he ne’er should die, nor know

Decay of age, through all the days to come;

Yet moved she not the purpose of his heart.

And how he next through many hardships came

To the Phaeacians, and they welcomed him

And honored him as if he were a god,

And to his native country in a barque

Sent him with ample gifts of brass and gold

And raiment. As he uttered this last word,

Sleep softly overcame him; all his limbs

Lay loose in rest, and all his cares were calmed.
The blue-eyed Pallas had yet new designs;

And when she deemed Ulysses was refreshed

With rest and sleep, in that accustomed bed,

She called the Morning, daughter of the Dawn,

To rise from ocean in her car of gold,

And shed her light on men. Ulysses rose

From his soft couch, and thus enjoined his spouse:—
"O wife! enough of misery have we borne

Already—thou in weeping for my long

Unhappy absence—I for years withheld

By Jupiter and all the other gods

From my return to this dear land, although

I pined for home. Now since upon this couch

We take the place so earnestly desired,

Take thou the charge of all that I possess

Here in the palace. For the herds and flocks

Which those high-handed suitors have devoured,

I shall seize many others as a spoil;

The rest the Greeks will bring me, till my stalls

Are filled again. I hasten to my farm

Embowered in trees, to greet the aged man

My excellent father, who continually

Grieves for me. Prudent as thou art, I give

This charge; a rumor, with the rising sun,

Will quickly go abroad that I have slain

The suitors in the palace. Now withdraw,

Thou and thy maidens, to the upper room,

And sit and look not forth, nor ask of aught.”
So spake the chief, and on his shoulders braced

His glorious armor. Then he called his son,

The herdsman, and the swineherd, bidding them

To take in hand their weapons. They obeyed,

And, having armed themselves in brass, they threw

The portals open. As they all went forth,

Ulysses led the way. The early light

Was on the earth, but Pallas, shrouding them

In darkness, led them quickly through the town.

Book XXIV

Conclusion

The souls of the suitors conducted to Hades by Mercury—Agamemnon and Achilles in Hades—Their meeting with the souls of the suitors, and narrative of Amphimedon—Meeting and mutual recognition of Ulysses and his father in the orchard at Ithaca—Insurrection of the Ithacans, with Eupeithes, the father of Antinoüs, at their head—The revolt quelled, Eupeithes slain by Laertes and a lasting peace made between Ulysses and his subject.

Cyllenian Hermes summoned forth the souls

Of the slain suitors. In his hand he bore

The beautiful golden wand, with which at will

He shuts the eyes of men, or opens them

From sleep. With this he guided on their way

The ghostly rout; they followed, uttering

A shrilly wail. As when a flock of bats,

Deep in a dismal cavern, fly about

And squeak, if one have fallen from the place

Where, clinging to each other and the rock,

They rested, so that crowd of ghosts went forth

With shrill and plaintive cries. Before them moved

Beneficent Hermes through those dreary ways,

And past the ocean stream they went, and past

Leucadia’s rock, the portals of the Sun,

And people of the land of dreams, until

They reached the fields of asphodel, where dwell

The souls, the bodiless forms of those who die.
And there they found the soul of Peleus’ son,

His friend Patroclus, and the blameless chief

Antilochus, and Ajax, who excelled

In stature and in form all other Greeks

Save the great son of Peleus. These were grouped

Around Achilles. Then approached the ghost

Of Agamemnon, Atreus' son; he seemed

In sorrow, and around him others stood,

Who in the palace of Aegisthus met

Their fate and died. The son of Peleus took

The word, and spake to Agamemnon thus:—
"Atrides, we had thought that Jove, who wields

The thunder, favored thee, through all thy years,

Beyond all other men—thou didst bear rule

Over so many and such valiant men

Upon the plain of Troy, where we of Greece

Endured such sufferings. Yet all too soon

The cruel doom of death, which no man born

Of woman can escape, has fallen on thee.

