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PREPARING FOR PUBLICATION.
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ANCIENT CLASSICS FOR ENGLISH READERS.

FOREIGN CLASSICS
FOR
ENGLISH READERS.

EDITED BY
MRS OLIPHANT.

PROSPECTUS.

The cordial reception given by the public to the Series of "Ancient Classics for English Readers" has confirmed the intention of the Publishers to carry out a kindred Series, which it is believed will not be less useful or less welcome, and in which an attempt will be made to introduce the great writers of Europe in a similar manner to the many readers who probably have a perfect acquaintance with their names, without much knowledge of their works, or their place in the literature of the modern world. The Classics of Italy, France, Germany, and Spain are nearer to us in time, and less separated in sentiment, than the still more famous Classics of antiquity; and if foreign travel is, as everybody allows, a great means of enlarging the mind, and dispersing its prejudices, an acquaintance with those works in which the great nations who are our neighbours have expressed their highest life, and by which their manners of thinking have been formed, cannot but possess equal advantages. A man who would profess to know England without knowing something of Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, and the great writers who have followed them, could form but an imperfect idea of the national mind and its capabilities: and so no amount of travel can make us acquainted with Italy, while
Dante, Tasso, and her great historians remain unknown to us; nor can the upheavings of French society and the mental characteristics of the nation be comprehended without Voltaire, Molière, Rousseau, and other great names beside. Neither is Germany herself without Goethe and Schiller: nor Spain recognisable deprived of that noble figure of Cervantes, in whom lives the very genius of the nation. This great band it is our design to give such an account of as may bring them within the acquaintance of the English reader, whose zeal may not carry him the length of the often thankless study of translations, and whose readings in a foreign language are not easy enough to be pleasant. We are aware that there are difficulties in our way in this attempt which did not lie in the path of the former Series, since in the section of the world for which we write there are many more readers of French and German than of Greek and Latin: but, on the other hand, there is no educated class supremely devoted to the study of Continental Classics, as is the case in respect to the Ancient; and even the greatest authority in the learned matter of a Greek text might be puzzled by Jean Paul Richter, or lose himself in the mysteries of Dante's 'Paradiso.' The audience to which we aspire is, therefore, at once wider and narrower than that to which the great treasures of Hellenic and Roman literature are unfamiliar; and our effort will be to present the great Italian, the great Frenchman, the famous German, to the reader so as to make it plain to him what and how they wrote, something of how they lived, and more or less of their position and influence upon the literature of their country.

The assistance of writers distinguished in the various walks of literature has been secured, which leaves no doubt as to the efficient carrying out of the scheme. Details of future volumes will be given in the beginning of the ensuing year, when the Series will commence with an account of Dante and his works, by the Editor.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD & SONS, EDINBURGH AND LONDON.
THE

ODYSSEY OF HOMER

BOOKS I.-XII.
IN MAGNIS VOLUISSE SAT EST
THE

ODYSSEY OF HOMER

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE IN
THE SPENSERIAN STANZA

BY

PHILIP STANHOPE WORSLEY, M.A.
SCHOLAR OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD

VOL. I.
BOOKS I.-XII.

THIRD EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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TO

THE REV. JOHN BRADLEY DYNE, D.D.
HEAD MASTER OF SIR ROGER CHOLMELEY'S SCHOOL, HIGHGATE

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE ODYSSEY

IS INSCRIBED

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND LATE PUPIL

P. S. WORSLEY.
PREFACE.

IN adding one more to existing versions of the 'Odyssey,' the end I have in view is not that recommended by Mr Matthew Arnold—to reproduce for scholars the enjoyment derived from reading the original poem. Some may, perhaps, find their powers stimulated by aspiring to the unattainable, and it may often be true that

Who aimeth at the sky,
Shoots higher much than he that means a tree.

For myself, I have cherished throughout the humbler ambition of conveying to the unprofessional reader, through the medium of his own language, something of what the classically educated feel in perusing Homer himself. It is those who have little or no Greek that I desire to interest. In seeking this end, I have followed no systematic theory. It has been my aim to produce, independently of doctrinal rules, a ver-
sion free enough to avoid harshness, and literal enough to deserve the name of a translation rather than a paraphrase.

The fact that the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' of both Chapman and Pope are read, while Cowper is neglected, seems to indicate, among other things, that blank verse will not, in these long narrative poems, sustain the interest of the general reader. If, therefore, experience seems to suggest the adoption of rhyme in translating Homer, it can scarcely be disputed that the metre of the 'Faerie Queene' is entitled to a trial. Theoretically, of course, no one will uphold the Spenserian, or any other stanza, as the true representative of the Homeric hexameter. The steady, continuous flow of Homer's style is apparently quite alien from the regular recurrence of such mechanical breaks as every stanzaic system demands; and it is at once evident that the Epic commonplace cannot, under the limitations of distributed rhyme, be always uniformly rendered. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that in practice, by which alone the question can be solved, these and other dissimilarities will not assert themselves obtrusively, and that the Spenserian stanza and the Homeric hexameter do, when judged not by detached lines but by entire passages, really resemble each other in their broad and general effect. I am myself
PREFACE. ix

convinced that, with a range of comparison sufficiently large, the analogy is, notwithstanding many serious drawbacks, quite perceptible. If I have failed in exemplifying this, the blame attaches less to the design than to the workman.

It was not till the final pages of this volume were passing through the press, that I had the pleasure of reading Mr Arnold's Lectures on translating Homer. I believe thoroughly in the truth of his fundamental axioms concerning the Homeric style, though I find it impossible to accept all his conclusions. It would ill become me to enter into anything like a controversy with so ripe a scholar and so accomplished a poet as Mr Arnold; but since in one passage he treats the question of translating Homer in the Spenserian stanza as one not worth arguing, I may be excused for pointing to an evident misconception in this particular instance. According to Mr Arnold,* "it is enough to observe, that if Pope's couplet, with the simple system of correspondences that its rhymes introduce, changes the movement of Homer, in which no such correspondences are found, and is therefore a bad measure for a translator to employ; Spenser's stanza, with its far more intricate system of correspondences, must change Homer's movement

* Lectures on Homer, pp. 67, 68.
far more profoundly, and must therefore be for the translator a far worse measure than the couplet of Pope." Now it is not true that a reader, feeling strongly this tyranny of correspondences in a simple system of rhyme, will find it *a fortiori* severe in a complex system—the contrary is the fact. It will be easy to make this plain by example. Read, for instance, the 'Essay on Man.' The ear is there kept unceasingly on the alert, and one is scarcely able to repress a kind of self-congratulation on every successive rhymic achievement. Hence poetasters have been more successful in this metre than in any other, and, by keeping the tune steadily in view, have often managed to turn out verses which are far from seeming positively mean, even when compared with those of their great master. To ordinary readers the jingle becomes the first, and the thought the second, consideration; while an irregular pause gives them pain. No one can doubt that, under such circumstances, rhyme must be fatal to Homer. But now turn to Fairfax's translation of the 'Jerusalem Delivered,' and though the ear is still busily occupied, it is neither so restless nor so acutely sensitive as before. We still feel discomfort at an irregular pause, but we recover the shock much more readily. Lastly, take a canto of the 'Faerie
Queene,' and the feeling to the ear is that of placid satisfaction, wholly subordinate to the general interest of the poem. We are no longer offended by unnatural pauses; indeed it is scarcely possible for a pause to seem unnatural. The very intricacy of the metre saves us from this, and a full stop may occur almost anywhere without detriment to the general effect of the stanza. Though it is true that in translating Homer we do not want to be continually making breaks and pauses, but exactly the reverse, yet it is evident that the power of doing so whenever and wherever we like without torturing the ear, is no bad test of the general freedom and plasticity of a rhymed metre, and we certainly do want general freedom and plasticity. On the whole, then, it appears that the more complicated the correspondences the less obtrusive and absolute are the rhymes. Or, in other words, whatever objections may be urged against a rhymed translation of Homer, diminish in weight precisely as the correspondences become more and more involved; though it is doubtful whether such involution could be safely carried beyond the limits laid down by Spenser. For the power of preserving the charms, while veiling the blemishes of rhyme, no metre existing in the English language can bear comparison with the Spenserian. It is one of those peculiarly happy
inventions which stand alone in the history of poetic literature. If the translation of Homer into this beautiful measure is to be condemned, it must at least be condemned on totally different arguments from those employed against Pope's couplet.*

When Mr Arnold also asserts that Spenser's manner is very far from Homeric, this may be true enough in itself, but has no bearing on the subject under discussion. It is one great merit of the Spenserian stanza, that the number of styles possible under the laws which it introduces is practically unlimited. How Mr Arnold could seriously pronounce the grand style to be beyond its reach, while the 'Faerie Queene' still contains the lamentation of Florimell, and the conclusion of 'Childe Harold' is yet in existence, I am at a loss to conceive.

In connection with the subject of metre, it may be worth while to remark, that there are two general types of the Spenserian Alexandrine.

* As Mr Arnold attributes to Dr Maginn the first recommendation of the Spenserian metre as a vehicle for Homeric translation, I ought perhaps to state that I had never either seen or heard of Dr Maginn's book till a great part of the present volume was completed. This ignorance may be in other respects inexcusable, but at least it absolves me from the charge of having adopted another man's suggestion without acknowledgment. I was led to choose the stanza in question by wholly independent considerations.
PREFACE.

The more familiar cæsura is placed as in the following line:—

Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralise my song.

The other, which is also liberally used by Spenser, may be represented thus:—

Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies.

Notwithstanding its beauty, this last cæsura has failed to meet with equal countenance from modern poets, and Byron has invariably rejected it in his 'Childe Harold.' In the 'Faerie Queene,' however, the variety affords a sensible relief to the ear. Hence, wherever the words have naturally fallen into this rhythm, I have gladly refrained from substituting the more hackneyed cadence.

Not even Mr Gladstone's example can now make Juno, Mercury, and Venus admissible in Homeric story. Such transmutations, by calling up ideas which are foreign to the subject, offend the classical, and delude the unclassical imagination. I have, therefore, clung to the Greek nomenclature, though with such modifications as I think essential in a version which aims at being popular. For instance, I write neither Phoibos Apollôn, nor Kirkê, but prefer to retain
the names which have been familiar to us from childhood. When I felt, however, that the Greek style could be preserved in all its integrity, without eitherstartling the ear or disturbing old associations, I have generally preserved it. Thus, a divided allegiance to literal accuracy and the imperative demands of English habit has given rise to one or two slight inconsistencies. But anything is better than pedantry displaying itself in verse, and in connection with the name of Homer.

I need scarcely, in the face of universal custom, apologise for calling the Sun-god Hyperion rather than Hyperion. Indeed, even on stricter grounds the abbreviation would seem justifiable. To suppose that the lengthening of the syllable is not inherent in the nature of the word itself, but, as in the case of certain comparatives and superlativestook its origin in the necessities of the hexameter verse, is possibly as reasonable as the theory that would account for the stress on the penultima by making the name a contracted patronymic.

In conclusion, I may perhaps be allowed to state, that these twelve Books of the 'Odyssey' have been translated under the pressure of severe illness. It has been physically impossible for me
to bestow even half the labour which the occasion might fairly exact, and which in happier circumstances I should have rejoiced to render. Not that I would deprecate or soften, on this account, the due severities of criticism. Every literary work must stand or fall solely by its own intrinsic merits; but I have a right to anticipate charges of personal carelessness which might otherwise seem justly based on the faults and imperfections which are, I fear, vastly too conspicuous in the following pages. I will only add, that whatever in this volume appears good and noble, is but a faintly-glimmering reflection of Homer; whatever is base or poor, distorts and misrepresents him. Even in the latter case, however, it is some consolation to have meant well, and to have worked throughout with the deepest reverence and love for the Great Father of Epic Poetry, who for me at least is no shadowy symbol, but a man of flesh and blood, endowed with individual character, all-embracing sympathies, and surpassing genius.
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BOOK I.

THE GODS IN COUNCIL—ATHENE VISITS TELEMACHUS.
BOOK I.

1
Sing me, O Muse, that hero wandering,
Who of men's minds did much experience reap,
And knew the citied realms of many a king,
Even from the hour he smote the Trojan keep.
Also a weight of sorrows in the deep
Brooding he bore, in earnest hope to save,
'Mid hard emprise and labour all too steep,
Himself and comrades from a watery grave—
Whom yet he rescued not with zeal nor yearnings brave;

2
For they were slain in their own foolishness,
Self-blinded, feasting on Hyperion's kine.
He, the great Sun, in vengeance merciless,
Wroth for the slaughter of his herds divine,
Did bend their fortunes to a stern decline,
And raze out wholly their returning day
With disadventure and destroying tyne—
These even to me, who hearken as I may,
Great goddess, child of Zeus, unfold in verse, I pray!
3
Now while the rest, safe-housed from war and waves,
Rested, and peril of destruction sheer,
Him only, in the cool of hollow caves,
Evermore pining for his consort dear,
Divine Calypso guarded for her fere.
But when the time came round, ordained of old
In heaven for his return, not even there,
In Ithaca, his own sea-fenced hold,
Even with his friends did due repose his life enfold.

4
Natheless the gods had pity of his case—
All save Poseidon, whose relentless ire
Urged everlastingly from place to place
Godlike Odysseus with misfortune dire,
Ere he might reach the land of his desire.
But he was now to the far Æthiops gone
(Extreme of men, who diverse ways retire,
Some to the setting, some the rising sun)
For sacrificial gifts and worship duly done.

5
There he his pleasure at the festive board
Took, couched in welcome ease. But all the rest
In the wide halls of their Olympian Lord
In gathered conclave sat—whom straight addressed
The Sire of gods and men; for in his breast
Blameless Ægisthus he remembered well,
Whom famed Orestes with swift doom suppressed,
Even Agamemnon's childe, avenger fell—
He in the council, rising, of that chance did tell:
6

"Mortals, ye Powers, upbraid us with their voice,
And brand us for the fount of all their ill;
Who, of their own act, not of fate but choice,
Heap to themselves much toil and sorrow still;
Even as Ἐγίσθως late, through wayward will,
Wedded the lawful consort of his king,
And him, returned, on his own hearth did kill,
The dark inventor of a heinous thing,
Though Hermes at our hest far other charge did bring.

7

"For spake not Hermes, the far-seeing one,
Slayer of Argus: 'Neither kill nor wed—
For know, so surely as the deed is done,
The awful count of Agamemnon's head
Shall to Orestes yet be renderèd,
When, grown up, he desires his fatherland.'
But him, Ἐγίσθως, no persuasion led,
Nor the boon counsel mote he understand—
Who now all scores hath paid to the avenger's hand."

8

Him answered then Athene, stern-eyed maid:
"Chiefest of thrones, great Kronides, our sire,
He is fit traitor in fit ruin laid!
So perish all who to like aim aspire!
But me a rending doubt doth inly tire,
For hapless brave Odysseus, who doth steep
His soul unfriendèd in extreme desire,
Girded of ocean in an island-keep,
An island clothed with trees, the navel of the deep.
9

"There dwells the child of Atlas, who can sound
All seas, and eke doth hold the pillars tall
Which keep the skies asunder from the ground.
There him, still sorrowing, she doth aye enthrall,
Weaving serene enticements to forestal
The memory of his island-realm; but he
Yearns for the native smoke, if that were all,
To see it curling, and to die;—yet thee
Always he findeth stern. O Zeus, that this should be!

10

"Where is that service, by the Argive ships,
Paid thee of old in Troy?" But Zeus replied:
"What word hath passed the portal of thy lips?
Or from my breast what care might thus divide
Odysseus? who all mortals far and wide
Excels in wisdom, and hath freely given
Of hallowed offerings more than all beside
To the immortal ones who rule in heaven—
No!—but one ceaseless anger hath against him striven.

11

"For know Poseidon, who doth hold the earth,
Blind Polyphemus doth remember yet.
For him, the mightiest of Cyclopian birth,
The god of nymph Thoösa did beget,
Child of the sea-king Phorcys—her he met
For love in the vaulted caves—and therefore still
The great Earth-shaker doth require the debt,
And, wroth against Odysseus, doth not kill,
But drives him up and down, according to his will."
"But come, let us in council here provide
How the return may be accomplished;
So shall Poseidon, hearing, thrust aside
His anger, nor dare risk his single head
Counter the one determination dread
Of all the gods." Whereunto Athene gave
Answer: "If this be fixed, as thou hast said,
O Sire, O chief of thrones, that wind and wave
Sunder from home no more that luckless wanderer brave,

"Send we now swiftly to Ogygia's isle
Hermes the herald, who did Argus slay.
There let him speak our message, without guile,
Of that long-suffering one's returning day.
But I will hence to Ithaca straightway,
To sting with sterner virtue the son's breast,
And plant a fierce resolve, if that I may,
Against the suitors who his house infest,
Slaying whole flocks at will and oxen of the best,

"That so before the assembled Argive host
He may denounce in daylight that fell band.
Then will I send him to the Spartan coast
And Pylos, to seek out on foreign strand,
The story of his sire from land to land,
If anywhere a rumour may be read—
And all men, seeing him, shall understand
How broad a glory on the task is shed,
And of his name good things shall evermore be said."
So ending, underneath her feet she bound
Her faery sandals of ambrosial gold,
Which o'er the waters and the solid ground
Swifter than wind have borne her from of old;
Then on the iron-pointed spear laid hold,
Heavy and tall, wherewith she smites the brood
Of heroes till her anger waxes cold;
Then from Olympus swept in eager mood,
And with the island-people in the court she stood

Fast by the threshold of the outer gate
Of brave Odysseus: in her hand she bore
The iron-pointed spear, heavy and great,
And, waiting as a guest-friend at the door,
Of Mentes, Taphian chief, the likeness wore;
There found the suitors, who beguiled with play
The hours, and sat the palace gates before
On hides of oxen which themselves did slay—
Haughty of mien they sat, and girt with proud array.

For round about them their officious toil
Heralds and servants plied, a goodly crew.
Some from the board of banquet washed the soil
With sponges, or mixed wine of ruddy hue
With water in the bowls apportioned due;
And other some did carve the flesh with skill.
First of them all Telemachus did view
The stranger; for bowed down, at grief and still,
He with the suitors sat, they banqueting at will.
18
There in his mind's eye shaping forth his sire,
He marvelled if from somewhere he would smite
The suitors, and make scattering in his ire
Of these who wrought his house such fell despite,
And earn huge honour, and assert his right,
And in the end bear rule among his own.
Thus dreaming, as he sat, his eyes did light
On one who waited in the porch alone.
He, rising, with swift steps thither did wend anon,

19
As grieved in soul to see a stranger stand
So long the portals of his house before.
And he drew near, and taking her right hand
Received the steel-tipped weapon which she bore,
And thus in wingèd words: "Stranger, good store
Of welcome!—taste thou first our cheer; and I
Will of thy matter afterward explore."
So passed within the palace vaulted high,
(Shé following), and the spear set in the stand, hard by

20
A pillar tall, whereon the shaft might lean,
Even in the polished stand where many a spear
Of travail-spent Odysseus long had been;
Then led the goddess to a stately chair
Elaborate, and beneath on carpet fair
Duly was placed a footstool for the feet;
Next, for himself, a bench of carvings rare
Planted, convenient from the noise and heat,
Lest, fall'n on insult rude, the guest should loathe his
meat;
21
Nor less in converse would he fain explore
Quest of his absent father, uncontrolled,
If that the stranger any tidings bore.
And lo! a handmaid from a vase of gold
Poured, in the silver basin, made to hold
The lustral stream, and set the shining board,
Whereon the pantleress, discreet and old,
Piled of the daintiest food she might afford,
And grudgeless gave of all that in the house was stored.

22
Also the carver many a dish did heap
Of flesh; and golden goblets did abound,
Wherein the herald poured the wine-draught deep.
And lo! came in, for noisy wassail bound,
The suitors; each at once his station found
For order of the revel, bench or chair;
To whom the bustling heralds handed round
Water to wash, nor did the maidens spare
Of food in baskets huge, and comely youths and fair

23
To crown the beakers to the brim with wine.
They eager hands upon the viands laid
And fed; but when the craving did decline,
Straightway their minds a new desire obeyed—
For dance and song; for with these charms arrayed
The feast flows smoother. Then the herald gave
The harp to one who sang perforce and played,
Even to Phemius, bard and minstrel brave,
Who straight with voice and lyre struck up the noble stave.
Then did Telemachus incline his head
Unto the stranger, and in whisper spake,
Fearing lest any hearken what he said:
"Dear stranger, be not angry for my sake!
Well, well may dance and song their pastime wake
Who eat, all-scatheless, their peculiar gain,
And of another's substance freely take,
Whose dead bones, whitening in the wind and rain,
Rot on the shore, or roll with billows in the main.

"If that in Ithaca he once might stand,
And these should see it with their eyes, I ween
Fleetness of foot were worth a realm of land,
Gold were right cheap, and brave apparel mean.
But he is fall'n, alas! in evil teen;
Hope enters not by any single cleft;
Aye, though men promise or a seer had seen
His glad return, yet no return is left;
He of his welcome day is evermore bereft.

"But tell me truly whence thou art of men,
Where is thy country, and thy parents where,
And in what bark thy mariners, and when,
Have brought thee, and what style they boast to bear—
For not by land thou cam'ſt—and this declare,
Whether thou wendest on some business new,
Or in old time my father's love didst share.
Known was our house to strangers not a few
While he was mixed with men. This therefore tell me true."
Whom the stern-eyed Athene answered thus:
"Yea, by mine honour. Know my name is hight
Mentes, the son of brave Anchialus,
And sea-famed Taphos is my regal right;
And with my comrades am I come to-night
Hither, in sailing o'er the wine-dark sea
To men far off, who stranger tongues indite.
For copper am I bound to Temesè,
And in my bark I bring sword-steel along with me.

"Moored is my ship beyond the city-walls,
Under the wooded cape, within the bay.
We twain do boast, each in the other's halls,
Our fathers' friendship from an ancient day.
Hero Laertes ask and he will say—
Who no more seeks the city, as they tell,
But with an old crone on his farm doth stay,
Who spreads the board, when vineyard labours quell
His slow weak strength amid the fields where he doth
dwell.

"I came but now—for verily men said
Thy sire among his people here did keep.
Him the gods hinder, but he is not dead;
Somewhere he liveth straitened in the deep,
Pent in a sea-girt island, rude and steep,
And hard men hold him there against his will.
Yet I, no skilled interpreter of sleep,
Nor in bird-omens versed, will utter still
That which the gods suggest, and also may fulfil.
"Surely not long dissundered from his home
Thy sire shall spend himself in vain essay.
Though chains of iron hold him, he will come;
Aye by shrewd counsel shall he find a way.
But render now true answer, yea or nay—
Art thou his child, thus tall? Thine eyes and face
Haunt me as I have seen him many a day
Ere with the chief he sailed of Argive race—
Since then no more we meet in any time or place."

Her answered then the sage Telemachus:
"Herein, my friend, will I inform thee well—
Truly my mother shapes the story thus,
But mine own stock can I in nowise spell,
Since never yet could child his father tell.
O had I been the seed of some one blest,
Whom an old age in peaceful home befel!
Now to a man, transcending all the rest
In woe, my birth they count—take answer to thy quest."

Whom the stern-eyed Athene answered straight:
"In sooth not nameless in an after day
The gods approve thy lineage, whom thus great
Penelope hath borne—yet also say,
Whereto this banquet serves, and wild array.
Is it a marriage or a simple feast?
'Tis plain no table where the eaters pay—
So flown with revel, to such height increased,
'Twould make one burn with shame—a wise man at
the least."
33
To whom the sage Telemachus returned:
"Since of this turmoil thou hast question made,
Know that much wealth and fame our mansion earned
While yet that hero with his people stayed;
But now the gods another doom have paid
Thrice evil, and have made him disappear
More than all mortals; since not death had laid
On me such loss, nor anguish so severe,
Had he but fallen thus with many a princely peer,

34
"Fall’n with his comrades by the Trojan wall,
Or in his friends’ arms when the siege was done!
So had the full host of Achaians all
Entombed him, and for ever he had won
Guerdon of loftiest glory for his son.
But now those limbs ingloriously are rent
By Harpies, and unheard-of he is gone;
While unto me the fameless path he went
Leaves a long store of pain and weeping and lament.

35
"Nor him alone I weep, but other griefs
The gods still framing have my life oppressed.
Dulichium, Samè, all the island-siefs,
Send me their chieftain-hordes from east and west,
With names of rugged Ithaca the best.
These woo my mother, but forestal the dower;
She nor refuses nor can grant a quest
So grievous.—Thus they spend with all their power
My substance. Even myself ere long they will devour."
To whom Athene, stung with inward flame:
"Sorely, by heaven, Odysseus dost thou need
Now to lay hand on feasters void of shame!
Would that, arrayed with helmet, he would speed,
And shield and javelins twain, and stand indeed
Here in the doors, as in my father's home
Him drinking with delight I marked with heed,
What time from Ephyra across the foam,
Even from Ilus, son of Mermerus, he did come!

"Thither Odysseus, in a swift black ship,
Seeking a deadly poison once did wend,
Wherein his arrows, barbed with steel, to dip;
Which yet the other would in nowise lend,
As fearing the immortals to offend—
Only my father gave it, since right well
He loved him. If the gods but now would send
Odysseus in like guise, I could foretell
Sharp marriage-feast to these and swift destruction's hell.

"But this the gods in their own knees do keep,
Whether thy father shall return or no,
And in his palace slake his vengeance deep.
But, for thyself, advise thine heart, that so
Thou may'st enforce these suitors hence to go.
And hearken now, and to my words give heed:
To-morrow bid the Achaian chieftains show
Together in the market, and thy rede
Make known, calling the gods in witness of the deed."
39
"There bid the suitors, by appeal thus dread,
Each depart homeward with the morning light.
And for thy mother, if she wish to wed,
Behold! her sire is known for kingly might;
Let her go back beneath his sovran right.
There shall his folk the marriage-feast prepare,
And gifts exceeding many and richly dight,
Fit for a daughter so beloved and fair.
Yet too remains deft counsel, if thou hear with care.

40
"Search out with pains, and furnish a choice ship,
With oarsmen twenty, and anon set sail,
If thou may'st call from any mortal lip
News, or a wandering voice from Zeus prevail;
For still doth Rumour loudest fame entail.
To Pylos first. There godlike Nestor old
Question of thy lost father without fail.
Thence Menelaus, with the locks of gold,
Last from the war returned, seek out in Sparta's hold.

41
"From whom if certain tidings thou shalt hear,
And that thy father liveth and will return,
Surely, though straitened, thou canst wait a year.
But be he quite cut off by fortune stern,
Sail homeward, build his tomb, and offerings burn,
And give thy mother to a man. But when
All this thou hast performed, devise and learn
How best amid wild wassail, there and then,
Whether by fraud or force, to slay these evil men.
42

“No more, with thews like these, to weakness cling.
Hast thou not heard divine Orestes’ fame,
Who slew the secret slayer of the king
His father, and achieved a noble name?
Thou also, friend, to thine own strength lay claim—
Comely thou art and tall—that men may speak
Thy prowess, and their children speak the same.
I now the swift ship and my comrades seek,
Lest tarrying long they tire—take heed and be not weak.”

43

To whom the sage Telemachus replied:
“Guidance from friendly spirit thou dost impart,
Even as a father his own child might guide;
Wherefore thy counsel will I take to heart.
But tarry now some while, albeit thou art
Eager to go, that having joyed a space
And bathed, thou may’st from hence gladly depart,
And bear a noble present to thy place,
Fitting for friend to give to friend whom he would grace.”

44

Him the stern-eyed Athene answered straight:
“Me, of thy courtesy, no more detain,
Who for the voyage yearn with yearnings great.
And for thy keepsake, when I come again
Give whatsoever thy kindly heart is fain,
Which homeward with delight I will bear hence,
And no reluctance shall my hand restrain.
Let it be one of much magnificence.
Right largely shalt thou earn exchange and recompense.”
45
So did she speak, and vanished like a bird
In flying, found in very deed divine.
And him, there gazing as she disappeared,
To strength and lordly valour she did incline,
And with his father's memory refine
His spirit yet more than in the former days.
He all the while, made certain by the sign,
Mused on Athene, silent with amaze—
Then with the suitors mixed, right godlike in their gaze.

46
But unto these the famous minstrel sang,
And they in silence listening sat around,
Of the Achaians' sad return he sang,
And how Athene did their way confound.
Soon to the upper chamber rose the sound,
Even to the ear of sage Penelope;
Whence by tall staircase to the lower ground
Passed the grave queen, but not alone went she;
With her fair maidens twain did move in company.

47
Under the pillar of the well-built dome
She halted, and let down her shining veil.
There to each side one of her maids did come—
Thence to the noble bard she made appeal:
"Phemius, thou know'st full many a charm to steal
Rapt hearts, the exploits both of god and man,
All minstrelsy that bards can make us feel—
Sing thou of these, for such a minstrel can,
While all in silence drink, as when thy stave began."
48

"But cease, I pray thee, from so dark a theme,
Which always in my breast my heart doth rend,
Since long-familiar sorrow and pangs extreme
Sweep on my soul, and waste me without end;
For that my ceaseless memory doth bend
Regretful back to the old days of him,
My husband, one so mighty, who did send
A torch through Hellas that shall ne'er grow dim,
And with his rumour filled whole Argos to the brim."

49

To whom the sage Telemachus replied:
"Why, mother, wilt thou grudge the minstrel's tongue
To shape the song whither his feelings guide?
For not the bard is cause of what is sung,
But Zeus, who unto all men, old and young,
Measures the measure that he deemeth best.
Nor should one chafe because the harp is strung
To woes wherewith the Danai were distrest—
For aye in minstrel mouth the newest theme is best.

50

"Then let thy heart and soul endure to hear
Not only to Odysseus that dear day
Hath perished, and Troy given a bloody bier;
But many brave have fallen in like way.
Back to the house, and thine own tasks essay,
The distaff and the loom, for these are thine,
And for thy maids their works appointed weigh;
But never more to public speech incline—
Of this shall men take care, I most— the rule is mine."
51
She, smit with wonder, to the house went back,
And in her mind the sapient counsel kept.
Thither the maidens followed in her track—
Even to the upper chamber on she stept,
They following—there, withdrawn apart, she wept
Odysseus as of old, her husband dear,
Nor closed the lamentation till she slept;
For to her eyelids did Athene bear
Sweet slumbers, shed with rest, that might her strength
repair.

52
But through the shadowy halls the suitors' clang
Waxed louder while they longed for loves and rest.
To whom, uprising as the noises rang,
Prudent Telemachus his word addressed:
"Proud suitors of my mother, meseemeth best
That we should feast in quiet, and rejoice,
Hearing the music with a better zest;
For it is good to list a bard so choice,
Who, singing here to-night, might match the gods in
voice.

53
"To-morrow in the council-court we meet;
There will I warn you sternly to go hence,
And other feasts at other tables eat,
Changing by houses, at your own expense;
But should it seem in this your insolence
Better to waste the total wealth of one
Scathless, then waste—but I with prayers intense
Zeus and the gods will ask, for all things done,
That unavenged, unwrapt, ye perish one by one."
54
He ended, but the rest in wrath did bite
Their lips, and wondered that he spake so bold.
Then said Eupeithes' child, Antinous hight:
"Surely the gods themselves teach thee to hold
Words of huge import and a mighty mould.
Pray heaven that never in this isle unblest
Zeus make thee king, which is thy right of old!"
Whom straight the sage Telemachus addressed:
"Antinous, be not wroth and I will speak the rest.

55
"Right gladly would I, did but Zeus allow,
Take what thine heart doth all too vile esteem.
A crown is no mean garnish for the brow.
More than himself in honour straight doth seem
That man, and wealth into his house doth stream.
But princes, old and young, are in the land.
Let whom it listeth of the kingdom dream,
Since that one is not.—But I swear to stand
Lord of my father's house and slaves of his right hand."

56
To whom Eurymachus, responding, said:
"This thing the gods in their own knees do keep,
Who in our sea-girt island shall be head;
But full right hast thou of thine own to reap,
Nor may the house thou rulest hold thee cheap.
Never, while Ithaca shall yet survive,
Never a man rise up, with insult deep,
Thee of thy proper empire to deprive!—
But who, my friend, was he who lately did arrive?
57

"Whence and of what land doth he boast to be?
Where is his nation, and his lineage where?
Came he with tidings from beyond the sea,
Even of thy sire's return the news to bear?
Or comes he hither on his own affair?
Since in a little moment he is gone,
Gone in hot haste, nor for the feast did care,
And hath not even tarried to be known.
Well-favoured did he seem, nor like a caitiff's son."

58

Then sage Telemachus this answer made:
"Surely my sire's return is come to nought.
Tidings no longer can my mind persuade;
Nor oracle inspired seems worth a thought,
Spoken by seer, when any seer is brought
From far, and by my mother response is won.
But 'twas a guest-friend late this mansion sought,
Mentes, of brave Anchialus the son.
He over Taphos rules where mariners do wonne."

59

So did he speak, but in his mind he knew
The goddess. They to songs and dances bent
Their souls, and revelled as the fancy drew.
And on their dancings came the black descent
Of evening, and with one accord they went
In darkness to the house to sleep their sleep.
That other passed to his own tenement,
Built in a beauteous place, and vaulted steep,—
Heavy of heart, and musing many things and deep.
60
Thither a daughter of Pisenor's line,
Wise Eurycleia, lighted torches bare,
For whom Laertes did of old consign,
When that her youth was freshest and most fair,
Gold worth a score of oxen, nor did spare
Equal in honour with his wife to name;
Yet not for this the couch of love did share,
Fearing the queen's ill zeal and bitter blame—
She now with lighted torches to the chamber came.

61
More than the rest she loved him in old time,
And fondly helped, ere other help had been.
He to the well-built chamber now did climb,
Opened the door, and on the couch did lean,
And the soft tunic doffed, which, folded clean,
She on the peg uphung, and went her way,
Shutting the silver bolt with careful mien.
He, wrapt in fleeces, till the dawn of day
There on Athene's rede in silence thinking lay.
BOOK II.

THE ITHACAN ASSEMBLY—DEPARTURE OF TELEMACHUS.
BOOK II.

I
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn came on,
Up sprang Telemachus with eager mind,
Put on his raiment, and his sword anon
Thrust in the scabbard, and made haste to bind
Fast to his feet, that in the morning shined,
His sandals fair. Soon issuing forth, in mien
Like to a god, he bade the heralds wind
Shrill summons, who with voices clear and keen
Straightway the long-haired chiefs in council bade convene.

2
So when the concourse to the full was grown,
He lifted in his hand the steely spear,
And to the council moved, but not alone,
For as he walked his swift dogs followed near.
Also Athene did with grace endear
His form, that all the people gazed intent
And wondered while he passed without a peer.
Straight to his father's seat his course he bent,
And the old men gave way in reverence as he went.
Then rose the brave Ægyptius, and begun
The council. He was curved with age, and knew
Things beyond number. Long ago his son
In the broad barks among a warrior crew
Sailed with divine Odysseus to ensue
Siege of horse-feeding Ilion far away.
Him in his cave the bloody Cyclops slew—
Antiphus—and prepared his final prey.
Three were yet left, of whom twain in the house did stay

Living their father’s life. Eurynomus,
That other, with the suitors did consort.
Nor did the old man not remember thus
That child, his lost one, but in grievous sort
Ever lamented, hearing no report;
And now with weeping he rose up and said:
"Hearken all ye that hither make resort!
Never hath speaker in the council pled
Since that our flower in ships divine Odysseus led.

"Who hath now called us in such eager speed?
To whom of old or young, I fain would hear,
Cometh at last this noticeable need?
Or knows he of an army marching near,
And would in public make the tidings clear,
Or even some other fact of weight instil?
May he be happy, for I hold him dear!
And, whosoe’er he be, may Zeus fulfil
All that his heart desires, and work the good man’s will!"
6

Therewith he ended. But Telemachus
Drew comfort from the utterance which he heard,
And not for long sat he in silence thus.
Warm for the loud harangue his bosom stirred,
And in the midst he rose to speak the word.
His hands Pisenor with the staff did grace,
Sage herald, who in counsel never erred.
He, rising, looked the old man in the face,
And to him first of all made answer from his place:

7

"Not far is he, old man—soon shalt thou hear—
Who called this council; yet in heart I groan.
No tidings of an army marching near
Unfold I now, first in my hearing shown,
Nor other fact of public weight make known.
This need hath fallen in a double way.
Proper is all the evil and mine own.
First I have lost a father, my one stay,
Who mildly ruled among you with a parent's sway.

8

"And yet new bale comes deepening, vaster far,
Which soon my whole house will in pieces rend,
Till not a remnant shall be left to mar.
Scions of noble houses without end
Flock to my halls, and with harsh suit offend
My mother, not enduring in their mind
That to her father's palace she should wend.
Thence with a fitting dower to be assigned
To whoso in his kingly eyes should favour find.
"No!—to our house resorting day by day
They kill fat beees and many goats and sheep,
Drink up the dark wine, as in wanton play,
And squander all our wealth in one fell heap.
For no Odysseus now is left to keep
Destruction from our doors, and ward off wrong.
Helpless are these hands for a plague so deep;
And I must languish pitiably and long:
Yet would I strike right home, if only I were strong.

The deeds they do no longer can be borne.
Falleth the house not honourably nor well.
Feel ye not wrath yourselves and righteous scorn?
How in the eyes of those who round ye dwell,
How can ye fail of shame unutterable?
Yet if not so, respect the wrath on high,
Lest they, the gods, turn round on you and quell
Your evil works and make the workers die!
Last to Olympian Zeus, and Themis queen I fly.

"By Zeus and Themis, who doth loose and call
Assemblies, leave me, friends, to bear my woe—
Aye, if my father never wronged at all
The long-haired Argives, nor this wrong ye show
For quittance, urging these. Yet even so
Better that ye yourselves should eat my store;
So might the loss not unrequited go;
Payment from street to street I might implore.
But now a cureless pang ye plant in my heart's core."
I2
So did he speak among them, thrilled with ire,
And dashed his regal sceptre on the ground.
Weepings of anger in his eyes took fire,
While pity held the listening folk around.
And who should answer were in silence bound,
Nor with sharp taunt did any dare revile—
None save Antinous: he alone was found;
And thus he spake: "Telemachus, whose style
Sublime befits a strength resistless found long while;"

I3
"What word is this thou speakest to our shame,
Who dost with foul disgrace our honour brand?
Know, then, that not the Achaians are to blame,
But thine own mother, who doth understand
Sleights more than all the women in the land.
For now behold a three years’ space is gone,
Even as I speak the fourth is nigh at hand,
Since with vain hopes she hath our hearts undone,
For bent on endless wiles she promises each one.