O, if amid the honors of thy sway

That doom had overtaken thee, while yet

In Troy’s far realm, then would the assembled Greeks

Have built a tomb to thee! Thou wouldst have left

A heritage of glory to thy son;

Now hast thou died a most unhappy death.”
And then the soul of Agamemnon said:

“Fortunate son of Peleus, godlike chief

Achilles, who didst die upon the field

Of Ilium, far from Argos, while there fell

Around thee many of the bravest sons

Of Troy and Greece, who fought for thee, and thou

Wert lying in thy mighty bulk, amid

Whirlwinds of dust, forgetful evermore

Of horsemanship. All that day long we fought,

Nor stayed our hands till Jove, to part us, sent

A hurricane. When we had borne thee thence

And brought thee to the fleet, upon a bier

We laid thee, pouring o’er thy shapely limbs

Warm water, and anointing them with oil.

Round thee the Achaians stood in tears, hot tears,

And cut their hair away. From ocean’s depth

Thy mother, when she heard the tidings, rose

With her immortal sea-nymphs. Mournfully

Came o’er the waves the sound of their lament.

Trembled the Greeks with fear, and, rushing forth,

Would have sought refuge in their roomy ships,

If Nestor, wise in ancient lore, and known

For counsels ever safe, had not restrained

Their haste, and thus declared his prudent thought:—

“ ‘Stay, Argives, youths of Greece; think not of flight!

It is his mother; from the sea she comes

To her dead son, and brings her deathless nymphs.’

“He spake; his words withheld the valiant Greeks

From flight. And now around thee came and stood

The daughters of the Ancient of the Deep,

Lamenting bitterly. Upon thy corse

They put ambrosial robes. The Muses nine

Bewailed thee with sweet voices, answering

Each other. Then wouldst thou have seen no one

Of all the Argive host with eyes unwet,

The Muses’ song so moved them. Seventeen days

And nights we mourned thee—both the immortal ones

And mortals. On the eighteenth day we gave

Thy body to the fire, and at the pile

Slew many fatling ewes, and many an ox

With crooked horns. In raiment of the gods

The fire consumed thee midst anointing oils

And honey. Many heroes of our host

In armor and in chariots, or on foot,

Contended round thy funeral pyre in games,

And mighty was the din. And when at length

The fires of Vulcan had consumed thy flesh,

We gathered up at morning thy white bones,

Achilles, pouring over them pure wine

And fragrant oils. Thy mother brought a vase

Of gold, which Bacchus gave, she said, the work

Of Vulcan the renowned, and in it now,

Illustrious son of Peleus, thy white bones

Are lying, and with thine are mingled those

Of dead Patroclus Menoetiades.

Apart we placed the ashes of thy friend

Antilochus, whom thou didst honor most

After the slain Patroclus. O’er all these

The sacred army of the warlike Greeks

Built up a tomb magnificently vast

Upon a cape of the broad Hellespont,

There to be seen, far off upon the deep,

By those who now are born, or shall be born

In future years. Thy mother, having first

Prayed to the gods, appointed noble games,

Within the circus, for the Achaian chiefs.

Full often have I seen the funeral rites

Of heroes, when the youth, their chieftain dead,

Were girded for the games, and strove to win

The prizes; but I most of all admired

Those which the silver-footed Thetis gave

To mark thy burial, who wert loved by all

The immortals. So thou hast not lost by death

Thy fame, Achilles, and among the tribes

Of men thy glory will be ever great;

But what hath it availed me to have brought

The war on Ilium to an end, since Jove

Doomed me to be destroyed on my return,

Slain by Aegisthus and my guilty wife?”
So talked they with each other. Now approached

The herald Argus-queller, bringing down

The souls of suitors by Ulysses slain.

Both chiefs moved toward them, wondering at the sight.

The soul of Agamemnon, Atreus' son,

Knew well-renowned Amphimedon, whose birth

Was from Melanthius, and by whom he once

Was welcomed to his house in Ithaca;

And him the son of Atreus first bespake:—
"Amphimedon, what sad mischance has brought

You all, who seem like chosen men, and all

Of equal age, into these drear abodes

Beneath the earth? 'Twere hard indeed to find,

In a whole city, nobler forms of men.

Has Neptune wrecked you in your ships at sea

With fierce winds and huge waves, or armed men

Smitten you on the land, while carrying off

Their beeves and sheep, or fighting to defend

Your wives and city? Tell me, for I claim

To have been once your guest. Rememberest thou

I lodged in thy own palace when I came

With godlike Menelaus, and besought

Ulysses to unite his gallant fleet

To ours, and sail for Troy. A whole month long

Were we in crossing the wide sea, and hard

We found the task to gain as our ally

Ulysses, the destroyer of walled towns.”
The soul of dead Amphimedon replied:

“Atrides Agamemnon, far renowned,

And king of men, I well remember all

Of which thou speakest; I will now relate,

And truly, how we met our evil end.