I4
"Now of all others hearken this device
Which in her mind the queen did frame. She reared
There in her halls a mighty loom of price.
Anon before the suitors she appeared,
And said: 'Young men, my suitors, what I feared
Is come; divine Odysseus is no more:
Woo ye, but leave my widowhood revered
A little while until my task is o'er,
Lest my long-purposed work fall void for evermore."
"I for Laertes weave a funeral sheet
Against the final debt that he must pay;
And I were shamed the Achaian dames to meet,
Should the long slumber find but shroudless clay
Of one who owned much lordship in his day."
So did she speak amid the suitors-throng,
And so persuaded our large heart gave way.
Daily she weaved; then working grievous wrong,
By night the woof unwound, with torches ranged along.

"So for three years she prospered in her wile.
But when the fourth came with the seasons’ flight,
One of her women, making known the guile,
Showed us the queen unwinding in the night.
So force, not will, constrained her to the right.
Know then the suitors’ answer in thy mind,
And know Achaia here in the open light—
Send to her sire thy mother, to be assign’d
To whoso in his eyes and hers shall favour find.

"But if the Achaians she will longer vex,
Proving the wiles whereof she hath large share
From Pallas, and a wit beyond her sex,
Cunning in brave works and designments rare,
Surpassing all of women that ever were—
Tyro, and those we hear of long ago,
Alcmene, and rich-zoned Mycene fair—
Of whom not one did equal knowledge know
With her the queen—who yet not wisely acteth so—
18

"Know that thy house from spoilers shall not rest
For all the while that she shall keep this mind
Which now the gods have planted in her breast.
Aye, though much glory for herself she find,
On thee huge loss of living she doth bind;
Nor will we ever to our homes depart,
Leaving this business unfulfilled behind,
Ere the queen cease from her pernicious art,
And of the Achaians wed one pleasing her own heart."

19

Where to the sage Telemachus replied:
"Antinous, I can never drive away
Her who did bear me and my wants provide.
Living or dead, my sire afar doth stay;
And heavy charges shall I have to pay
Icarius, unprovoked if I expel
My mother. Much to him must I defray,
Her sire, but more to God: for she may well
The hateful Furies call, when driven elsewhere to dwell.

20

"Men will cry shame. I will not speak this word.
Yet if your anger brook not this, go hence;
Be other banquets unto mine preferred,
Changing by houses, at your own expense.
But should it seem in this your insolence
Better to waste the total wealth of one,
Scatheless, then waste. But I with prayers intense
Zeus and the gods will ask, for all things done,
That unavenged, unwept, ye die here every one."
So spake Telemachus, and eagles two
Far-seeing Zeus sent flying from the hill.
And at the first along the wind they flew
Together, with expanded wings, until
They reached the market many-voiced, and shrill
With tones of high debate, there wheeling round
Turned on each other, and in turning still
Shook their strong pinions with a boding sound,
And on the heads of all fiercest destruction frowned.

There with strung talons tearing in full sight
Each other’s cheeks and neck, awhile they fought,
Then ’mid the houses rushed off on the right.
And all in wonder marked the omen wrought,
Shaping strange shadows of event in thought.
Soon Halitherses rose, his speech to make,
Best of his age to know the meanings taught
By birds prophetic, and sage counsels take.
He now, their firm well-wisher, thus harangued and spake

"Ithacans, hear; and let these suitors con,
Chiefly, the word that I shall speak to-day.
Thiers is a mighty sorrow, rolling on;
Nor is Odysseus very far away
From friends that love him, but doth somewhere slay
These in his thought e’en now—yea, many more
In sun-warmed Ithaca their price shall pay.
Come, let us stop these traitors long before;
Or let themselves desist, Death standing at their door."
"I do not warn, in auguries unskilled.
That which I speak I also understand.
Truly I say that all things are fulfilled
Just as I uttered when the Argive band
Embarked on shipboard for the Ilian strand,
And with them wary-wise Odysseus went—
How in the twentieth year to his own land
He should return, with sore affliction spent,
Companionless, unknown. Time crowns the whole
event."

To him returned Eurymachus, the son
Of Polybus: "Old man, go home and show
Thy children what hereafter shall be done,
And bid them guard against this future foe.
I am a better seer than thou, and know
That many birds beneath the sunlight wide
Range. Not all creatures winging to and fro
Teach fate. Odysseus far from hence hath died.
And would that thou, old man, wert lying by his side!

"So should thy prophecies be found more few;
Nor would'st thou thus an angry man incite—
Telemachus—expecting for thy due
Some gift. Yet, warning, I declare outright,
If you will urge with words a younger wight,
You who know better, being wise and old,
You shall first suffer in a loss not light;
For we will fine you in a fine of gold,
Soul-vexing, hard to pay, for being over-bold."
“But to Telemachus before you all
I here give notice he must send away
His mother to her father's house and hall;
Where a rich marriage-feast without delay
Men shall make ready, and large presents pay
Fit for a daughter so beloved and fair:
For well I know the Achaians till that day
Never will cease from their rough suit, nor spare
His substance, since all-dreadless we for no man care,

“Not even Telemachus, so loud of speech—
No!—nor the oracle which thou, old man,
Dost vainly, to thine own confusion, preach.
Here will we eat, as when we first began,
His substance up, and neither shall nor can
Come restitution till his mother wed;
For we, kept waiting, will new contests plan
Of virtue, none sufficing in her stead,
Though 'twere high time for each to win some bridal bed.”

Whereto the prince replied: "Eurymachus,
And all ye suitors, deaf to prayers and woe,
No more will I waste words upon you thus;
These things the gods and all Achaians know.
Come, give me bark and crew, that I may go
On this dear quest. To Pylos I would sail
And thence seek Sparta, if some tongue may show
News of my sire, or even a voice prevail
From Zeus, for still doth Rumour loudest fame entail."
30
"From whence if certain tidings I shall hear
And that my father liveth and will return,
Though sorely straitened I can wait a year.
But if the sorrow of his fall I learn,
Then to the dear old land whereto I yearn,
I, coming back, whatever else befal
Will build his tomb and goodly offerings burn,
Fittest to grace a father's funeral,
And her some husband find, when rites are rendered all."

31
So spake he and sat down, and Mentor straight
Uprose, Odysseus' friend, and left in ward,
Under Laertes, of the whole estate.
Stedfast he spake, and not to be debarred
From counsel: "Hear me, Ithacans, and regard!
Let none hereafter of the race of kings
Be mildly tempered, but morose and hard,
Known for a doer of unequal things,
Since good desert no tender recollection brings

32
"Of one who always when his name was strong
Ruled like a father for his people's sake!
Yet grudge not I their violence and wrong
To these proud suitors, who their own heads stake,
When this wild havoc in the house they make,
Dreaming him dead. Well, let them dream their fill,
And while they may their shallow comfort take!
But shame it is that ye should all sit still,
Mute for these few, nor dare to curb their haughty will."
33
Thereto Leiocritus, Evenor's son:
"Fool Mentor, what is this that thou hast said?
Would'st really bid them put the suitors down?
Even a strong multitude were hardly led
To fight us for a matter of beef and bread.
Why, if the great Odysseus were to find
Guests such as these who at his table fed
And from his halls to drive them were inclined,
He, though long missed, would come not wholly to the mind

34
"Even of his wife, who should behold him fall
Fighting with many. Thou hast not said right.
But come 'tis high time that this people all
Disperse, each to his work, and for this wight
Mentor and Halitherses can to-night
Furnish his wants:—his father's friends are they.
But all these things are vague and out of sight,
And 'tis my creed that yet for many a day
News will he wait at home, nor tempt this unknown way."

35
So did he speak, dissolving the debate,
And all went homeward on their business, save
The suitors, who at once departed straight
Bound for the palace of Odysseus brave.
Telemachus beside the barren wave
Paced forth in melancholy mood alone.
He in the hoary deep his hands did lave,
And to Athene prayed: "Hear thou my groan,
Who yesterday did'st come 'neath-yonder roof our own."
36

"There did'st thou bid me o'er the dark sea-foam
Sail, of my absent father to explore
Some tidings, yet they hold me here at home,
Even the Achaians, and impede me sore,
But most these suitors pierce me to the core,
So evil-minded in their haughtiness."
Thus prayed he, and Athene came before
His eyes, most like in aspect and address
To Mentor, and winged words spake, calming his distress:

37

"Not base and foolish after all is done
Shalt thou be counted, if the brave old blood
Hath from the sire descended to the son.
If thou like him both word and deed make good,
Then were thy journey all in vain withstood.
Yet have I no hope thou wilt prosper well
If thou be sprung from some less lordly brood.
Few match their fathers. Any tongue can tell
The more are worse: yea, almost none their sires excel.

38

"But since nor base nor foolish thou shalt be,
Nor wholly failest of thy father's skill,
Hope the attainment of thy toils to see;
Leave these unwise to work their own brute will,
And let the unrighteous be unrighteous still.
Fools, not to know black Death comes even now
Armed, in one day their ruin to fulfil!
Nor think that I love's claim will disallow.
Faithful I follow, and will with good ship thee endow.
39

"But go now, join the suitors once again;
And in the house much food, with all thy care,
Wine in strong jars, and corn, the marrow of men,
In tough skins for our journey's use prepare.
And I will forth among the people fare
And get thee volunteers, a goodly crew,
And look what bark seems very choice and rare—
Ships are found here in plenty old and new—
And we will launch it laden with provision due."

40

So spake Athene, child of Zeus; nor long
Telemachus there lingered, when he heard
Counsel to mingle with the festive throng.
So went he, warned by the god-spoken word;
But his dear heart within was sorely stirred.
And lo! the suitors without stint or shame
Flayed goats and singed swine in the court, nor feared
Him nearing. But Antinous smiling came,
And clasped his hand, and spake, and called him by his
name:

41

"Telemachus, loud boaster uncontrolled,
Bear not about a trouble in thy breast,
But eat and drink securely as of old,
And the Achaians will perform the rest,
Yea, find thee bark and oarsmen of the best
That thou may'st quickly unto Pylos make
This voyage on thy noble father's quest."
But sage Telemachus in answer spake:
"Antinous, thine advice can I by no means take.
"Tis not in reason I should here rejoice
Fed with dishonour. Rest ye not content
That in my childhood, ere my power of choice,
Ye robbed me, and I knew not what it meant?
But now, grown up, such weakness I repent,
Both taught of others and enlarged in mind;
Nor will I cease till vengeance make descent
From Pylos, or some means even here I find
Wherewith the rueful Fates against you to unbind.

"Yes, I will go—my way shall prosper too—
Go in some merchant's vessel for a price,
Owning nor ship nor oarsmen, thanks to you;
So seemed, forsooth, more gainful in your eyes."
Thus he made answer, and in angry wise
Wrenched his hand roughly from Antinous' hold.
They all the while bemocked his vain emprise,
Jeering his mood with bitter tongues and bold;
And in the midst outspake a youth of haughtiest mould:

"Surely Telemachus our death will scheme.
What if avengers follow in his wake
From sandy Pylos over ocean's stream,
Or Sparta, since all bondage he doth break,
Or even to Ephyra swift speed he make
And from the fatness of her fields bring up
Drugs that all manhood from the spirit take,
And cast the fatal poison in our cup,
And fall on, sword in hand, and smite us while we sup!"
45
Forthwith outspake another in reply:
"Who knows if while he wanders o'er the main
He may not somewhere like Odysseus die
Far from his friends, to our exceeding gain?
Then should we soon divide to all our train
His treasures, each receiving what is fair,
And to his lady mother we were fain
Proffer this royal palace for her share,
With him to have and hold who should espouse her there."

46
So in their talk. But he that chamber sought,
His sire's, where store of copper from the mine
Lay, and the tissue of pure gold well wrought,
And scented oils of price, and raiment fine
In chests. There also earthen jars of wine,
Mellow with age, and sweet, were ranged in rows,
Sealing up safe the unmixed drink divine,
If e'er Odysseus after many woes
Came back; and two-leaved doors the chamber did enclose.

47
All these a faithful woman day and night
Guarded, a daughter of Pisenor's race,
Wise Eurycleia, as of household right;
Whom when the prince had summoned to the place,
He straight addressed her: "Nurse, draw wine apace,
The mellowest next to that which thou dost keep
Stored up how long! for one in evil case,
If the Zeus-born Odysseus whom we weep
Should e'er, evading death, come sailing o'er the deep.
“Fill me twelve vessels, each with lid supplied,
And packed in well-sewn wallets give me grain.
Next twenty measures of fine meal provide;
And, above all, close secrecy maintain;
For in the evening I will come again
And take them, when my mother shall ascend
For sleep to the upper chamber. O’er the main
To Sparta I, and sandy Pylos, wend
On my sire’s quest, to learn some tidings of the end.”

So spake he, but the good nurse wailed aloud,
And in sore grief these wingèd words out pressed:
“Ah! why, dear child, this voyage hast thou vowed?
Whither art roaming from thy native nest,
The sole one of thy mother, o’er earth’s wide breast?
Zeus-born Odysseus far from hence hath died
’Mid stranger peoples, and this brood unblest
When thou art gone will evil counsels hide,
To cut thee off unwares, and all thy wealth divide.

“Ah! bide with thine own people here at ease.
There is no call to suffer useless pain,
Wandering always on the barren seas.”
But he: “Good nurse, prithee take heart again,
These things are not without a god nor vain.
Swear only that my mother shall not know
Till twelve days pass, or she herself be fain
To ask thee, or some other the tidings show,
Lest her salt tears despoil much loveliness with woe.”
Then she the grand oath of the gods did swear
Nought to discover, and, when the oath was sworn,
Drew wine in vessels, and with all her care
In well-sewn wallets packed the useful corn.
Telemachus outfaced the suitors’ scorn
Returning. But new things Athene planned,
Likened to him of brave Odysseus born,
And in the streets amid the throng did stand,
And whispered words to each, and added this com-
mand—

That in the evening they should all repair
Down to the swift ship, at her own request
Lent by renowned Noëmon, Phronius’ heir—
Gladly he lent it, with a willing breast.
Then the sun fell, and on the land did rest
Cloud, and she launched into the floods her bark,
Placed it in all wherewith good ships are drest,
And by the deep edge of the haven dark
Cheered the good seamen well, who all her words did
mark.

But soon Athene had new things in thought.
Straight to Odysseus’ house her way she took,
And a sweet slumber on the suitors brought,
And made them wander in their wine, and shook
Cups from their hands; nor could they longer brook
The banquet, but went quickly from the hall,
Such nerveless languor on their eyelids strook.
And then Telemachus she forth did call,
And spake in Mentor’s mien, and Mentor’s voice withal.
54
"Telemachus, thy well-grieved comrades stay
With oar in hand, waiting thy word, even thine.
Come, let us lose no time upon the way."
So spake Athene, and, with steps divine
Preceding, did their diligent course incline
Seaward in haste. But when the twain did reach,
Where the bark floated on the foamy brine,
They found their long-haired comrades on the beach,
To whom the godlike youth, Telemachus, made speech:

55
"Come, friends, and with me the provision bring.
The whole stands ready waiting in the hall.
My mother hath not yet heard anything;
'Tis hid too from the female servants all.
One of them only knoweth what shall fall."
So to the house he led them, and they brought,
And in the well-benced vessel did instal
Those needments, as Telemachus had taught.
So, when the ship was stored, and all in order wrought,

56
He clomb on shipboard; but the goddess-guide
Went first. She sat down in the aft, he near.
The strong stern-cables all the rest untied,
Embarked and manned the benches. Loud and clear
Sang the bluff Zephyr o'er the wine-dark mere
Behind them. By Athene's hest he blew.
Telemachus his comrades on did cheer
To set the tackling. With good hearts the crew
Heard him, and all things ranged in goodly order true.
The olive mast, planted with care, they bind
With ropes, the white sails stretch on twisted hide,
And brace the mainsail to the bellying wind.
Loudly the keel rushed through the seething tide.
Soon as the good ship's gear was all applied,
They ranged forth bowls, crowned with dark wine,
and poured
To gods who everlastingly abide,
Most to the stern-eyed child of heaven's great lord.
All night the ship clave onward till the Dawn upsoared.
BOOK III.

TELEMACHUS AND ATHENE IN THE LIKENESS OF MENTOR
ARRIVE AT PYLOS—TELEMACHUS VISITS NESTOR, AND
LEAVES PYLOS FOR SPARTA WITH PISISTRATUS, NESTOR'S YOUNGEST SON.
BOOK III.

I
Leaving the beauteous lake, the great Sun scaled
The brazen sky, and heavenly gods with light,
And mortal men and earth's rich glebe, regaled.
So they to Pylos came, the town well pight
Of Neleus. There, by the sea's margin bright,
Bulls black, without a fleck, the Pylians slay,
In service to the dark Earth-shaker's might.
Nine seated companies, in fair array,
Five hundred each, had given nine bulls apiece that day.

2
They then the entrails tasted, and each thigh
Burned to the god; but the others downward bore
Full on the land, and the sails furled on high,
And moored the bark. Anon came forth on shore
Telemachus; but Pallas went before.
Him first the stern-eyed goddess there addressed:
"Shame thou dost need, Telemachus, no more.
Art thou not sailing on thy father's quest,
To learn what land conceals him, or what fate suppressed?"
3

"Come, to horse-taming Nestor forward go;
Search we what counsel in his breast there lies.
Ask him yourself, that he the truth may show.
No falsehood will he tell; he is so wise."
Where to the sage Telemachus replies:
"How can I go, and what am I to say,
O Mentor—how accost him, in what guise?
No craft have I sage meanings to convey.
'Twere shame a youth should question one so old and grey."

4

Whom the stern-eyed in answer straight addressed:
"Telemachus, thine own mind will conceive
Somewhat, and other will a god suggest,
Since not without the gods, I well believe,
Thou both wast born, and nurture didst achieve."
Thus having said, Athene led the way.
He to the steps divine did closely cleave.
So to the Pylians seated in array
They came, where Nestor sat among his sons that day.

5

Round them their comrades, setting forth the feast,
Spitted the flesh. But when they saw appear
The strangers, all from their employment ceased,
Came, clasped their hands, and bade them to the cheer.
First Nestor's son, Pisistratus, drew near,
And took the hand of each, and made them sit
On fleeces soft that on the shingle were,
Near Thrasymedes and his sire to wit,
And wine in golden cup gave, and a portion fit,
Cooked, from the entrails, and spake, welcoming
The child of Zeus who doth the aegis bear:
"Pray now, dear stranger, to Poseidon king;
His is the banquet ye find spread so fair.
When, duly praying, thou hast poured thy share,
Hand to him next the goblet. I divine
That he too prays; all men have need of prayer:
But he, much younger, counteth years like mine:
So to thee first I give this golden bowl of wine."

Therewith the goblet in her hands he placed.
She the just heart and insight of the man
Hailed, that her first with the sweet wine he graced.
So to the king Poseidon she began:
"Hear us, Poseidon, in our prayers! and plan
For Nestor and his children first of all
Glory. This people next with favour scan,
That sweet exchange whole Pylos may befall,
For hetacomb renowned, and this rare festival.

"Grant also to Telemachus and me
That we may home, our work fulfilled, repair—
That work for which we came across the sea."
So did she speak, and finished all her prayer;
Then gave Telemachus the wine-bowl fair,
And in like manner prayed Odysseus' son.
But when the flesh was roasted with due care,
Drawn from the spits, and carved, they feasted on
Till their desire for meat and drink was quenched and
gone.
Then up spake Nestor, the Gerenian knight:
“Now may we ask these strangers who they are,
Since they have feasted to their own delight.
Strangers who are ye? from what coast afar
Sail ye the watery ways? After some star
Of purpose, or, at random blown about,
Range ye like pirates, whom no perils bar,
Who o’er the wide sea, with their lives in doubt,
Range, and to foreign ships mischance and harm deal out?”

Answered Telemachus with dauntless breast,
For inward courage from Athene came;
So of his long-lost father to make quest,
And among mortals to inherit fame:
“O Nestor, son of Neleus, a great name
In Argos, thou demandest whence we be;
And I this matter will unveil. We came
From rock-hung Ithaca across the sea,
On private quest, not public—touching only me.

“Some wide-blown rumour of my sire I seek,
Odysseus, that much-suffering one divine,
Who, as they tell me, did fierce vengeance wreak,
Thy comrade, on the Trojan town long syne.
All other warriors of Achaian line
We hear of, where and by what fate they fell;
But him to grave unknown did Zeus consign:
Whether on land foes smote him none can tell,
Or Amphitrite’s billows round his dark bier swell.
12

"So to thy knees I come, if thou some word
Vouchsafe me, whether thou with eyes hast seen
His downfal, or from some chance pilgrim heard.
How hath his mother to exceeding teen
Borne him! Let no kind thought thy tidings screen;
Paint not the tale through pity. O friend, if e'er
The good Odysseus hath right loyal been
In word or work, when ye much travail bare
In Troy, remember now, and truly this declare."

13

Answered him Nestor, the Gerenian knight:
"Friend, thou remind'st me of exceeding pain,
Which we, the Achaians of unconquered might,
There, and in ships along the cloudy main,
Led by Achilleus to the spoil, did drain,
With those our fightings round the fortress high
Of Priam king. There all our best were slain—
There the brave Aias and Achilleus lie;
Patroclus there, whose wisdom matched the gods on
high.

14

"There too Antilochus my son doth sleep,
Who in his strength was all so void of blame—
Swift runner, and staunch warrior. Labours deep
Also beyond these on our backs there came.
Where is the tongue could half our ills proclaim?
If for five years, or six, thou should'st ensue
This story, tired with even our labours' fame
Thou would'st go home. Nine years no pause we knew,
Scheming the siege. Kronion hardly brought us through.
15

"There none was found that ever face to face
Rose up to rival that surpassing wit,
Thy sire's, if thou indeed thy lineage trace
From him. Deep awe upon my soul doth sit,
Even as I hear—thy words with his so fit;
Nor would one think there could such likeness be
In one much younger. O, how closely knit
In either council was thy sire with me!
For Argos' welfare still one heart, one mind, had we.

16

"Soon as the citadel we tumbled down
And utterly despoiled, in ships we went,
God-scattered, sailing from old Priam's town.
There Zeus our voyage marred with stern intent,
And dire disaster on the Argives sent—
Not all had wisdom nor a righteous breast—
So, working out a grievous punishment,
Pallas Athene did their course infest,
And in the Atridae stirred a bitter strife unblest.

17

"They all the Argives in assembly called,
Lax, not in order, at the setting sun.
Heavy with wine they came, their reason pallèd
With revel, and a vain talk was begun.
Then these expounded why the thing was done,
And Menelaus did with zeal persuade
Homeward to haste; but of his counsels none
Pleased Agamemnon, who would fain have stayed
Till for Athene's ire due hecatombs were paid.
18

"Unwise, who knew not she would ne'er be changed. For not so readily wavers the mind Of gods. So they twain in their wrath, estranged Each against each, did bitter insult find; And, self-confounded in the turmoil blind, Rose up the Achaians with portentous hum, And frenzied meanings diversely inclined. So dreaming hard things till the Dawn had come, We slept, and Zeus meanwhile enhanced our evils' sum.

19

"Then, in the morning, on the noble main We launched our ships, and all our goods well stored And took the deep-zoned women, a shining train. But of the army, half, with one accord, To Agamemnon clave, their sovran lord, And with the shepherd of the people stayed. But we the rest, unbaftled, went on board, And rowed with zeal, and speedy voyage made, For 'twas a god's good help the monstrous ocean laid.

20

"To Tenedos we came, and there did burn Gifts to the gods, and longed for home in vain, For Zeus not yet intended our return— Was he not hard to stir up strife again? Some in their ships redoubled the broad main, Led by Odysseus, wise and warlike king, So Agamemnon's favour to retain. But I with all my naval following Fled, when I knew the god would verily mischief bring.
21

"Fled too the son of Tydeus, apt for war,
And urged right well his comrades to the flight.
At eve came sailing in our wake afar
The golden-haired one, and on us did light
At Lesbos, helpless to resolve aright—
Whether to wend above the rugged nape
Of Chios, pushing with what speed we might,
With Psyria leftward, or our course to shape
Clean round the Chian cliffs, by Mimas’ windy cape.

22

"Therefore we asked the god to send a sign;
Who sent it, and bade cleave the middle sea
Straight to Euboia, for that wrath divine
Impended, and the hour was ripe to flee.
And a stiff wind sang loudly in our lee.
Saved from the waters at the time of sleep,
Down to Geræstus came our company.
There we fat thighs unto Poseidon heap
Of bulls, right glad in soul to have measured the great deep.

23

"On the fourth day the ships of Tydeus’ son
Stood in the roads of Argos. I the while
Held on for Pylos, nor the breeze went down
Which erst the god gave from the Lesbian isle.
And this, dear heart, is all my journey’s style;
Nor know I who were saved or who were slain.
But whatso sitting in my halls erewhile
I heard and hear, if it may bring thee gain,
Even as right requires I surely will make plain.
24

"Safely, they say, the Myrmidons came home,
Whom the renowned son of Achilleus led;
And safely Philoctetes the wide foam
Passed over, child of Poias, warrior dread.
Also Idomeneus to Creta sped
With all his comrades whom the battle spared;
None of his heroes in the sea lie dead.
And Agamemnon's fate yourselves have heard
Even far off, so widely hath that rumour fared.

25

"Yes, ye have heard how he to Argos came,
And how Ægisthus did his doom devise,
Who now with dolour and exceeding shame
Hath paid the price of his iniquities.
This is a good thing, and let none despise,
That of a dead man should be left a son
To rise as he rose up for brave emprise,
Avenging murder, and much glory won
On him, so dark with wiles, who had his sire undone."

26

Whereto the sage Telemachus replied:
"O Nestor, son of Neleus, rarely well
Played he the avenger's part, and far and wide
Even hereafter shall the Argives swell
His story. Would that in my breast could dwell
Strength equal from the gods, that I might pay
These suitors, and their open outrage quell!
But not such happiness did heaven convey
Unto my sire or me. I bear it as I may."
27

Him answered Nestor, the Gerenian knight:
"Friend, (thou remind'st me by thy words), they say
That suitors of thy mother in thy despite
Live many in thy halls from day to day,
And evil machinations move alway.
Art thou kept under of thine own free will?
Or doth the general hate a voice obey
From God? but who knows if alone he still,
Or girt with Argive troops, a great revenge fulfil?"

28

"For if stern-eyed Athene deign to love
Thee as she loved thy father well-renowned
By Troia's town, all other souls above,
Where we, the Achaians, were in travail bound—
(For by him only was such favour found,
Nor ever marked I love so manifest
From god to man as did to him redound
From Pallas)—if such love on thee too rest,
Right soon will all thy foes forego this marriage quest."

29

Answered in turn the sage Telemachus:
"Old man, I know that I shall never see
This voice fulfilled. It cannot fall out thus.
Hard is thy word, and heavy in degree,
And great astonishment comes over me.
Never, alas! could I believe such bliss—
Not though the gods themselves willed it to be!"
To whom Athene: "Hush! what word is this?
Lightly a god that willed even from far, I wis,
"Could save a man. But truly I were fain
Rather from sorrows long, and weary strife,
To find true welcome, than much earlier gain
Hearth-murder, as that king found treason rife,
By dark Ægisthus killed and his own wife.
Howbeit not even can the gods forefend
Like doom from any, nor uphold the life
Even of a man whom they would fain befriend,
When once down-striking Death brings on the fated end."

He answered: "Mentor, let us bear to yearn
In silence, and not talk our sorrows o'er.
Never to him remaineth true return;
But heaven his death determined long before.
Yet would I fain ask Nestor one thing more,
Who more than others in his heart doth hold
Both righteous dealings and life's wiser lore.
Three generations reigning he hath told;
So that a god he seems, one deathless to behold.

"O Nestor, son of Neleus, truly tell
How Atreus' son, by what disloyal play
Cut off, the wide-realmed Agamemnon fell;
And where was Menelaus on that day?
How did Ægisthus stretch his hand to slay?
What doom did he devise?—since he made bleed
A better man—or was the prince away
From Argos on some pilgrimage of need,
Which hearing he took heart, and dared the heinous deed?"
33
Him answered Nestor, the Gerenian knight:
"Herein, dear child, will I the truth expound.
So 'twould have fallen—thou hast guessed aright—
Had Menelaus, son of Atreus, found
Ægisthus standing yet on Argive ground.
Then had he not known burial, even dead,
But him the dogs without the city's bound
And birds had gorged, nor any woman shed
Tear, nor bewailed his fate, who schemed a work so dread.

34
"For we lay absent in a cloud of ill;
But he fared softly in the calm recess
Of knight-famed Argos, and with fond words still
The wife of Agamemnon did caress.
She at the first that vile unseemliness
Turned from, divine one, in her worth of mind;
And there was eke a minstrel who not less
Sustained her, whom Atrides left behind,
And to his care, parting for Troy, his wife consigned.

35
"But when the fate divine had bound down fast
That minstrel hero to a doom severe,
Ægisthus led him to an island waste,
And gave him for the fowls of heaven to tear,
And took her: willing franion, willing fere.
He many thighs in many a holy place
Burned to the gods, and golden gifts did rear,
And costly shrines with woven apparel grace,
Lord of a huge success which hope scarce dared t' embrace.
36

"For we twain sailed together, bound from Troy,
I and the son of Atreus golden-haired,
Heart-folded in exchange of friendship's joy.
Soon as to Sunium's hallowed brow we neared,
Phoebus Apollo, as we onward fared,
Slew with his gentle arrows one who held
The helm of Menelaus—name revered,
Son of Onetor, Phrontis, who excelled
All steersmen of all ships, in tempest's rage unquelled.

37

"So was he holden, though to flee right fain,
Till that the funeral rites were duly done.
But when he, driving o'er the wine-dark main,
Had to the gaunt ridge of Malea won,
Evil already was from Zeus begun.
Shripled the wild storms, and a resounding swell
Of monstrous billows, huge as hills, came on.
These the fleet sunder, and in part compel
Crete-ward, to Jardon's streams, where the Cydonians
dwell.

38

"Lo! there, shot forth into the murky deep,
Rises a sheer cliff at the far land's end
Of Gortyn. From south-west the great waves leap
On the left headland, as in wrath to rend.
Vainly on a little stone huge strength they spend.
Thither the barks rushed, and the men with pain
Snatch the bare life; all else the billows shend
On the sharp rocks. Swept on in the tempest's strain,
Five ships, the azure-prowed, to Egypt's coast attain.
39

"So he much substance gathering there, and gold,  
Wandered with ships 'mid tribes of other tongue.  
Meanwhile Ægisthus in the halls did hold  
His murder's wage, and to bad counsels clung,  
And kept the people under, old and young.  
Seven years in rich Mycene he bore sway;  
But lo! from Athens, in the eighth, upsprung  
Orestes, stern avenger, to repay  
That evil dark usurper who his sire did slay.

40

"Forthwith good funeral cheer he gave to all,  
Feasting the Argives for that caitiff blood,  
And his dead mother with the heart of gall.  
That self-same day within his portals stood  
Brave Menelaus. Store of treasures good  
Lay heavy in his barks.—But thou, my friend,  
Wander not far from home, leaving a brood  
Of vauntful spoilers thine estate to rend,  
Lest they take all, and thou for nought thy labour spend.

41

"Natheless I bid you with what zeal I may  
On to the house of Menelaus go.  
Hath he not lately come from far away,  
Even from a strange land which we cannot know?  
Whence none, whom the errant tempest first might blow  
Far from all soundings to a deep so drear,  
Could hope again to stem that ocean-flow—  
Whence even the birds within a single year  
Cannot o'erpass a sea so vast and void of cheer.
42

"Now, in the swift ship with thy friends make speed;
Or if thou choose to travel hence by land,
Horses and chariot shall attend thy need,
And sons of mine wait ready to thy hand,
Guides of thy journey, till thy feet shall stand
In Lacedæmon the divine, where dwell
Brave Menelaus and his household band.
Ask him yourself, and he the truth will tell.
Pure from the heart his words fall ever wisely well."

43

He ending, the sun fell, and o'er the land
Grew darkness, and stern-eyed Athene said:
"Old man, in all this shall thy counsel stand;
But come, the tongues cut; mix the wine-bowl red;
Now be libations to Poseidon shed,
And to the other gods, then seek we rest.
Now is the hour of sleep to weary head;
For lo! heaven's lamp is fallen in the west;
Nor is it right to linger long at a god's feast."

44

She ended, and all heard the voice divine,
Heralds pour water on their hands; in haste
Youths crown the bowls with drink, and cups of wine
Bear round to each. Then in the fire they cast
The tongues, and, rising, pour libations last.
So having drunken to their hearts' content,
Back to the hollow ship they would have passed,
The prince and she; but Nestor, ere they went,
Fastened on both with words, upbraiding their intent:
"Now Zeus and all the other gods forefend
That thus ye pass hence from my doors, as though
From one quite robeless, and with nought to spend,
Nor having of fine rugs abundant show,
Wherein himself and guests soft sleep may know!
Shall then the dear son of Odysseus sleep
On shipboard thus, and I alive? Not so—
Nor while these good halls one descendant keep
To entertain the stranger who would welcome reap."

Answer on whom Athene did bestow:
"Well hast thou spoken, dear old man. 'Twere meet
Telemachus obey, and nobler so.
Let him go with you, and find slumbers sweet
There in your halls; but I will hence to greet
My comrades, and make known what things befall—
Who me, their elder, reverently entreat—
Young men they are, and follow friendship's call,
Telemachus' compeers, like him large-hearted all.

"There in the hollow ship will I this night
Lie down, but with the dawn I must proceed
To that large-hearted race, Cauconian hight,
Since of a debt there owing I have need,
Long-standing and not small. But take thou heed,
After thy doors once entered, him to send
Hence in a chariot on his course with speed;
Also let some one of thy sons attend;
And horses, even thy best in strength and fleetness, lend."
48
So having said, Athene went away,
Winged, like an osprey; and the sudden flight
Mute-lipped amazement on them all did lay.
He too, the old man, marvelled at the sight.
Taking his guest's right hand, that aged knight
Spake: "Friend beloved, I feel not any fears
To find thee craven ever, or void of might,
Since plainly, even in thy youthful years,
The gods themselves environ thee beyond thy peers.

49
"This is none other of the names that hold
Olympus, save the Trito-born renowned,
Daughter of Zeus, who loved thy sire of old.
Be kind, O queen! With honour's noble sound
Me and my children and my wife surround.
For this will I a yearling heifer slay,
Wide-browed, which to the yoke man never bound—
Such unto thee, with gilded horns, I pay."
So in his prayer, and Pallas heard him on that day.

50
So Nestor led his sons and sons-in-law
Back to the beauteous house; but when they came
To the far-famed palace of the king, they saw
Benches and chairs ranged ready in the same.
And for them, sitting, the old knight did frame
Mixture of sweet wine of the eleventh year,
Now first unsealed by the discreet house-dame.
He the wine mixed, and to Athene there,
Daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, poured forth in prayer.
Soon having poured, and drunk their hearts' content,
They in the house for sleep themselves bestow.
Telemachus, on couch magnificent,
Gerenian Nestor made lie down below
The wide roof of the resonant portico.
Spear-armed Pisistratus, the yet unwed,
Slept near him. But the knight himself did go
To far recess, by noise unvisited,
And there his lady wife made ready and shared his bed.

But when the rosy-fingered Dawn came on,
Then rose up Nestor, the Gerenian knight,
And came, and sat down on the polished stone;
For many such stood ranged and well in sight
Before his lofty portals, glistering white.
Thereon sat Neleus in the days of yore,
Made equal to the gods through wisdom's light;
But him the stroke of taming Death came o'er,
And into Hades' house he wended long before.

Nestor, Achaian warder, sat there now,
Sceptre in hand. Round him were gathered,
Each a fair presence and of peerless brow,
Echéphron, Stratus, the king's elder seed,
Perseus, Aretus, noble Thrasymede.
Then came the sixth, hero Pisistratus.
All these group round their sire, and forward lead
To vacant throne godlike Telemachus.
Them the Gerenian knight bespoke, commanding thus:
54
“Prosper my wish, dear sons, without delay.
Athene I would favourably incline
First of the gods, who came down yesterday
Clothed in clear figure to our feast divine.
One to the plain speed, and from herds of mine
Choose out a beast well-favoured, best of hue,
Which quickly to the driver’s charge consign.
One to the black ship haste, and all the crew
Of our large-hearted guest escort, save only two.

55
“One to the dwelling of Laerces wend,
The goldsmith, and enjoin him speedily
Hither with engines of his craft attend,
To gild the victim’s horns; but here with me
Let the rest linger in one company;
And bid the servants of our lordly hall
With all their vigour to the banquet see,
And water bring and wood, and seats withal.”
So Nestor spake, and they sped busily breathless all.

56
Came then the heifer from the plain forthwith,
Came too the friends of their large-hearted guest,
Came with his implements in hand the smith,
Anvil and hammer, at the king’s behest,
To work the gold, and fire-tongs of the best;
Came too Athene from her place to meet
The sacred gifts; and gold of virgin test
The old knight gave, which round the horns in heat
He, the smith, welds—glad sight the goddess’ eyes to
greet.
57
Then Stratius and divine Echéphron lead
The victim by the horns. Aretus brings
The water from the house, for lustral need,
In laver chased with flowery figurings,
And in his other hand the meal he brings
In basket. Thrasymede with axe in hand
Stood by the beast, to sever the vital strings,
And Perseus with the bowl hard by did stand,
To catch the out-welling life. These wait their sire's command.

58
Anon with lustral lymph and sprinkled meal
Nestor began, and to Athene prayed,
Shearing the front lock of the head with steel.
This in the fire he cast. So prayer being made,
No longer noble Thrasymede delayed.
Heavily smote he; and the axe cut through
The tendons, and the whole neck open laid,
And loosed the creature's strength. Then at the view
Shrill to the echoing heaven cried the whole female crew,

59
Daughters-in-law, and daughters, and the wife
Of Nestor, venerable Eurydice.
Forthwith the fallen corse, to meet the knife,
Men from the wide-wayed earth uplift, and he,
Pisistratus, prince-hero, instantly
Plunged in the weapon; and the darkling tide
Gushed forth, and warm life from the bones did flee.
They on the moment all the flesh divide,
And the thighs, duly cut, in layers of fat they hide;
Well-folded, and on these raw pieces pile;
Which the old knight on fire of cloven wood
Burned, pouring on streams of dark wine the while.
Also the young men round their father stood
With forks to move the fire and keep it good.
But when the thighs are quite consumed, they taste
The entrails, and prepare the rest for food.
Then morsels on the pointed spits they placed,
Which holding in their hands they cooked the generous feast.