We wooed the wife of the long-absent chief

Ulysses; she rejected not nor yet

Granted our suit, detested as it was,

But, meditating our destruction, planned

This shrewd device. She laid upon the loom

Within her rooms a web of delicate threads,

Ample in length and breadth, and thus she said

To all of us: ‘Young princes, who are come

To woo me—since Ulysses is no more,

My noble husband—urge me not, I pray,

To marriage, till I finish in the loom—

That so my threads may not be spun in vain—

A funeral vesture for the hero-chief

Laertes, when his fatal hour shall come,

With death’s long sleep; else some Achaian dame

Might blame me, should I leave without a shroud

Him who in life possessed such ample wealth.’

Such were her words, and easily they won

Upon our generous minds. So went she on

Weaving that ample web, and every night

Unravelled it by torchlight. Three full years

She practised thus, and by the fraud deceived

The Grecian youths; but when the hours had brought

The fourth year round, a woman who knew all

Revealed the mystery, and we ourselves

Saw her unravelling the ample web.

Thenceforth constrained, and with unwilling hands,

She finished it. And when at length she showed

The vesture she had woven, the broad web

That she had bleached to brightness like the sun’s

Or like the moon’s, some hostile deity

Brought back Ulysses to a distant nook

Of his own fields, and to his swineherd’s lodge.

And thither also came in his black ship

His son, returning from the sandy coast

Of Pylos. Thence the twain, when they had planned

To slay the suitors, came within the walls

Of the great city; first Telemachus,

And after him Ulysses, with his guide

The swineherd. He was clad in sordid weeds,

And seemed a wretched beggar, very old,

Propped on a staff. In that disguise of rags

None knew him, as he suddenly appeared,

Not even the oldest of us all. Harsh words

And blows we gave him. He endured them all

Awhile with patience, smitten and reviled

In his own palace. Moved at length by Jove,

He and his son Telemachus bore off

The shining weapons from the hall, to lie

In a far chamber, and barred all the doors.

Then, prompted by her husband’s craft, the queen

Proposed a game of archery, with bow

And rings of hoary steel, to all of us

Ill-fated suitors. This drew on our death.

Not one of us could bend that sturdy bow,

None had the strength. But as it passed from us

Into Ulysses’ hands, we loudly chid

The bearer, and forbade him, but in vain.

Telemachus alone with stern command

Bade him deliver it. When in his hands

The much-enduring chief, Ulysses, took

The bow, he drew the string with ease, and sent

A shaft through all the rings. He sprang and stood

Upon the threshold; at his feet he poured

The winged arrows, cast a terrible glance

Around him, and laid King Antinoüs dead,

Then sent the fatal shafts at those who stood

Before him; side by side they fell and died.

Some god, we saw, was with them, as they rushed

Upon us mightily, and chased us through

The palace, slaying us on every side;

And fearful were the groans of dying men,

As skulls were cloven, and the pavement swam

With blood. Such, Agamemnon, was the fate

By which we perished. Now our bodies lie

Neglected at the palace; for not yet

Our kindred, dwelling in our homes, have heard

The tidings, nor have come to cleanse our wounds

From the dark blood, and lay us on the bier

With tears—such honors as are due the dead.”
In turn the soul of Agamemnon spake:

“Son of Laertes, fortunate and wise,

Ulysses! thou by feats of eminent might

And valor dost possess thy wife again.

And nobly minded is thy blameless queen,

The daughter of Icarius, faithfully

Remembering him to whom she gave her troth

While yet a virgin. Never shall the fame

Of his great valor perish, and the gods

Themselves shall frame, for those who dwell on earth,

Sweet strains in praise of sage Penelope.

Not such was she who treacherously slew

The husband of her youth—she of the house

Of Tyndarus. Her name among mankind

Shall be the hateful burden of a song;

And great is the dishonor it has brought

On women, even the faithful and the good."
So talked they with each other, standing there

In Pluto's realm beneath the vaulted earth.