Meanwhile the tender Polycaste fair,
Youngest of Nestor's daughters, bathed the guest
Telemachus, and with rich unguents rare
Anointed; whom then, in soft tunic drest,
She with a gorgeous mantle did invest.
Forth from the bath he moved, and seemed in pride
Of aspect, and condition stateliest,
Like an immortal. He, thus beautified,
Came to the throng once more and sat by Nestor's side.

But when the flesh was toasted with due care,
And from the spits withdrawn, they feasted on,
Sitting—and young men, very goodly fair,
Poured wine in golden goblet for each one.
But soon as their desire was quenched and gone,
There in the midst Gerenian Nestor spake:
"Horses the flowing-maned and best of bone
Yoke for Telemachus, my sons, and take
Good chariot for his use, that he swift journey make."
So spake he, and they heard him and obeyed.
Quick to the car they yoke the horses fleet.
Therein both corn and wine the house-dame laid,
And viands which Zeus-nurtured princes eat.
Then first up mounted to the stately seat
Telemachus, and next came Nestor's son,
Pisistratus, heroic prince complete.
Clomb he the car, and with his hands anon
Upon the reins laid hold, right eager to be gone.

Then did he lash the horses, and they twain,
Forth from the Pylian gates adventuring,
Flew onward with their whole heart to the plain.
The yoke between them all day long they swing,
Till earth is wrapt in cloudy covering.
The travellers at the house of Diocles,
Son of Orsilochus, at Phere bring
Their journey to a pause, and there take ease
Of sleep. He food provides and friendly courtesies.

Soon as the rosy-fingered Dawn comes on
They the steeds harness, and eftsoons again
In carven chariot from the porch are gone.
Then did he scourge the horses, and they twain
Went as with wings. At eve they reach a plain
Waving with yellow harvest wide and high.
There with good speed the journey's end they gain,
Toiled the fleet horses so continually.
Falleth the sun, and all earth's ways o'ershadowed lie.
BOOK IV.

LACEDÆMON—THE MARRIAGE-BANQUET—ADVENTURES OF MENELAUS—EVENTS IN ITHACA.
BOOK IV.

I

So they to hollow Lacedæmon drave,
To house of Menelaus well-renowned.
He, on that day, for son and daughter gave
A marriage-feast to all his clansmen round.
She from his palace was for bridal bound
Unto the court of brave Achilleus' son;
For thus her father, yet on Ilian ground,
Gave plught in the old war-time long agone.
Now the due marriage-hour the gods were leading on.

2

So her with chariots he was sending now
And horses to the far-famed capital
Swayed by his friend, according to the vow.
Nor less for Megapenthes in the hall,
And for Alector's child, made festival;
Spartan the bride, well-loved yet slave-born he;
For child to Helena no more at all
The gods gave after sweet Hermione—
Like golden Aphrodite very fair was she.
3

Therefore the neighbours and the clansmen all
Of Menelaus, well-renownèd, eat
Lapped in delight beneath the high-roofed hall.
There the divine bard, while they sit at meat,
Strikes the loud chords, and singeth clear and sweet;
And from the moment he took up the song
A pair of dancers ever with whirling feet
Danced in the midst; and through the festive throng
Still the sweet music swims melodiously along.

4

Meanwhile they twain, their journey's end now won,
Stood with their steeds the vestibule before,
Hero Telemachus and Nestor's son;
And lordly Eteoneus to the door
Came, and beheld them, and what mien they wore.
He, loyal servant of the prince renowned,
Straight to the shepherd of the people bore
Through the wide halls the tidings he had found,
And quickly in winged words did thus the tale expound:

5

"Zeus-nurtured Menelaus, hear me now!
Two strangers, heroes, at thy portals stand,
Stamped with the great Zeus-kinship on their brow.
Say, shall we loose their horses out of hand,
Or even send them hence, at thy command,
To look for love's good kindnesses elsewhere?"
Then, roused to anger at the shame he planned,
Answered the hero of the golden hair:
"Time was, O Eteoneus, no such fool you were;"
6

“But now you talk things senseless, like a child.
Good sooth! have we then never broken bread
In strange men's houses, and found love grow wild
In far-off lands ere hitherward we sped?
Pray Zeus that sorrow hang not o'er our head
Even at this hour! Unyoke the steeds and call
These men, that to their fill they may be fed.”
He at the word ran hastily from the hall,
And the quick servants bade to follow him withal.

7

They then the hot-breathed horses there untie.
Eftsoons they fasten each within the stall,
Mix in the mangers barley-meal and rye,
The chariot lean against the shining wall,
And bring the men in to the festival;
Who the divine house of the Zeus-born king
Gazed on with silent rapture, for that all
The high-roofed dome a gleamy flash did fling,
Like as of sun or moon, upon them entering.

8

With eyes entranced to the bath they go.
There the maids wash them and with oil besmear,
And costly fine apparel round them throw.
So to the son of Atreus; and one there
The lustral stream from golden pitcher fair,
To cleanse their hands, in silver basin poured,
And the well-polished table set with care,
Whereon the staid house-dame, piling a hoard
Of dainties, grudgeless gave whatever decked the board.
9
Also the carver many a dish did heap
Of flesh, and beakers ranged of costliest mould,
Wherein the herald poured the wine-draught deep.
Then said the hero with the locks of gold:
"Fall on now, feast right merrily, uncontrolled;
Then will we ask your nation and your name.
No dark oblivion doth your sires enfold;
But from a line of sceptred kings ye came—
For well I ween to such no caitiff blood lays claim."

10
So spake he, and upheaves with both his hands
A fat beef-chine and for their use purveys,
Which on the board his own set portion stands;
Nor his guests longer from the banquet stays.
Soon as the feast their appetite allays,
Forthwith Telemachus his head doth bend
Toward Nestor's son, and thus in whisper says,
Fearing lest any ear his words attend:
"O son of Nestor, look, mine own beloved friend!

11
"Even through all the echoing dome behold
How wondrously the glint of brass doth shine,
Silver, electron, ivory, and gold!
Such and so glorious to celestial eyen
Haply may gleam the Olympian halls divine
Of Zeus, heaven's king! For where may voice be found
So eloquently wrought as to define
And shape these splendours in articulate sound?
Wonder lays hold upon me while I gaze around."
Thus while Telemachus his friend bespake,
Him the brave hero of the golden hair
Watched as he whispered, and did answer make:
"No one, my sons, of mortal brood may dare
Himself with Zeus, the lord of all, compare.
Immortal is the house where he doth dwell,
Immortal treasures bloom about him there.
But may be false or true, I cannot tell,
That earthly prince my pomp can rival or excel.

"For truly, having suffered many things,
Hardly I came at last, in the eighth year,
Home with my ships from long long wanderings.
Far as to Cyprus in my woe severe,
Phœnice, Egypt, did the waves me bear.
Sidon and Ethiopia I have seen,
Even to Erebus roamed, and Libya, where
The lambs are full-horned from their birth, I ween,
And in the rolling year the fruitful flocks thrice yean.

"For in that climate neither churl nor lord
Butter doth ever lack, or milk or meat;
All the year round the flocks and herds afford
Milk to the milker, very choice and sweet.
So through the land I rove with wandering feet,
And get me store of treasure. But ah! the while
The dark usurper of my brother's seat
Covertly killed him, through a false wife's guile.
Thus I in wealth rule here with little cause to smile.
"These things ye haply may have heard before
From your own fathers, whosoe'er they be,
Since evils neither few nor light I bore,
Who lost a house built well and pleasantly,
Teeming with treasures and all luxury.
Yet gladly would I in my place enjoy
Even but a third part of the wealth ye see,
So they were living whom the wars in Troy,
Far from this knightly land of Argos, did destroy.

"Here in these halls I sit and still bewail
The fallen, and one time my soul I steep
In sorrow, and one time my weepings fail.
Soon hath enough the man that drinketh deep
Heart-bitterness and woe. All, all I weep;
And yet not all lament so much as one—
Whom to remember robs my eyes of sleep,
My lips of food; since of the Achaians none
Hath ever toiled as he, Odysseus, toiled and won.

"His was the fate to suffer grievous woe,
And mine to mourn without forgetfulness,
While onward and still on the seasons flow,
And he yet absent, and I comfortless.
Whether he live or die we cannot guess.
Him haply old Laertes doth lament,
And sage Penelope, in sore distress,
And to Telemachus the hours are spent
In sadness, whom he left new-born when first he went."
18
So speaking, in the other's breast he stirred
Yearnings to weep—who to the ground let fall
A secret tear, when of his sire he heard,
His eyes behind his raiment's purple pall
Shrouding with both his hands. Him therewithal
The son of Atreus marked, and in his breast
Doubted to leave him dreaming in the hall,
Rapt in his fond remembrances at rest,
Or frankly first him question and of all make test.

19
While in his mind he sat revolving this,
Forth from her fragrant bower came Helen fair,
Bright as the golden-spindled Artemis.
Adraste set the couch; Alcippe there
The fine-spun carpet spread; and Phylo bare
The silver basket which Alcandra gave,
Consort of Polybus, who dwelt whilere
In Thebes of Egypt, whose great houses save
Wealth in their walls, large store, and pomp of treas-
ures brave.

20
For he two baths of silver, and a pair
Of tripods, and ten talents gave of gold
To Menelaus, and rich gifts and rare
His wife gave Helen—a spindle of pure gold,
And, silvem, and half-sphere-like, rimmed with gold,
The basket. Filled with yarn this Phylo bare,
With spindle which the violet wool did hold.
She on the couch sat, and on footstool fair
Rested her feet, and thus bespake her husband there:
21

"Zeus-nurtured Menelaus, know we who
These that our house have entered boast to be?
Shall I in speaking hit the false or true?
But, howsoe'er, my soul constraineth me—
For man nor woman did I ever see
So like—I gaze in wonder—as this same
Is like the young Telemachus whom he,
Odysseus, left, when for me, void of shame,
Warring to Troia's walls the bold Achaians came."

22

And gold-haired Menelaus answering said:
"Lady, I doubt not thou hast weened aright.
Such were his feet, and such his hands and head;
Such too the hair, and such the glancing light
Thrown from his eyes. And when I name to-night
Odysseus, and his sorrows durst recal,
Borne for my sake, and all his evil plight,
He, for I marked, a bitter tear let fall,
Shrouding his eyes behind his raiment's purple pall."

23

Pisistratus made answer: "Zeus-born king,
This is indeed his son, as thou hast guessed.
Yet hath he fine reserve, and would not bring
Unseemly matters to invade your rest,
Who with the sweet voice of a god have blessed
Our listening ears. Me Nestor, knightly sire,
From Pylos sends companion of his quest;
For he was fain to see thee, and inquire
If word or work thou knowest to forward his desire."
24

"For verily a child hath many pains
Dragging the days in orphan wretchedness,
To whom no helper in the house remains.
Such is the weight and such the loneliness
Which now Telemachus my friend oppress.
His sire is found not, and the rest think scorn
Frankly to stand up for the fatherless.
Yea, for none liveth in the land to warn
Outrage from fenceless head, and succour the forlorn."

25

Whom Menelaus answered: "Now, by heaven,
Child of one dearly loved hath passed my door,
One who for my sake to extremes was driven.
Yea, and I said that I would love him more
Than all men, should Olympian Zeus restore
Us twain in swift ships to our native land.
Then had I somewhere on the Argive shore
Builded him houses and fair city planned,
And with his wealth him brought from Ithaca's rough
strand,

26

"Him and his wife and child and people all,
When of my cities I had emptied one.
So had we often each in other's hall
Closely conversed, nor aught beneath the sun
Torn heart from heart, and friendship's joys undone,
Till the black shadow that for all doth lower,
Dark-brooding Death, we could no longer shun.
This, as it seems, God grudged, who had the power,
And him alone hath made returnless to this hour."
27
Thus he for all desire of tears unbound.
Wept Argive Helen, child of Zeus, and wept
Telemachus, and Atreus’ son renowned;
Nor at those words the son of Nestor kept
His eyes yet tearless—for his memory swept
Back to the blameless brave Antilochus,
Whose life that shining knight did intercept,
Memnon, the bright Dawn’s offspring glorious.
He now, remembering all, in wingèd words spake thus:

28

“O son of Atreus, Nestor used to tell,
When in our halls we mention made of thee,
How through the earth thy wisdom did excel,
Wherefore now hear me of thy courtesy—
For griefs I love not, nor sufficingly
Mourn, in mid feast; but soon will Dawn appear.
Yet, when a life is lost, it seems to me
Hard and unnatural to spare no tear,
Nor can I not bewail one fall’n in death severe.

29

“’Tis the sole boon to wretched mortals given,
The lock to sever and the tear to shed;
And not from Argos was her meanest riven
When that my brother on the field lay dead.
Haply thou knowest all I leave unsaid—
For him these eyes have never seen in deed;
Yet far and wide I know that fame hath spread
How that Antilochus did far exceed
Others of mortal mould alike in strength and speed.”
Whom Menelaus answered: "O my friend, 
Well hast thou spoken, as the wise of heart 
Would speak and do, when grey hairs wisdom lend. 
Thy words bewray thee of what sire thou art. 
Lightly the race is known, if Zeus impart 
Good luck in marriage and the marriage-bed, 
As Nestor's life he prospered in each part, 
And on himself a smooth old age hath shed, 
And given him sons wise-hearted and in spear-craft dread.

"But lamentation let us now give o'er, 
And once more to the feast our hearts apply. 
Now on our hands fresh water let them pour, 
And in the morn Telemachus and I 
Will each with other talk right lovingly." 
So spake he, and Asphalion water poured 
There on the hands of each industriously, 
Obedient to his well-renownèd lord. 
They then with outstretched hands assailed the banquet-board.

Then Helena the child of Zeus strange things 
Devised, and mixed a philter in their wine, 
Which so cures heartache and the inward stings, 
That men forget all sorrow wherein they pine. 
He who hath tasted of the draught divine 
Weeps not that day, although his mother die 
And father, or cut off before his eyen 
Brother or child beloved fall miserably, 
Hewn by the pitiless sword, he sitting silent by.
33
Drugs of such virtue did she keep in store,
Given her by Polydamna, wife of Thôn,
In Egypt, where the rich glebe evermore
Yields herbs in fōison, some for virtue known,
Some baneful. In that climate each doth own
Leech-craft beyond what mortal minds attain;
Since of Paonian stock their race hath grown.
She the good philter mixed to charm their pain,
And bade the wine outpour, and answering spake again:

34
“O Atreus’ son, and ye that boast your blood
From loins heroic, what if Zeus to all
Deal as he listeth evil things and good—
Who all things can? Feast freely in the hall
And charm you with the tale I now recal.
Yet can I not unfold, nor even name,
Half that the brave Odysseus did besal.
Yet this one work he wrought of glorious fame,
When woe by Troia’s walls on you the Achaians came.

35
“For self-disfigured with unseemly scars,
And clothed in many a vile habiliment,
In menial aspect past the foeman’s bars
His course into the wide-wayed town he bent,
In beggar’s weeds disguising his intent,
Who was far other by the Achaian fleet.
So masked among the silent crowd he went.
I only knew him, and did oft repeat
My questionings, which he with sleights did still defeat.
"But when I washed his limbs and rubbed with oil,
And robed him, and a mighty oath had sworn
By no discovery his design to foil,
Nor of Odysseus' name the Trojans warn,
Till that he safely from the foe were borne
Unto the swift ships and the huts, lo! then
He showed me all the Achaian mind in turn,
And having with his sword slain many men
Back to the Argive camp with tidings came again.

"Then all the other Trojan dames wept sore,
But o'er my breast a gladdening change there lay.
Already had my heart gone back before
Homeward; already I bewailed the day
When Aphrodite did my steps convey
From Sparta and my fatherland so dear,
Leaving my child an orphan far away,
And couch, and husband who had known no peer,
First in all grace of soul, and beauty shining clear."

Whom Menelaus: "Yea, well said, my wife!
I know the counsels of heroic men,
And many lands have traversed in my life,
Yet never came such heart within my ken
As of the brave Odysseus. Think of when
He, waiting in the Horse with all our best,
Planned Troia's downfall in the hollow den.
Thither thou camest, at some god's behest
Who would the Trojan name with glory fain invest.
39

"Godlike Deiphobus thee following came.
Thou, walking thrice around our hollow lair,
Each part didst handle, and call each by name,
Even the Danaan chieftains, feigning fair
Their wives' own voices that were far elsewhere.
And I and Tydeus' son and the divine
Odysseus heard thee calling to us there.
Then would we twain have issued, or some sign
Sent from the Horse, and with our voices answered thine,

40

"Had not Odysseus taught us to refrain.
So all the sons of the Achaians rest
In silence, but Anticlus yet was fain,
He only, not to leave thee unaddressed.
But ere the voice clomb upward from his breast
A heavy hand Odysseus on him laid,
Nor that strong clasp, wherewith his jaws he pressed,
Bated till he our full deliverance made,
When Pallas at the last thy footsteps thence conveyed."

41

Then spake Telemachus: "O noble chief,
So much the worse! Not all this could forefend—
Not though his heart were iron—utter grief.
But turn we now to sleep, that we may end
Toil, and our lives their sweet refreshment lend."
Then Argive Helen bade the maidens set
Beds in the corridor, and eke attend
With rugs and many a purple coverlet,
And blankets of warm wool wherein they might forget,
42
Sleeping, their sorrows. They, then, torch in hand,
Went from the hall and spread the couches fair.
Forthwith the herald at his lord’s command
Marshalled the strangers, who did straight repair
Thence to the vestibule, and lay down there,
Hero Telemachus and Nestor’s son.
The child of Atreus from that noble pair
Moved to the chamber of his house anon,
And near him long-robed Helen the divine lay down.

43
But Menelaus with the dawn uprose,
Belted his good sword, and the sandals clean
Linked on his shining feet—then forth he goes,
Likest for beauty to a god in mien;
So by Telemachus, in raiment sheen,
Chose out a seat; and spake his word and said:
“Hero Telemachus, some need I ween
Thee o’er the waves to Lacedæmon led,
Private or public. Be thy tale now frankly sped.”

44
To whom the sage Telemachus replied:
“Atrides Menelaus, Zeus-born king,
Hither I journey o’er the ocean wide,
If to my ear thy converse chance to bring
News of my sire. For know that everything
Falleth to ruin—they destroy me quite.
Filled is the house with enemies that cling
Fast to my mother’s suit in fell despite,
And slay my flocks and herds, and spoil me day and
night.
45

"So to thy knees I come, if thou some word
Vouchsafe me, whether thou with eyes hast seen
His downfal, or from some chance pilgrim heard.
How hath his mother to exceeding teen
Borne him! Let no kind thought thy tidings screen;
Paint not the tale through pity. O friend, if e'er
The good Odysseus hath right loyal been
In word or work when ye much travail bare
In Troy, remember now, and truly this declare."

46

Then Menelaus, rived with wrath, began:
"Fools! who all-strengthless have aspired to sleep
In the void couch of a strong-hearted man!
Even as a hind in lion's lair doth keep
Her tender sucklings, lulled in slumbers deep,
Then through the mountain-knees and grassy dells
Roams feeding—he returning home doth leap
Fierce on them both and in a moment quells—
So on their heads Odysseus evil doom impels.

47

"O father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo!
Would that as once with Philomeleus' son
He wrestled, whom a stronger strength did follow
And hurled him to the Lesbian earth undone,
All men rejoicing that Odysseus won—
Would he might hurtle on the suitors so
Swift death, sad marriage! But I will not shun
Aught of thy quest nor darken what I know.
All that the old sea-god revealed will I thee show."
48

"Fain to come hither, me the gods did keep
In Egypt, wroth for hecatombs unpaid.
Off the mainland, amid the rolling deep,
Far as in one day is the distance made
By some sharp keel with happy breeze conveyed,
Lies island Pharos with her haven fair,
To mariners well known a timely aid;
Thither for watering they resort; and there
For twenty days the gods detained me in despair.

49

"For all that while the breathings of the sea
Stirred not, wherewith the wave-borne barks are led,
And food and strength had vanished, but that me
Some god befriended, hard with woe bested—
Eidothea, child of Proteus, whose heart bled
To see me; and she met me far away,
Pacing companionless in doubt and dread—
For they with fish-hooks wandering all the day
Sought food, while famine ate them to the bone alway.

50

"Near me she stood and spake: 'O weak of sense,
Or reckless, or perchance indulging pain
For pastime, that thou find'st no issue hence,
Wasting for ever all these hearts in vain!'
So did she speak, and I to her again:
'Goddess, whoë'er thou art, I stay not here
For pastime; but may be the gods some stain
Find in me. Heavenly birth makes perfect seer;
Tell me what god withstands, and my return make clear.'
51
“She answered: ‘Truly will I show this thing.  
Proteus, the old sea-seer, doth here frequent;  
Of Egypt he, Poseidon’s underling;  
Who knows all secret things in ocean pent,  
My sire reputed. If thou circumvent  
Him guardless, thy return he can unfold,  
Ay, and the good and ill make evident,  
Wrought in thy halls, if thou wouldst have them told,  
While all these weary seasons o’er thy griefs have rolled.’

52
“Then said I: ‘Tell me how the god to snare,  
Lest he first know me, and my toils evade.  
Hardly can man celestial strength impair.’  
She answered: ‘Not for this be thou dismayed!  
What time the sun in middle heaven is stayed,  
Veiled in dark ripple, Zephyr’s air beneath,  
Comes up the god to sleep in cavern-shade.  
Around him the whole sea-brood slumbereth;  
All by the deep respire their bitter briny breath.

53
“‘There will I take you when the Dawn appears,  
And set you couched in order. Choose thou well  
Three comrades, bravest of thy mariners.  
I all the old man’s sleights to thee will tell.  
He first the number of the seals will spell,  
And then lie down, like shepherd with his sheep.  
Soon as ye see him couched, remember well  
Your virtue, and in iron grasp him keep  
Reluctant, though to all things that on earth’s breast  
creep
54

"He change, and water, and portentous fire.
You all the while clasp harder, strain the more.
When he your purpose shall with words inquire,
In the same figure that he whilome wore,
Loose him, and ask what god with anguish sore
Loads thee, and how the wide fish-teeming sea
Thou mayst pass over to thy native shore.'
This spoken, underneath the waves went she.
I to the stranded barks paced musing heavily.

55

"So to my ship returning and the deep,
I found my comrades. When the meal was o'er
And night descended with ambrosial sleep,
Tired we lay down on the surf-beaten shore
Till rosy-fingered Dawn did light restore.
Then by the margin of the highway flood
I moved, and dearly did the gods implore;
Also went with me three companions good,
Who first in each emprise for trustiest valour stood.

56

"Meanwhile Eidothea in the sea's deep breast
Dived, and brought up four seal-skins newly flayed,
Scheming with fraud her father to invest.
Forthwith for each a sand-scooped lair she made,
And sat there waiting. We no more delayed,
But all together hastened and came near.
Us then she ranged, each in wet hide arrayed.
Dire was the ambush, and the stench severe.
Who could a rank sea-beast at such close quarters bear?
57

"But she, delivering us, a great help planned,
And placed ambrosia near the lips of each,
Which in our nostrils breathed an odour bland,
And the sea-monsters' stench did overreach.
There moveless through the morn and void of speech
We crouched, until the seals came from the sea,
Which then lay down in order on the beach.
Last the old sea-god—at high noon came he,
Found the fat seals, and all counted right carefully.

58

"Us with the first he counted, nor at all
Dreamed guile; then lay down on the sands to rest.
So we with shouts rush forth, and on him fall;
Nor he the sundry sleights within his breast
Failed to remember, and each art to test.
Lion long-maned, snake, panther, he became;
Then water, and a tree with leafy crest.
But we with clench of iron held our game,
Till the old sea-god tired and took his former frame.

59

"Then said he: 'What celestial set thee on,
O son of Atreus, thus with wiles to snare
Me all unwilling? What wouldst thou have done?'
But I made answer: 'Thou art well aware.
Why seek the truth with questions to forswear,
And make me swerve? Long in this isle I wait,
Finding nor end nor issue. My despair
Enlighten! for the gods interpret fate.
What heavenly power me binds in this extreme estate?
60

"Also, I pray thee, my return declare,
How to pass over the fish-teeming sea.'
Then did he answer my prevailing prayer:
'When that rich sacrifice shall offered be
To Zeus and every other deity,
Embank, and quickly o'er the wine-dark main
Sail to thy country; for thou canst not see
Friends, house, or land, but still must yearn in vain,
Till to the rain-fed river thou return again,

61

"'Even Ægyptus, and perform with care
To the immortal ones their offerings due;
Then shall the gods thy journey prosper fair.'
Thus spake he; but my heart was pierced through,
For that he bade me o'er the deep renew
Voyage so long, so painful; yet I said,
Though sorrowing: 'All this task will I ensue.
But tell me truly how the Achaians sped—
All that were left in Troy, when I and Nestor fled.

62

"'Did they come scatheless, their salvation won?
Or on the sea did any timeless die?
Or in his friends' arms when the fight was done?'
Thus did I ask, and he vouchsafed reply:
'O Menelaus, son of Atreus, why
Seek a sad knowledge? 'Tis not meet at all
Thine heart should learn what in my breast doth lie.
Too soon, alas! a bitter shower would fall,
Streamed from thy smileless eyes, when thou hadst
hearkened all.
63
"' For many were destroyed and many left,
Yet of the Achaian leaders died but twain,
Returning; (you know whom the battle reft);
One in the wide-realmed ocean doth remain
Pent, yet alive; and Aias hath been slain
Among his ships. For by Poseidon led
He unto Gyrae's cliffs did safe attain,
And, though by Pallas hated, might have fled
Destruction, had he not drawn doom on his own head.

64
"' Flown with coarse pride, and breathing deep disdain,
He boasted, maugre all the powers on high
That he had safely vanquished the great main.
And lo! Poseidon heard the vauntful cry,
And with his trident smote imperiously
On the Gyrenean rock a thunderous blow,
And clave it: part remained and part did fly
Seaward, whereon sat Aias to his woe
Mouthing vain scorn. So sank he in the wild sea-flow.

65
"' In hollow ships, evading every ill,
Came back thy brother, saved by Hera queen.
Yet even as he neared Malea hill,
Storms o'er the rough deep hurling unforeseen,
On coast of old Thyestes, whelmed with teen,
Drave him, where now that prince Thyestian dwelt,
Ægisthus. Seemed the way secure, I ween,
Him the gods wafting home. He landing knelt,
His native soil to kiss; great joy made his heart melt.
"‘Many the warm tears from his eyelids shed,
When through the mist of his long-hoped delight
He saw the lovely land before him spread.
Him from high watch-tower marked the watchman wight
Set by Ægisthus to watch day and night,
Two talents of pure gold his promised hire.
Twelve months he watched, lest the Avenger light
Unheeded, and remember his old fire;
Then to his lord made haste to show the tidings dire.

"‘Forthwith Ægisthus, shaping a dark snare,
Score of his bravest chose, and ambush set,
And bade rich banquets close at hand prepare.
Then he with horses and with chariots met
The king, and welcomed him with fair words, yet
With fraud at heart, and to the feast him led;
There, like a stalled ox, smote him while he ate.
So with Atrides all his followers bled,
And eke Ægisthus’ ambush. All alike lay dead.’

"There he made end. Heart-broken, faint, undone,
Straight on the sands I sat me down to weep,
Nor any longer wished to see the sun.
There, rolling on the margin of the deep,
In floods of sorrow heart and eyes I steep.
At last the old unerring sea-god spake:
‘No longer, child of Atreus, idly heap
Pain upon pain, thy inmost soul to break,
Since from vain tears thy griefs nor cure nor comfort take."
"'Come, with new zeal uprouse thee to attain
Thy country. Either thou shalt find thy foe
Alive, or haply by Orestes slain,
Yet mayst the funeral-feast attend even so.'
So spake he, and my breast began to glow
Once more, though rived with sorrow, and I said:
'These know I well, but thou the third one show,
Who in wide ocean is alive or dead.
Fain would I hear this name, though welmed with
anguish dread.'

"So did I speak, and he replied once more:
'It is the Ithacan, Laertes' child;
Yea mine own eyes have seen him weeping sore
Pent in the palace, in mid ocean isled,
Of that celestial nymph, Calypso styled.
She her reluctant fere doth aye constrain:
Nor can he, sailing o'er the sea-deep wild,
Gaze on the rough dear fatherland again,
Reft both of oars and bark, and all his valiant train.

"'But thou, Zeus-nurtured one, by will supreme,
Never in knight-famed Argos shalt see death.
Thee to Elysian fields, at earth's extreme,
The gods shall convoy, so the high fate saith,
Where Rhadamanthus aye inhabiteth,
And life runs smoothest; whither storm, rain, snow,
Come never; but the ocean-zephyr's breath,
Winged with cool ease, o'er happy men doth blow;
Because thou Helen hast, and child of Zeus art so.'
72

"This spoken, 'neath the waves he made descent. 
I with those brave ones of my godlike train
Moved to the ships, deep-musing as I went. 
We, there arrived, beside the ships and main
Eat till ambrosial darkness, and again
Lie down for sleep on the surf-beaten shore.
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn shone plain,
We in the great deep launch our barks once more,
And set the mast and sails, and all our naval store.

73

"Then went we up, and manned in order due
The benches, and the hoary waves gan smite.
Back to Ægyptus, rain-fed stream, we flew.
There I the ships stayed, and performed aright
Grand hecatombs, the gods appeasing quite;
And next a tomb to Agamemnon piled,
Framing a quenchless glory for his sprite.
So the everlasting gods were reconciled,
And homeward bare us on with steady breezes mild.

74

"But come now, tarry in these halls, I pray,
Even till dawning of the eleventh night
Or twelfth, and I will send thee on thy way
Glad with resplendent gifts of rich delight,
Three noble horses and a chariot bright;
Also a goblet will I give to thee,
Beautiful, rare, with godly chasings dight,
That oft amid thy far festivity
Thou to the gods mayst pour, and pouring think of me."

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75
He ended, and Telemachus replied:
"Spare, son of Atreus, longer to detain
One who could gladly for a year abide,
Nor to his parents yearn nor home again,
Charmed to the quick with thy sweet story's strain.
But now in Pylos the divine my crew,
While thou too long with love dost entertain
Me feasting in thy halls, my absence rue,
Since I indeed e'en now surpass the season due.

76
"And if a gift at all, some keepsake grant.
With me no steeds to Ithaca shall sail.
Such leave I here, thy grace, thy rightful vaunt,
Lord of a level land, where never fail
Lotus and rye and wheat and galingale.
No room hath Ithaca to course, no mead—
Goat-haunted, dearer than horse-feeding vale—
None of the isles for pasture or for speed
Lies well—in roughness all doth Ithaca exceed."

77
So he; and warrior Menelaus smiled,
And stroked him with his hand, and thus outspake:
"Thy words bewray thy gentle blood, dear child.
Changed be these gifts; for I have power to make
Other; a bowl, choice, precious, thou shalt take,
Hephaestus' work, all silver, rimmed with gold,
Given me by Sidon's king for friendship's sake,
Phaedimus, courteous host and hero bold—
Henceforth to thee pertains this gift of price untold."
78
So they the morning with sweet converse wore.
The suitors all these hours in pastime spent,
And spear and whistling discus, as of yore,
Hurled on that well-smoothed ground without a dent,
Known long for outrage and unjust event.
Antinous sat there and Eurymachus,
Chief of the train, in arms most excellent;
To whom Noemon, child of Phronius,
Came near, and to Antinous spake, inquiring thus:

79
"Know we or not, Antinous, when shall wend
Telemachus from sandy Pylos? He
Sailed in my ship. Now must I needs descend
Therein to wide-wayed Elis, which for me
Feedstwelve brood-mares, and eke twelve foalsthere be,
Unbroken mules; one would I break." But they
Stared, never dreaming such event to see.
Either, they thought, he tarrieth day by day
Here with his flocks, or in the swineherd's house doth stay.

80
Him then Antinous answered: "Tell me true.
When did he hence depart, and with what train?
Ithaca's choice ones, or were serfs his crew?
Or sailed he with his slaves across the main?
Not even that would he attempt in vain.
And did he force thee, or entreating sue?"
To him the son of Phronius spake again:
"Freely I gave. What else could a man do,
Pressed by such friend, weighed down with cares not light nor few?"
81

"And, next to us, the choicest of the land
Went with him, brave young men, large-hearted, tall.
Chiepest I viewed embarking from our strand
Mentor, or even a god; yet seemed he all
Like Mentor. Wonder on my soul doth fall.
For mine own eyes beheld but yestermorn
The noble Mentor in our capital,
Who then on shipboard was to Pylos borne."
So to his father's house. But wonder, rage, and scorn

82

The manly spirit of those twain did take.
Bidding the suitors pause amid their play,
Antinous in mid session thus outspake,
While through his eyes the inward wrath made way,
So that they flamed like fire: "Ye gods, this day
Telemachus hath wrought a work of might,
Which late we boasted he should ne'er essay.
Yes, he hath launched a black ship in despite
Even of us, so many, and is gone outright.

83

"And, after us, the choicest of the land
Went with him; thus our wrongs are but begun.
Great Zeus, unnerving his vile heart and hand,
Grind out his life, ere that revenge be won
Which he far off deviseth to have done!
Let me take ship with twenty men, and wait
In secret ambush which he cannot shun,
'Twixt Ithaca and Samos in the strait,—
That he this bootless toil mourn miserably too late."
Then all, consenting to the word, withdrew
And to the palace of Odysseus went.
Also the good Penelope soon knew
The sullen mutterings of their fierce intent;
For Medon marked outside the whole event,
They weaving in the court unrighteous fate.
Swift to Penelope his course he bent
With purpose to unfold their dire debate.
As he the threshold passed the queen addressed him straight:

"What brings thee, herald, thee, the pioneer
Of these imperious suitors? Do they send
To bid the servants of my husband dear
Of their appointed task-work to make end,
And on their lordly revelries attend?
Never elsewhere may they survive to meet!
Here in these halls, while our estate they rend,
May they their latest and their last now eat,
Who thus with outrage foul Telemachus entreat!

"Ye to your parents heedful ear lend none,
Nor hearken how Odysseus lived of yore,
And no unrighteousness hath said nor done.
Such is the use of monarchs evermore,
This one to love, that hate; but none the more
Wrought he this folly in the land, I ween,
Evil on any undeserved to pour.
But your unworthier works are clearly seen.
No gratitude, alas! no shame doth intervene."
87
Her the sage herald Medon straight addressed:
"Ah! would, my queen, that thou the worst hadst said!
For now the suitors scheme within their breast
Evil designs far deeper and more dread,
Whereon Kronion no fulfilment shed!
Thy son returning o'er the ocean-brine
They with the sharp sword purpose to strike dead,
Who late, of his dear sire to find some sign,
For sacred Pylos sailed and Sparta the divine."

88
Therewith he ended, and her knees and heart
Quailed; on her lips a wordless stupor strook;
While from her eyelids twain the tears did start
Streaming, and voice long time her throat forsook.
Yet the sad silence at the last she broke:
"Why went my child? What need did him constrain
Swift ships, the horses of the sea, to yoke?
So wide, so far they sail the desert main—
Wished he not even his name should e'er be heard
again?"

89
To her sage-hearted Medon answering said:
"Whether some god inspired his mind to go,
Or his own yearnings him to Pylos led,
Thus of his father's fate the truth to know,
Whate'er it be, I have no skill to show."
He with these words departed; but the queen
Inly was drowned with heart-devouring woe;
Nor dared she, lest her sorrow should be seen,
Pause in her place, but passed, bewailing her sad teen,
90
On to her well-carved chamber, and sat down
Fast by the threshold of the door to weep.
And all about her whispering their low moan,
The handmaids, whomsoe’er the house did keep,
Both old and young, bewailed in pity deep.
Then the queen answered, finding no relief:
"Hear me, sweet friends! Olympian Zeus doth heap
On me, beyond my fellows, load of grief;
For, look you, first I lost that lion-hearted chief,

91
"My husband, for each manly virtue brave
Through Hellas and ’mid Argos widely known.
Yet had not all his merit strength to save.
Now am I quite forsaken of my own,
Twice am bereavèd, and yet more alone.
For thou, my child, (alas! I never heard),
’Mid whirling waters art for ever gone.
And ye, unkind, my slumbers never stirred,
Aye, though ye knew full well, never vouchsafed a word.

92
"Had I once dreamed that he was minded thus,
Then had he stayed or left his mother dead!
Go some one, call the aged Dolius,
My garden’s keeper, whom I hither led,
Gift of my father when I first was wed,
That he may hasten to the fields and find
Laertes, and unfold the tidings dread,
Who haply, weaving somewhat in his mind,
May turn these men with tears who his child’s death
designed."
93
Her Eurycleia, the dear nurse, addressed:
"Kill me, sweet love, with cruel sword or spear,
Yet shall no longer be the truth suppressed.
All this I knew and did his wants prepare,
Corn and sweet wine. Great oath he made me swear
Till the twelfth day to hide it, or till thou
Shouldst miss him, lest much grief thy beauty wear.
Wash thee, put on clean raiment, clear thy brow,
Haste to the upper chamber with thy maids, and vow

94
"Thy vows unto Athene, child of Zeus,
The Ægis-bearing Sire. She yet from bale
May save him. Spare fresh sorrows to induce
On one so old who finds enough to wail.
Good hope have I to see thy prayers prevail;
Nor can I think the blessed gods abhor
The old Arkeisiad line, to make it fail.
Some one among them shall the heavens restore
To wide-roofed houses yet, and broad lands, as of yore."

95
Thus she the sad queen's weeping did restrain,
Who, washed, and freshly in clean robes arrayed,
Passed to the upper chamber with her train,
And, sprinkling meal, thus to Athene prayed:
"Hearken, O Tireless Virgin, Zeus-born maid!
If here Odysseus, in the seasons gone,
Of ox or sheep choice offerings ever made,
Remember these things now, and save my son!
Make those hard-hearted fall, defeated and undone!"
96

Therewith she cried out; and the prayer was heard.
Loud rang the revel through the shadowy hall,
And one among the young men spake this word:
“Surely the queen her marriage festival
Prepares, nor knoweth her son's fated fall.”
So spake he, knowing not the things that were.
Then said Antinous: “'Ware rash speeches all,
Lest some one listening our designs declare.
Come let us rise in silence and our purpose dare.”

97

Then choosing twenty of their best he passed,
Girt with his trusty followers, to the shore.
Forthwith the ship they launch and plant the mast,
Set the white canvass and adjust each oar
Fast in the loops of leather, and all store
Of tackling, and provision for their need,
The servants bring. Far in the deep they moor
The good black ship, and straight embark with speed,
And take their evening meal, and watch till day recede.