Meantime Ulysses, hastening from the town,

Came to the fair fields of Laertes, tilled

With care. Laertes, after years of toil,

Acquired them. There his dwelling stood; a shed

Encircled it, where ate and sat and slept

The servants of the household, who fulfilled

His slightest wish. An old Sicilian dame

Was there, who waited, in that distant spot,

On her old master with assiduous care.

And then Ulysses to his followers said:—
“Go into that fair dwelling, and with speed

Slay for our feast the fattest of the swine.

I go to prove my father; I would learn

Whether he knows me when he sees my face,

Or haply knows me not, so long away.”
He spake, and laid his weapons in their hands.

Straight toward the house they went. Ulysses passed

Into the fruitful orchard, there to prove

His father. Going down and far within

The garden-plot, he found not Dolius there,

Nor any of the servants, nor his sons.

All were abroad, old Dolius leading them.

They gathered thorns to fence the garden-grounds.

There, delving in that fertile spot, around

A newly planted tree, Ulysses saw

His father only, sordidly arrayed

In a coarse tunic, patched and soiled. He wore

Patched greaves of bullock’s hide upon his thighs,

A fence against the thorns; and on his hands

gloves, to protect them from the prickly stems

Of bramble; and upon his head a cap

Of goatskin. There he brooded o’er his grief.

Him when the much-enduring chief beheld,

Wasted with age and sorrow-worn, he stopped

Beside a lofty pear-tree’s stem and wept,

And pondered whether he should kiss and clasp

His father in his arms, and tell him all,

How he had reached his native land and home,

Or question first and prove him. Musing thus,

It pleased him to begin with sportive words;

And thus resolved, divine Ulysses drew

Near to his father stooping at his task,

And loosening the hard earth about a tree,

And thus the illustrious son accosted him:—
"O aged man! there is no lack of skill

In tending this fair orchard, which thy care

Keeps flourishing; no growth is there of fig,

Vine, pear, or olive, or of plants that grow

In borders, that has missed thy friendly hand.

Yet let me say, and be thou not displeased,

Thou art ill cared for, burdened as thou art

With years, and squalid, and in mean attire.

It cannot be that for thy idleness

Thy master treats thee thus; nor is there seen

Aught servile in thy aspect—in thy face

Or stature; thou art rather like a king;

Thou seemest one who should enjoy the bath

And banquet, and lie soft—for this befits

Old men like thee. Now say, and tell me true,

Who may thy master be? whose orchard this

Which thou dost tend? And, more than this, declare,

For much I long to know, if I am come

To Ithaca, as I just now was told

By one who met me as I came—a man

Not overwise, who would not stop to tell

What I desired to learn, nor bear to hear

My questions, when I asked him if a guest

Of mine were living yet in health, or dead

And in the realm of Pluto. Let me speak

Of him, and mark me well, I pray; I lodged

Once, in my native land, a man who came

Into my house, and never stranger yet

More welcome was than he. He was by birth

Of Ithaca, he said, Laertes' son,

And grandson of Arcesias. Him I led

Beneath my roof, and hospitably lodged,

And feasted in the plenty of my home,

And gave such gifts as might become a host—

Seven talents of wrought gold, a silver cup

All over rough with flowers, twelve single cloaks,

Twelve mats, twelve mantles passing beautiful,

And tunics twelve, and, chosen by himself,

Twelve graceful damsels, skilled in household arts.”
And then his father answered, shedding tears:

“Thou art indeed, O stranger, in the land

Of which thou dost inquire, but wicked men

And lawless now possess it. Thou hast given

Thy generous gifts in vain; yet hadst thou found

Ulysses living yet in Ithaca,

Then would he have dismissed thee recompensed

With gifts and liberal cheer, as is the due

Of him who once has been our host. Yet say,

And truly say, how many years have passed

Since thou didst lodge my son, if he it was,

Thy hapless guest, whom, far away from home

And all his friends, the creatures of the deep,

And the foul birds of air, and beasts of prey,

Already have devoured. No mother mourned

His death and wrapped him in his shroud, nor I,

His father; nor did chaste Penelope,

His consort nobly dowered, bewail the man

She loved upon his bier with eyes dissolved

In tears, as fitting was—an honor due

To those who die. Now, further, truly tell,

For I would learn, what is thy name, and whence

Thou comest, from what tribe, thy city where,

And who thy parents. Where is the good ship

At anchor which has brought thee and thy friends?