98

But in the upper chamber lay the queen
Fasting for grief, not tasting drink nor meat,
Now dreaming his dark fall through doom unseen,
Now that her child their ambush would defeat.
Like as a lion, when the hunters meet
Around him, stares aghast with doubt and dread,
So lay the queen perplexed, till slumbers sweet
Through her worn soul a painless calm had shed,
And her o'er-wearied limbs sank loosening on the bed.
Then did Athene mould unto the life
A phantom like Iphthime form and face,
  Icarius' daughter and Eumelus' wife,
And sent it to Odysseus' dwelling-place,
Where slumbered, grieving in her queenly grace,
Penelope, to make an end of woe.
So the shade, entering in with soundless pace,
Gazed on the sleeper as she slept below,
And by the couch-head paused, and made these accents flow:

"Liest thou here, mine own Penelope,
With thy dear spirit drowned in pain and sleep?
The easy-living gods have pitied thee;
Not with their will dost thou lament and weep;
For yet thy son returneth o'er the deep;
He no offender to the gods doth seem."
While in her ear the silver accents creep,
She, stirring sweetly in the gates of dream,
Thus from her lips outpours the drowsy vocal stream:

"Why, sister, art thou here? Not thus of old
Thou camest, who so far away dost dwell.
Wouldst thou these pains end that my life enfold?
Know first my lion-hearted husband fell,
Whose praises far and wide through Argos swell;
And now my child in hollow bark is gone,
Ah! foolish child! who knew not labours well,
And life in public hath experienced none.
Less for the other now than him do I make moan.
I shudder lest some evil on him sweep,
Either amid the people of the land
Whither he wends, or in the dangerous deep.
For many foemen his return withstand,
Seeking to slay him ere he reach our strand.”
And her in answer the blind shade addressed:
“Calm now thy fears, thy fainting heart command,
For such a safeguard on thy son doth rest,
As many a man desires his own life to invest,

For she is able and hath strength to save,
Pallas Athene. She hath heard thy cry,
And to my care but now this message gave,
To help thee fallen in perplexity.”
To her the queen wise-hearted made reply:
“Hast hearkened speaking in the homes on high,
Say if the sunlight on that dear one shine,
Or Hades' house enfold him overcome with tyne?”

To her in answer spake the phantom blind:
“Whether he live or die I may not tell;
But words like these are idle as the wind.”
So past the pillar like a shade she fell,
By staple of the door out-gliding well,
And altogether melted into air.
Then the queen, starting from her dreamy spell,
Felt her soul warm within her and void of care,
Who in the night's dead hours had seen a dream so clear.
Meanwhile the suitors on their watery way
Passed sailing, and were scheming in their breast
Hands of swift murder on the prince to lay.—
Rock-hung, in the dividing deep doth rest,
Midway between rough Same's towering crest
And Ithaca, the island Asteris,
Not large, yet hath it haven of the best
And on both sides approachable. In this
Lurked the Achaian band, nor feared their prey to miss.
BOOK V.

THE BUILDING OF THE SHIP—ODYSSEUS LEAVES CALYPSO
AND IS WRECKED—ARRIVES AT SCHERIA.
BOOK V.

I
Leaving the grand Tithonus, rose up then
Dawn from her couch, sweet minister of light
To everlasting gods and mortal men.
Soon came the gods to council. In full sight
Sat the Lord Zeus who thunders in the height;
Nor one was counted in that heavenly train
But unto him must yield in kingly might;
And there Athene all Odysseus' pain
Told—for she ne'er forgot him pent in the deep main:

2
"O father Zeus, and ye immortals blest,
Let none hereafter of the race of kings
Be just, or gentle-souled within his breast,
But hard, a worker of unequal things!
Since in his own land no kind memory clings
To the divine Odysseus, who bore sway
Mild as a father. Him keen sorrow stings
In nymph Calypso's mansion night and day;
She from his island-bourne still holds him far away.
3

"No ships hath he fair-oared and comrades none
To waft him o'er the broad back of the sea.
Now, too, they yearn to kill his only son
Homeward returning; for to Pylos he
And Lacedæmon is gone forth, to see
If any rumour of his sire remain,
Whether he view the sun or lifeless be."
Then to his child's appeal, urged not in vain,
The cloud-compelling Zeus in answer spake again:

4

"What word the bulwark of thy lips, dear child,
Hath passed? for didst thou not thyself invent
This counsel, that the suitors, self-beguiled,
Might from Odysseus, in the last event,
Reap, when he comes, their crime's due punishment?
Thou then Telemachus escort with care;
Art thou not able? With thy sole consent
Back to his fatherland he safe shall fare,
While in their ships all foiled the suitors home repair."

5

He ended, and to Hermes turned and said:
"Thou, Hermes, still our loyal messenger
Whate'er the work requiring to be sped,
Go to the fair-haired nymph, and tell to her
Our counsel, firm and fast, which cannot err.
Odysseus must return, yet not with guide
Divine or human, so the Fates aver.
He on a bark, compactly built, must ride,
Cumbered with griefs, alone, across the ocean wide."
6

"So he to Scheria on the twentieth day,
Land of Phæacians, god-related race,
Comes, reverenced like a god—who on his way
In swift ship to his native land apace
Shall send him, crowned with all beseeming grace,
With raiment, brass, and gold beyond his share
Of spoil, had he returned unto his place
Scaetheless from Troy. Not else can he repair
To fatherland and friends and well-roofed mansion fair."

7

So spake he, nor did Hermes aught withhold.
He nimbly underneath his feet made fast
Fair-shining sandals of ambrosial gold,
Wherewith the wide sea, with the blowing blast,
And land unmeasured he of old hath passed;
Then took the wand which can men’s eyes subdue,
Whomso he listeth in long sleep to cast,
And sleeping wake to breathe and feel anew—
This holding in his hand the Slayer of Argus flew.

8

He on Pieria pitched, and in the sea
Shot from the ether. Him the waves upbore
Like to some bird that on the watch for prey
Searches the barren sea-gulfs o’er and o’er,
And dips her feathers in the ocean hoar.
So Hermes through the yielding waters drave
Till the nymph’s island rose his eyes before.
Gladly he came forth from the dark-blue wave,
And through the land walked on, and came to a great cave.
9
There dwelt the fair-haired nymph, and her he found
Within. Bright flames, that on the hearth did play,
Fragrance of burning cedar breathed around,
And fume of incense wafted every way.
There her melodious voice the livelong day,
Timing the golden shuttle, rose and fell.
And round the cave a leafy wood there lay,
Where green trees waved o'er many a shady dell,
Alder and poplar black and cypress sweet of smell.

10
Thither the long-winged birds retired to sleep,
Falcon and owl and sea-crow loud of tongue,
Who plies her business in the watery deep;
And round the hollow cave her tendrils flung
A healthy vine, with purpling clusters hung;
And fountains four, in even order set,
Near one another, from the stone out-sprung,
Streaming four ways their crystal-showery jet
Through meads of parsley soft and breathing violet.

11
So that a god, if any came that way,
For wonder, admiration, and delight
Would stand agaze, as Hermes gazed that day;
Who, having satisfied his soul with sight,
Moved where the broad cave did his steps invite.
Nor did Calypso, nymph divine, I trow,
His features or his form not read aright.
For never do the gods—not even though
Asunder far they dwell—each other fail to know.
But he, large-hearted one, Odysseus brave,
Within was found not. He sat weeping sore
Hard by the breakings of the barren wave,
Where he did oft afflict his soul before,
And through the floods unfruitful evermore
Yearned a set gaze with many a tear and groan,
Heart-broken captive on a hated shore.
Then nymph Calypso in celestial tone
Spake, making Hermes rest upon a glittering throne:

"Why, golden-wanded Hermes, friend revered,
Com'st thou—not wont of old to visit me?
Show me thy mind, that, when my ears have heard,
Thou the fulfilment of thy thought mayst see,
If I be able, and the Fates agree."
So did she speak and on a table set
Ambrosia, and red nectar mixed, and he
There to his heart's full pleasure drank and ate,
And at the last with words her question answering met:

"Of me a god thou goddess dost enquire,
And I clear answer in all truth will grant.
Know then it was not at my own desire
Zeus sent me hither, the gods' pursuivant.
For who the salt waves wild and resonant
Of choice would stem? In all that barren round
No mortal men their habitations plant
Nor to the gods rich hecatombs abound.
But who the mind of Zeus can gainsay or confound?"
"Hath he not said that with thee here doth dwell
One who is cumbered with exceeding woe,
Of those who round old Priam's citadel
Fought in the Argive armies long ago,
Nine years, and in the tenth did overthrow
And sack the Ilian town, then homeward went.
But they returning over ocean's flow
Offended Pallas, who, her dire intent
Wreaking, disastrous gales and wild sea-tossings sent.

"Now him, bereaved of his companions brave,
Water and wind unto thy shore have led,
And thou must send him o'er the salt sea-wave;
For Zeus will have this matter quickly sped;
Since by high fate the man must not fall dead
Far from his friends—whom yet his eyes shall see
In the dear land where he was born and bred."
So did he speak, but inly shuddered she,
And him with winged words assailed right bitterly:

"Hard are ye gods, and envious above all,
Who grudge that goddesses should mortals know,
And heroes of the earth their husbands call.
Thus did the rosy-fingered Dawn bestow
Love on the fair Orion long ago;
But ye, the easy-living gods, took fire,
And virgin Artemis with silver bow
And gentle arrows did his life require;
So came a bitter end on their too fond desire."
18

"So when Demeter loved Iasion
And yielded to her love, and with him lay
Couched in the thrice-worked fallows, Zeus anon,
Hearing far whispers of their amorous play,
Him with a white-flamed thunderbolt did slay.
And now ye deathless ones disdain that I
Live with a man, whom dangerously astray
Horsed on a keel I found 'mid billows high,
When the white fire of Zeus his ship clave utterly.

19

"Him did I love, him cherish, yea and thought
To make him deathless, young eternally.
But who the mind of Zeus can set at nought?
Hence let him go then, if it so must be,
O'er the salt floods—but not with help of me.
No bark have I, no comrades at command,
To send him o'er the broad back of the sea.
Yet will I firm to this engagement stand,
And urge him to sail hence, unscathed, to his own land."

20

She ended, and to her Heaven's pursuivant,
Killer of Argus, Hermes, made reply:
"Thou by all means his quick departure grant,
Lest Zeus perchance feel anger by-and-by."
So spake the Argus-slayer and thence did fly.
But to Odysseus, when she heard that speech,
Went nymph Calypso, musing heavily,
And found him gazing o'er the long sea-reach,
Sitting with eyelids wet upon the barren beach.
21

There daily did his sweet life waste away
Feeding a hopeless sorrow. He by night
Unwilling fare by willing leman lay.
No more the nymph seemed pleasing in his sight.
Companion of the rocks the livelong light
He dreaming on the shore, but not at rest,
With groans and tears and lingering undelight
Gazed on the pulses of the ocean's breast.
Him now advancing near the nymph divine addressed:

22

"Weep no more, luckless hero, weep no more,
Nor always thus consume thy life with pain.
Now will I send thee from this island-shore
Back to thy country o'er the watery plain.
Come thou and fall unto thy task amain.
Fell trees; with iron a broad craft prepare,
Made strongly to withstand the billows' strain,
And fix thwart timbers for the deck with care,
Which o'er the cloud-dark billows may thee safely bear.

23

"I corn and water and red wine will place
Therein, good store, thy famine-pangs to quell,
And eke thy form with brave apparel grace,
And with fair breezes waft thee onward well,
Which to thy fatherland shall safe impel
The good bark scatheless, if the gods assent,
Who in the wide-realmed heaven securely dwell;
For it is theirs to judge of each event,
Their strength is more than mine to forward or prevent."
24
So did she speak, but inly shuddered he,
And in winged words the nymph divine addressed:
"How can a weak raft measure the great sea?
Some fraud thou art preparing in thy breast.
This is a hard thing. Even sore distrest
They sail who in the wind of Zeus rejoice.
Hardly they land with many woes oppressed.
Swear (for I will not sail without thy choice)
That no strange evil lurks in thy too friendly voice."

25
He ended, and Calypso, nymph divine,
Caressed him with her hand and smiled and said:
"O versed in wiles, with temper filed too fine,
Still thy wit plays, nor is thy cunning dead.
Yet may the Heaven that bendeth overhead,
Earth, and that dark stream, rolling evermore,
The great oath Styx, which even immortals dread,
Know that I mean no guile in my heart's core,
But for thy use I plan whate'er I should explore

26
"For mine own comfort in the hour of need,
Since in me dwells a soul that loveth right,
One that is merciful in word and deed;
No iron heart within my breast is pight."
So she departed and the sorrowing knight
Went after, till they came unto the cave.
There sat Odysseus on the throne so bright
Whence Hermes rose. To him the goddess gave
Such store to eat and drink as mortals use to have.
27
Fronting Odysseus she sat down to meat.
Forthwith the serving-maids themselves bestir,
And liquid nectar and ambrosia sweet
Quickly to the divine nymph minister.
They twain, the goddess and her mortal fere,
Stretch forth their hands upon the viands spread,
Nor the good banquet any more defer.
So when desire of meat and drink had fled,
Thus the celestial nymph to sage Odysseus said:

28
"Child of Laertes, wouldst thou fain depart
Hence to thine own dear fatherland? Farewell!
Yet, couldst thou read the sorrow and the smart,
With me in immortality to dwell
Thou wouldst rejoice, and love my mansion well.
Deeply and long thou yearnest for thy wife;
Yet her in beauty I perchance excel.
Beseems not one who hath but mortal life
With forms of deathless mould to challenge a vain strife."

29
To whom the wise Odysseus answering spake:
"O nymph Calypso much revered, cease now
From anger, nor be wroth for my wife's sake.
All this I know and do myself avow.
Well may Penelope in form and brow
And stature seem inferior far to thee,
For she is mortal, and immortal thou.
Yet even thus 'tis very dear to me
My long-desired return and ancient home to see."
“But if some god amid the wine-dark flood
With doom pursue me, and my vessel mar,
Then will I bear it as a brave man should.
Not the first time I suffer. Wave and war
Deep in my life have graven many a scar.
Let this be numbered with the labours gone!”
He ended, and came up the evening star.
They to the hollow cave’s recess moved on,
And steeped their souls in love, night-shrouded and alone.

But when the Dawn with rosy fingers drew
Night’s curtain, in soft tunic well bedight,
And robed in flowing vesture fair to view,
Went forth Odysseus with the morning light.
She too, the nymph, in mantle silver-white,
Rich, fine of texture, did herself array,
And, with gold zone about her gleaming bright,
And veil upon her head, passed on her way,
For that large-hearted knight safe-conduct to essay.

She then an axe of huge dimensions gave,
On both sides bladed, steel of temper fine,
Into the strong clasp of Odysseus brave,
Beautiful, helved with olive, work divine,
And well-curved hatchet, whose metallic shine
Lightened afar. Anon the way she led
To the isle’s margin, where the soaring pine,
Alder, and poplar black, were thickly spread,
Fitted to float with ease—sapless long since and dead.
33
So having shown him where the wood grew tall,
Calypso, nymph divine, returning went
Homeward. But he the forest-trees made fall,
Eager to reap his work's accomplishment.
Nor did his vigour from the task relent
Till twenty he had felled, and each with care
Meted and planed. Then nymph Calypso lent
Augers, and he the pierced planks fitted fair,
And with firm bolts and joints the good ship did prepare.

34
As is the wide-walled compass which a man
Makes for a merchant-craft which he doth build,
Such for his broad bark did Odysseus plan,
And set the upright ribs, and sockets drilled
For thwart deck-timbers, and the space unfilled
With horizontal planks did overlay,
And planted the tall mast with art well skilled,
And to its place the sail-yard did convey,
And shaped the rudder well to rule her onward way.

35
Also an osier bulwark woven deep
To breast the dashings of the angry tide,
That he securely through the waves might sweep,
He wrought; and ballast for the ship supplied.
Divine Calypso linen did provide
For sails, which he contriving not in vain
Well fashioned, and each rope and cable tied,
Bound down the strong sheets, fit for every strain,
And launched the ship with levers on the noble main.
36
'Twas the fourth day, and all his task was o'er.
Him on the fifth Calypso, nymph divine,
Robed in sweet raiment, culled from her own store,
And bathed, and to his good bark did consign.
Two skins, one filled with water, one with wine,
She gave him, and a wallet stored with meat,
And in his wake along the rippling brine
Breathed a warm wind, exceeding soft and sweet,
Which with spread sails Odysseus did right gladly greet.

37
He sitting wielded the good helm aright,
Nor on his eyelids slumber cast her pall.
He on the silver Pleiades all night
Gazed, and Boötes, which so late doth fall,
And the bright Arctus, which the Wain they call,
Close to him wheeling, on the watch to find
Orion. She alone among them all
Bathes not in Ocean. Thus the nymph assigned
His course, with starry Arctus on the left, to wind.

38
Ten days and seven he sailed the watery plain.
And on the eighteenth to his eye revealed
Loomed shadowy elevation in the main,
Even the Phæacian isle, which in the field
Of cloud-swept water shone like a great shield.
Wending from Æthiopia's festal rest,
Him from the hills of Solyma beheld
Poseidon, and deep anger fired his breast;
He fiercely waved his locks, and his own soul addressed:
39

"By Heaven, the other gods have surely planned
New things about Odysseus while I stayed
Far-dreaming in the Æthiopian land.
Wellnigh to the Phæacians hath he made
Good access, where fate wills that he evade
His labours, and dire accident forego—
Which yet once more shall on his life be laid—
Yea, by myself I swear that even so
He, ere that hour arrive, shall sate his soul with woe."

40

Therewith the clouds he marshalled, and the wave
Smote with his trident, stirring the wild deep,
And loosed the blasts of all the winds that rave.
O'er earth and main he bade the dark clouds sweep;
And Night came rushing from heaven's stormy steep.
Fiercely the sky-born North, South, East, and West,
Blow their wild chorus, and the rough waves leap
In thunder. Then Odysseus' knees and breast
Were loosened, and he thus his noble heart addressed:

41

"Ay me, forlorn! what evil yet remains?
I shudder lest in all things she spake true,
Who told me of innumerable pains
Here in the gloomy deep to be gone through,
Ere yet these eyes my fatherland could view.
These things march on to their accomplishment.
For Zeus with clouds doth veil the heaven and brew
Storms in the main, and warring winds hath blent
Together, and for me this dire confusion sent."
"O thrice and four times were those Danai blest,
Killed in the wide-wayed Troia far away,
Who served the Atridæ and are now at rest!
Would God that I had fallen on that day
When round the son of Peleus, where he lay
Dead, the fierce Trojans hurled their iron rain!
Then all the Achaian host had joined to pay
Fame and the funeral rites to me thus slain,
Who now in death's vile toils ingloriously am ta'en."

Even as he spoke a mighty wave uncurled
Downward, around him, with a hideous leap.
He from the torn deck violently hurled,
Nor able in his clasp the helm to keep,
Fell at a distance in the swirling deep;
And the fierce hurricane split the groaning mast.
For mingled in a wild convulsive sweep
Madly the universal winds rushed past,
And in the foaming flood canvass and sail-yard cast.

Long time he lay submerged in the great wave,
Nor could recover from the ruinous stroke,
Encumbered with the robes Calypso gave;
Yet from the dark depths at the last upbroke,
Sputtering the salt sea-water, nigh to choke.
Nor even then did he forget the ship
In the wild buffetings whereto he woke,
But struggling clutched it with an iron grip,
And the bark clomb, and sat hoping Death's toils to slip.
THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER. [BOOK V.