Or hast thou landed from another’s barque,

Which put thee on the shore and left the isle?”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“I will tell all and truly. I am come

From Alybas; a stately dwelling there

Is mine, Apheidas is my father, son

Of royal Polypemon, and my name

Eperitus. Some deity has warped

My course astray from the Sicanian coast,

And brought me hitherward against my will.

My barque lies yonder, stationed by the field

Far from the city. This is the fifth year

Since parting with me thy Ulysses left

My native land for his, ill-fated man!

Yet there were flights of birds upon the right

Of happy presage as he sailed, and I

Dismissed him cheerfully, and cheerfully

He went. We hoped that we might yet become

Each other’s guests, exchanging princely gifts.”
    He spake, and a dark cloud of sorrow came

Over Laertes. With both hands he grasped

The yellow dust, and over his white head

Shed it with piteous groans. Ulysses felt

His heart within him melted; the hot breath

Rushed through his nostrils as he looked upon

His well-beloved father, and he sprang

And kissed and clasped him in his arms, and said:—
    “Nay, I am he, my father; I myself

Am he of whom thou askest. I am come

To mine own country in the twentieth year.

But calm thyself, refrain from tears, and grieve

No more, and let me tell thee, in a word,

I have slain all the suitors in my halls,

And so avenged their insolence and crimes.”
And then Laertes spake again, and said:

“If now thou be Ulysses, my lost son,

Give some plain token, that I may believe.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“First, then, behold with thine own eyes the scar

Which once the white tusk of a forest boar

Inflicted on Parnassus, when I made

The journey thither, by thy own command,

And by my gracious mother’s, to receive

Gifts which her father, King Autolycus,

Once promised, when he came to Ithaca.

And listen to me further; let me name

The trees which in thy well-tilled orchard grounds

Thou gavest me; I asked them all of thee,

When by thy side I trod the garden walks,

A little boy. We went among the trees,

And thou didst name them. Of the pear thirteen,

And of the apple ten thou gavest me,

And forty fig-trees; and thou didst engage

To give me fifty rows of vines, each row

Of growth to feed the winepress. Grapes are there

Of every flavor when the hours of Jove

Shall nurse them into ripeness from on high.”
He spake; a trembling seized the old man’s heart

And knees, as he perceived how true were all

The tokens which Ulysses gave. He threw

Round his dear son his arms. The hardy chief,

Ulysses, drew him fainting to his heart.

But when the old man’s strength revived, and calm

Came o’er his spirit, thus he spake again:—
“O father Jove, assuredly the gods

Dwell on the Olympian height, since we behold

The arrogant suitors punished for their crimes.

Yet much I fear lest all the Ithacans

Throng hither, and send messages to rouse

Against us all the Cephallenian states.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“Take courage; let no thought like that disturb

Thy mind; but let us hasten to the house.

Telemachus is there, with whom I sent

The herdsman and the swineherd, bidding them

Make ready with all speed our evening meal.”
Thus talked the twain, and toward the dwelling took

Their way, and entering the commodious rooms

They found Telemachus, and by his side

The herdsman and the keeper of the swine,

Dividing for the feast the plenteous meats,

And mingling the dark wine. Then to the bath

Came the Sicilian dame, and ministered

To the large-souled Laertes, and with oil

Anointed him, and wrapped a sumptuous cloak

About him. Pallas gave the monarch’s limbs

An ampler roundness; taller to the sight

He stood, and statelier. As he left the bath,

His son beheld with wonder in his eyes,

So like a god Laertes seemed, and thus

Ulysses said to him in winged words:—
“Someone among the ever-living gods

Hath surely shed, O father, on thy form

And aspect all this grace and majesty."
The sage Laertes answered: "Father Jove,

And Pallas and Apollo! would that I

Were now as when I took the citadel

Of Nericus, the strongly built, beside

The seashore of Epirus, leading on

My Cephallenians! With such strength as then,

Armed for the fray, I would have met and fought

The suitors in the palace yesterday,

And struck down many lifeless in the hall,

And greatly would thy spirit have rejoiced."
So talked they with each other. When they all

Ceased from their task, and saw their meal prepared,

They sat them down in order on the thrones

And seats, and each put forth his hand and shared

The banquet. Now approached an aged man,

Dolius, attended by his sons, who came

Weary with toil, for the Sicilian dame,

The nurse who reared them, went and summoned them—

She who in his late age with faithful care

Cherished the father. These, when at the board

They saw Ulysses, and knew who he was,

Stopped in the hall astonished. Instantly

Ulysses called to them with friendly words:—
"Sit at the board, old man; let none of you

Give way to blank amazement. Know that we,

Though keen our appetite for this repast,

Have waited long, expecting your return."
He spake, and Dolius sprang with outstretched arms

And seized Ulysses by the hand, and kissed

The wrist; and thus in winged words he spake:—
“Dear master! since thou art returned to us,

Who longed and yet expected not to see

Thy face again—since some divinity

Has led thee hither—hail! and great may be

Thy happiness, and may the gods bestow

All blessings on thee! But declare, for I

Would gladly know, if sage Penelope

Have heard the tidings yet of thy return,

Or must we send them by a messenger.”
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

“My aged friend, she knows already all.

Why wouldst thou take that care upon thyself?”
He spake, and Dolius on a polished seat

Sat down, but round the great Ulysses came

His sons, and welcomed him with loving words,

And hung upon his hand, and then they took

Their places by their father. So they sat

Beneath Laertes' roof, and banqueted.
    Now through the city meantime swiftly ran

The rumor that the suitors all had met

A bloody death. No sooner had men heard

The tidings than they came with cries and moans

Before the palace, moving to and fro.

Each carried forth his dead, and gave to each

His funeral rites, except to those who came

From distant cities; these they put on board

Swift-sailing galleys of the fishermen,

That they might bear them home. And then they came

Sorrowing together in the marketplace.

There, when the assembly now was full, arose

Eupeithes and addressed them. In his heart

Was sorrow, that could never be consoled,

For his slain son Antinoüs, who was first

To fall before Ulysses. Weeping rose

The father, and harangued the assembly thus:—
“Great things, indeed, my friends, hath this man done

For us Achaians. Many valiant men

He gathered in his ships and led abroad,

And lost his gallant ships, and lost his men;

And now, returning, he has put to death

The best of all the Cephallenian race.

Come, then, and ere he find a safe retreat

In Pylos, or in hallowed Elis, where

The Epeians rule, pursue him; endless shame

Will be our portion else, and they who live

In future years will hear of our disgrace.

If we avenge not on these men of blood

The murder of our sons and brothers, life

Will not be sweet to me, and I would go

At once, and gladly, down among the dead.

Rise, then, and fall upon them ere they flee."
So spake he, weeping; and the Greeks were moved

With pity as they heard him. Now appeared

The herald Medon and the sacred bard,

As, rising from the sleep of night, they left

The palace of Ulysses. They stood forth

Amid the multitude, who all beheld

With wonder. Then sagacious Medon spake:—
"Give ear, ye men of Ithaca, and know

That not without the approval of the gods

Ulysses hath done this. I saw, myself,

One of the immortals taking part with him,

In all things like to Mentor. Now the god

Standing before Ulysses strengthened him

For combat, and now drove the routed band

Of suitors through the hall; in heaps they fell.”
He spake, and all who heard were pale with fear.

The aged hero, Halitherses, son

Of Mastor, then came forward; he alone

Knew what was past and what was yet to come,

And, wisely judging, to the assembly said:—
“Hear now my words, ye men of Ithaca.

Through your own wrong all this has come to pass.

To me ye would not hearken, nor obey

When Mentor, shepherd of the people, spake.

On the mad doings of your sons ye put

No curb, nor checked the guilty insolence

That dared to waste the substance and insult

The consort of a man of eminent worth,

Who, so they thought, would nevermore return.

Now be it as I counsel; let us not

Go forth to draw down evil on our heads.”
    He spake; but more than half the assembly rushed

Abroad with shouts; the others kept their place

Together. Ill the augur’s speech had pleased

The most. Eupeithes had persuaded them.

They flew to arms, and when they had put on

The glittering brass, they mustered in close ranks

Before the spacious city. At their head

Eupeithes led them on, who madly deemed

Himself the avenger of his slaughtered son.

Yet he from that encounter nevermore

Was to return; his fate o’ertook him there.
Then Pallas thus addressed Saturnian Jove:

“Our Father, son of Saturn, king of kings,

Tell me, I pray, the purpose of thy heart

Yet unrevealed. Shall there be cruel war

And deadly combats, or wilt thou ordain

That these shall henceforth dwell in amity?”
And cloud-compelling Jove made answer thus:

“My child, why ask me? Was it not with thee

A cherished purpose, that, returning home,

Ulysses amply should avenge himself

Upon the suitors? Do, then, as thou wilt.

Yet this, as the most fitting, I advise.

Now that the great Ulysses has avenged

His wrongs, let there be made a faithful league

With oaths, and let Ulysses ever reign;

And we will cause the living to forget

Their sons and brothers slain, and all shall dwell

In friendship as they heretofore have dwelt,

And there shall be prosperity and peace.”
He spake, and eager as she was before,

Encouraged by his words, the goddess plunged

Down from the summits of the Olympian mount.

Now when they all had feasted to the full,

The much-enduring chief, Ulysses, said:

“Go, one of you, and see if they are near.”
He spake; a son of Dolius at his word

Went forth, and, coming to the threshold, stopped.

He saw them all at hand, and instantly

Bespake Ulysses thus, with winged words:

“They are upon us; we must arm at once.”
He spake; they rose, and quickly were in arms.

Four were Ulysses and his friends, and six

The sons of Dolius. Old Laertes then,

And Dolius, put on armor with the rest,

Gray-headed as they were, for now their aid

Was needed. When they all had clad themselves

In shining brass, they threw the portals wide

And sallied forth, Ulysses at their head.
Now Pallas, daughter of almighty Jove,

Drew near them. She had taken Mentor’s form

And Mentor’s voice. The much-enduring chief,

Ulysses, saw her and rejoiced, and said

To his beloved son, Telemachus:—
“Now wilt thou, of thyself, Telemachus,

Bethink thee, when thou minglest in the fray

That tries men’s valor, not to cast disgrace

Upon thy forefathers—a race renowned

For manly daring over all the earth.”
And thus discreet Telemachus replied:

“Nay, if thou wilt, my father, thou shalt see

That by no lack of valor shall I cast,

As thou hast said, dishonor on thy race.”
Laertes heard them, and rejoiced, and said:

“O what a day for me, ye blessed gods,

Is this! With what delight I see my son

And grandson rivals on the battlefield.”
And then the blue-eyed Pallas, drawing near

Laertes, said: “Son of Arcesias, loved

By me beyond all others of my friends,

Pray to Jove’s blue-eyed daughter, and to Jove,

And brandish thy long spear, and send it forth.”
So Pallas spake, and breathed into his frame

Strength irresistible. The aged chief

Prayed to the daughter of almighty Jove,

And brandished his long spear and sent it forth.

It smote Eupeithes on the helmet’s cheek.

The brass stayed not the spear, the blade passed through,

And heavily Eupeithes fell to earth,

His armor clashing round him as he fell.

Then rushed Ulysses and his valiant son

Forward, the foremost of their band, and smote

Their foes with swords and lancet double-edged,

And would have struck them down to rise no more,

If Pallas, daughter of the god who bears

The aegis, had not with a mighty voice

Commanded all the combatants to cease:—
“Stay, men of Ithaca; withhold your hands

From deadly combat. Part, and shed no blood.”
So Pallas spake, and they grew pale with awe,

And fear-struck; as they heard her words they dropped

Their weapons all upon the earth. They fled

Townward as if for life, while terribly

The much-enduring chief Ulysses raised

His voice, and shouted after them, and sprang

Upon them as an eagle darts through air.

Then Saturn’s son sent down a bolt of fire;

It fell before his blue-eyed daughter’s feet,

And thus the goddess to Ulysses called:—
“Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,

Ulysses, hold thy hand; restrain the rage

Of deadly combat, lest the god who wields

The thunder, Saturn’s son, be wroth with thee.”
    She spake, and gladly he obeyed; and then

Pallas, the child of aegis-bearing Jove,

Plighted, in Mentor’s form with Mentor’s voice,

A covenant of peace between the foes.