45

Her all the while the mighty waves o'erpower,
And whirl in dire distraction to and fro.
As when the north wind, in autumnal hour,
O'er the wide champaign thistle-down doth blow,
Clinging together as it can, even so
Dashed by the winds she drifted here and there
In the mid billows. Now did Notus throw
The bark to Boreas; nor did Eurus spare
His ire, then spued her forth for Zephyrus to tear.

46

Him the fair-ankled Ino soon espied,
Leucothea, child of Cadmus, whilome known
Mortal with mortal voice, who now doth bide
Housed in the deep sea-chambers, and doth own
Like glory with the gods. Him all alone
Wandering, welmed with anguish, she did mark;
Anon like sea-bird from the seas hath flown,
And fluttering lighted on the well-built bark.
She then to him made speech amid the waters dark:

47

"O wretched man! why doth Poseidon rave,
Shaker of Earth, with such wild violence
Against thee? In his wrath these woes he gave;
Yet full destruction can he not dispense.
Fail not in this, (thou seemest to have sense):
Strip off thy garments; let the vessel drive;
Thou with thy hands establish thy defence
By swimming; nor one moment cease to strive
Till on Phæacian soil thy wearied limbs arrive.
48

"There shall thine anguish cease; but take this veil
Celestial; bind it on thy breast; no fear
That with such talisman thy life should fail.
Only remember when thou landest there
Far from the shore to hurl it in the mere;
Then hold thyself aloof."  Therewith she gave
The veil, and did like sea-bird disappear
Under the surgings of the wine-dark wave.
But grieved Odysseus thus bespake his spirit brave:

49

"Ay me! some daughter of the immortals weaved
This wile, to bid me from my bark descend.
Yet will I bear up, for I late perceived
That land where she averred my labours end.
This will I do, destruction to forefend.
Here, while these planks the rolling flood sustain,
I will hold on; but should the rough sea rend
Their joinings, no more will I pause in vain,
But for my life swim forth.  Nought better doth remain."

50

These things while he revolved Poseidon hurled
A dread wave arched, and smote him.  Like a heap
Of dry husks, 'mid the windy eddyings whirled,
This way and that were driven along the deep
The torn ship-timbers.  Him the flood did sweep
Horsed on a spar.  The robes Calypso gave
He then stripped off, and with a headlong leap
Plunged in the waters, and like swimmer brave
Spread forth his hands to swim, his grief-spent soul to
save.
51
And the Earth-shaker saw him, and his head
Shook, and in wingèd words his soul addressed:
"Go now, with many pains discomfited,
Stem the vague floods with thy sea-beaten breast,
Till with a race Zeus-nurtured thou find rest.
Nor shalt thou even thus, for quarrel, blame
Thy fortune, wishing to be more distrest."
Therewith he lashed the long-maned steeds, and came
To Ægæ, where doth stand his house of noble name.

52
Forthwith new things Athene, child of Zeus,
Planned, and the courses of the winds bound fast,
And bade them pausing their wild wrath reduce,
And sleep, save only the frore-sweeping blast
Of Boreas. He along the billows passed
And brake them, wielding the tumultuous main,
Till the Zeus-born Odysseus at the last
From Death deliverance and the Fates should gain,
And to the sea-skilled race Phæacian safe attain.

53
Two nights and days in that tumultuous swell
He wandered. Often did his heart forebode
Utter extinction in the yawning hell.
But when the fair-haired Dawn arising glowed,
And in the eastern heaven the third light showed,
Came a calm-deepening day, windless and clear.
Then, while Odysseus on a tall wave rode,
And his keen eyes along the heaving mere
Stretched in extreme desire, he saw the land rise near.
54
As when a father, on the point to die,
Who for long time in sore disease hath lain,
By the strong fates tormented heavily
Till the pulse faileth for exceeding pain,
Feels the life stirring in his bones again,
While glad at heart his children smile around,
He also smiles—the gods have loosed his chain,—
So welcome seemed the land, with forest crowned,
And he rejoicing swam, and yearned to feel the ground.

55
But now, within a voice-throw of the rocks,
The sound of waters did his ears appal.
Full on the coast the great waves' thunder-shocks
Roll, and afar the wet foam-vapours fall.
No roadstead there, no haven seemed at all,
Nor shelter where a ship might rest at ease;
But from the main-earth darted a wild wall
Of headlands. Then Odysseus' heart and knees
Were loosened; and his soul thus spake in the deep seas:

56
"Ay me! Zeus gives me to behold firm ground
Unhoped-for, and salvation seem to reap.
Yet from the white waves no escape is found.
These sheer rock-bulwarks, and a raging sweep
Of waters, the dear spoil encompass deep.
Deep to the very edge the sea doth flow.
How can I learn to clamber that gaunt steep?
Ere I my feet could plant, evading woe,
Me on the rocks' sharp spires the ravening wave will throw.
57
"And should I swim till I some haven find,
Or mild declivity of shelving shore,
I shudder lest again the hurtling wind,
Loosed in the heavens, impel me groaning sore
To that fish-teeming desert where I bore
Such woes, or a sea-monster track my path,
Urged by the power that dooms me evermore;
Many such monsters Amphitrite hath;
Oft have I known right well the great Earth-shaker's
wrath."

58
While thoughts like these about his mind were tost,
Came a great wave, and he was onward driven
Full on the splinters of the broken coast.
Then from his limbs had all the flesh been riven,
And his bones peeled and crushed, but that kind Heaven
Into his mind a timely counsel cast,
This sole salvation by Athene given—
Clasping the rock with both hands he clung fast,
Groaning, until the wave's huge flood was overpast.

59
Thus he this bale avoided, but again
The wave, retiring with the ebb, did bear
Him backward, sucked into the tumbling main.
As when the slow sea-polypus doth fare
Forth from the gloom-bound chambers of his lair,
And the thick pebbles to his feelers grow;
So to the rocks his fingers, and were there
Peeled to the quick. He whelmed in the far sea-flow
Had perished, but that Pallas made him wise in woe.
He from the echoing breakers swam right fain,
Skirting the coast, if chance his eyes explore
Or far or near some haven of the main,
Or mild declivity of shelving shore.
But when he came the river's mouth before,
And his gaze rested on the long white gleam,
By rocks unchafed and windless evermore,
Here to his thought best landing-place did seem,
And in his soul he prayed, feeling the calm sweet stream:

"Lord of the river, whoso'er thou be,
End of unnumbered supplications, hear
One who the dark Poseidon's anger flee!
For even the immortal gods hold dear
The wandering stranger, and his woes revere.
I to thy river and thy knees come now,
Tired with long labours and exceeding fear;
Deign in thy royal pity to allow
Grace to these prayers, which me thy suppliant thus avow."

He ended, and the stream-god checked the wave,
And smoothed a level calm, nor made delay
Into the river's outflow him to save.
Then could the knees and hands no more essay
Their office—then the sea-worn heart gave way.
And all his flesh swelled, and the salt waves still
Gurgled in mouth and nostrils, as he lay
Stunned in the river, void of strength and will,
Sore-laboured, breathless, voiceless, overwhelmed with ill.
63
But when his spirit had revived anew,
Then he the veil celestial straight unbound,
Which in the seaward-flowing stream he threw.
Onward it drifted o'er the rippling sound,
With quick tide floating to the seas profound,
By Ino soon in friendly fingers pressed.
He, turning, sank down on the welcome ground,
Couched in the rushes, and the boon earth's breast
Kissed, and in anguish deep his noble heart addressed:

64
"Ay me! what evils must I yet go through?
How will they end? If here I pass the night,
I fear lest haply the life-showering dew,
Mixed with keen hoar-frost, overcome me quite,
Sadly forth-gasping my enfeebled sprite—
And before dawn the river-wind blows chill;
Or should the wooded slope soft rest invite,
And the dire shiverings of fatigue be still,
I shudder lest the maw of some wild beast I fill."

65
Thus while he pondered in his mind, this way
Seemed in the issue better fraught with gain.
He to the forest made ascent, which lay
A little from the water, beacon plain.
There from a single stem grew olives twain,
One fruitful and one wild, implæchéd deep,
Whose shade no moist wind pierced nor sun nor rain.
Under their branches did Odysseus creep,
And a broad couch of leaves with vehement hands did heap.
66
For leaves enough to shelter two or three,
Even in severe mid-winter, there were found.
Such couch Odysseus was right glad to see,
And he, reclining, piled the leaves well round.
As some lone dweller on a distant ground
Hoard's up the seed of fire in embers dead,
Wind-proof, Odysseus underneath the mound
Of leaves lay warm, and o'er his weary head
Athene all night long pain-healing slumber shed.
BOOK VI.

ODYSSEUS SUPPLICAES NAUSICAA, THE DAUGHTER
OF ALCINOUS.
BOOK VI.

I

Him toil and sleep weighed down. Athene sought
The race Phæacian, who in time of yore
Held Hypereia, whom the rude untaught
Cyclopes harrying chased from their own shore.
Them far from traders prince Nausithous bore
To Scheria. Houses, fanes, a castled town
He builded, parcelling lands to rich and poor.
He, tamed by Fate, to Hades' house went down;
Now god-inspired Alcinous held the kingly crown.

II

So to the halls of the Phæacian chief
Passed the stern-eyed Athene; yea, and went,
Framing the dear return, the end of grief,
For brave Odysseus, to the chamber sprent
With carvings, flowered with dædal ornament,
Wherein the daughter of the house did lie
Sleeping upon a couch magnificent,
Nausicaa blooming in virginity,
Who with celestial forms in loveliness might vie.
Near to the princess two handmaidens slept,
Loved by the Graces, a right beauteous pair,
Couched on each side the gleaming doors. Thence swept
Athene, fleet as unsubstantial air,
And by the pillow of the virgin fair
Paused, like the child of ship-famed Dymas seen,
Equal in age, and her companion dear.
Such seemed the goddess both in form and mien,
And with these words addressed the daughter of the queen:

"Nausicaa, wherefore did thy mother bear
Child so forgetful? This long while doth rest
Like lumber in the house much raiment fair.
Soon must thou wed and be thyself well drest,
And find thy bridegroom raiment of the best.
These are the things whence good repute is born,
And praises that make glad a parent’s breast.
Come, let us both go washing with the morn,
So shalt thou soon have clothes becoming to be worn.

"Know thy virginity is not for long,
Whom the Phaeacian chiefs already woo,
Lords of the land whence thou thyself art sprung.
Soon as the shining Dawn comes forth anew,
For wain and mules thy noble father sue,
Which to the place of washing shall convey
Girdles and robes and rugs of splendid hue.
This for thyself were better than essay
Thither to walk—the place is distant a long way."
6

Forthwith, her rede delivered, the Stern-eyed
Did to the mansions of Olympus go.
There, as they tell, the gods securely bide
In regions where the rough winds never blow,
Unvisited by mist or rain or snow,
Veiled in a volant ether, ample, clear,
Swept by the silver light's perpetual flow;
Wherein the happy gods from year to year
Quaff pleasure. To those bowers Athene made repair.

7

Scarce had she gone when bright-throned Morning
 came;
And, rising from her couch magnificent,
Fair-robbed Nausicaa wondered at the dream,
And through the wide house to her parents went
Forthwith, her matter to make evident.
One by the hearth sat, with her maids around,
And on the skeins of yarn, sea-purpled, spent
Her morning toil. Him to the council bound,
Called by the lordly chiefs, just issuing forth she found.

8

Standing beside him, fondly thus she spake:
"Dear father, could you lend a waggon tall,
Fair-wheeled and well-equipped, that I may take
Robes to the stream and wash them? for they all
Lie lustreless, defiled within our hall.
Thee most of all beseemith in our state,
When the Phaeacian chiefs their council call,
Clothed in clean garments to attend debate.
Moreover five dear sons live here within thy gate,
"Two having wives, three in youth's flower unwed,  
Who in the choral dances would appear  
In clothes new-washed—this care is mine." So said  
Nausicaa, shamed to hint in her sire's ear  
Her marriage-hour. But he the fact saw clear,  
And answered: "Loan of mules will I concede,  
Or if aught else, dear child, thy heart may cheer.  
Go—a tall wain the servants for thy need,  
Fair-wheeled, with upper framework, shall equip with speed."

Forthwith the servants to his word obey,  
And for her use the rolling wain prepare,  
And yoke the mules with all the speed they may.  
Soon from her chamber the bright raiment fair  
Forth to the lustrous wain Nausicaa bare.  
And in a roomy chest her mother stored  
All kind of delicate food and viands rare,  
And eke sweet wine did plenteously afford,  
Which in a well-sewn goatskin for their use she poured.

Such needments she purveyed with eager toil,  
Till now the virgin-princess clomb the wain  
Fair-shining, and a golden cruise of oil  
Into her hands her mother gave right fain,  
Her to anoint and her attendant train.  
She then the reins took and the scourge did ply.  
Onward the mules loud-clattering trouled amain,  
As each his restless fellow would outvie,  
And robes and princess bore and all her company.
So when they came to the fair-flowing river,
Which feeds good lavatories all the year,
Fitted to cleanse all sullied robes soever,
They from the wain the mules unharnessed there,
And chased them, free to crop their juicy fare
By the swift river, on the margent green;
Then to the waters dark the vestments bare,
And in the stream-filled trenches stamped them clean,
Urging the welcome toil with emulation keen.

Which having washed and cleansed they spread before
The sunbeams, on the beach, where most did lie
Thick pebbles, by the sea-wave washed ashore.
So having left them in the heat to dry,
They to the bath went down, and by-and-by,
Rubbed with rich oil, their mid-day meal essay,
Couched on green turf, the river rolling nigh;
And thence, unveiling, they rise up to play,
While the white-armed Nausicaa leads the choral lay.

Such as adown the Erymanthian hill,
Or tall Taygetus, with arrows keen
Moves the fair Artemis, on chase to kill
Boars and the flying deer:—around their queen,
Daughters of Zeus, the rural nymphs, are seen
At pastime; (gladdening sight hath Leto there);
She by the face and forehead towers, I ween,
Right easy to be known, but all are fair—
So did that virgin pure amid her train appear.
15
But when she thought to yoke the mules and fold
The raiment, then Athene cast to wake
Odysseus, that the maid he might behold
Ere she returned, and following in her wake
To the Phaeacian town her guidance take.
Just then by a false aim she flung the ball
Far in the swirling river:—the maidens brake
Into a long loud scream, whose echoing call
Odysseus roused. He sitting thus debated all:

16
"Ay me! what mortal souls inhabit here?
Despíteful, wild, unjust?—or love they well
The stranger, and the immortal gods revere?
Surely but now the female cry did swell
Of virgin nymphs who in the mountains dwell,
Or haunt the cradles whence the rivers flow,
Or green slope of the fountain-trickling dell—
Am I with men that human language know?
Come, I will soon explore what cheer these coasts
estow."

17
Then from the olive-brake Odysseus came,
And from the forest, all around him spread,
Snapped a young shoot, thick-leaved, to veil his shame—
And as a lion on the mountains bred,
With rain and wind and hunger hard bested,
Goes, trusting in his strength, his eyes on fire,
Against the sheep and oxen making head,
Or rending the wild deer; yea, fierce desire
Drives him in quest of ravin, stung with the famine-fire,
Even a house well-builded to essay—
So to the fair-haired maidens would have gone
Odysseus—such sore need upon him lay—
Though naked, his dire anguish to make known.
But terror seized them when his form was shown,
Squalid with brine; and diverse ways they fled,
Hurrying along the bending banks. Alone
Stood firm Alcinous' child. Athene fed
Her soul with strength, and freed her tender limbs from
dread.

Him she stood fronting, while within his heart
Pondered Odysseus whether now to press
The virgin-knees and all his prayer impart,
Or if aloof he should the maid address
With gesture mild and voice of tenderness.
Seemed best her spirit from afar to prove
With gesture mild and voice of tenderness,
Lest the knees clasping he should anger move.
He in a smooth set speech to gain her heart thus strove:

"Queen, hear me—art thou of the earth or skies?
If of the deities in heaven that dwell,
To Artemis, the child of Zeus, in size
And form and beauty I thee liken well—
Or if of mortals who on earth excel,
Thrice fortunate thy mother and thy sire!
Thrice fortunate thy brothers! Haply swell
Their hearts when they behold in fair attire
Such scion of their house threading the mazy choir.
21
"But he more fortunate than all beside,
Who with rich gifts contending shall prevail
To win thy hand and lead thee home a bride.
No mortal form did ever these eyes hail,
How amiable soever, but would fail,
Or man or woman, to compare with thee;
Yea, as I gaze, much wonder makes me pale.
Such once in Delos-isle a young palm-tree,
Hard by Apollo's altar, I did chance to see.

22
"I thither also in my wanderings went,
By a large host attended, on a way
Fraught with deep loss and many a dark event;
But when this fair palm did its form display,
Gazing I paused long time, and on me lay
(Since never from the earth upsprang there such)
The same strange wonder that I feel to-day.
Lady, I reverence thee, and fear to touch
Thy knees—yet wounding griefs assail me overmuch.

23
"But yester-even, on the twentieth day,
I was delivered from the wine-dark deep.
Me all that time the waves and storms affray,
While from Ogygia's isle I onward sweep.
Now fortune hurls me hither—perchance to weep.
It cannot be the gods will hold their hand.
O queen, have mercy! To thee first I creep,
Broken with sorrow, and thy help demand.
No mortal else I know inhabiting this land.
24

"Show me the city, and some shred bestow
To shield my nakedness, if aught thou hast;
And unto thee the heavenly gods make flow
Whate'er of happiness thy mind forecast,
Husband and home and spirit-union fast!
Since nought is lovelier on the earth than this,
When in the house one-minded to the last
Dwell man and wife—a pain to foes, I wis,
And joy to friends—but most themselves know their
own bliss."

25

To whom Nausicca the white-armed replied:
"Stranger, who seemest neither vile nor vain,
Zeus both to good and evil doth divide
Wealth as he listeth. He perchance this pain
Appointed; thou thy sorrow must sustain.
But, since thou comest to our land and state,
Nor succour shalt thou lack, nor welcome fain,
Raiment, nor any comfort, small or great,
Such as doth aye behove on suppliant wretch to wait.

26

"Now to the city will I guidance give,
And in thy ears unfold this people's name.
Know the Phæacians in this land do live—
My father is Alcinous, first in fame,
Large-hearted, who the regal power doth claim,
And sways the sceptre of Phæacia's might."
She spake, and to her maidens cried: "For shame!
How then hath one man's form put you to flight!
Deem ye a wretch like this some trampler down of right?
"That mortal is not living, nor can be,
Who brings us sword and fire. Far off we dwell
Loved by the gods, and zoned by the deep sea;
Nor can men hitherward their barks impel.
Now comes this wanderer—let us treat him well;
All strangers and all poor by Zeus are sent,
And love can make a little gift excel.
Come, to this stranger food and drink present,
And in wind-sheltered stream lave ye his limbs sore-spent."

Thereat they standing each to other cried,
Then to wind-sheltered stream Odysseus brave
Led, and a robe and tunic at his side
Placed, and the golden cruise of oil they gave,
And bade him wash there, in the river’s wave.
Then said divine Odysseus: "Keep thus clear,
While I the salt brine from my shoulders lave,
And limbs anoint which oil long comes not near.
Shames me with fair-haired maidens naked to appear."

So spake he, and they passed aloof and told
The princess. But divine Odysseus there
In the clean stream dissolved the sea-scurf, rolled
In flakes about his shoulders, loins, and hair;
Then rubbed his skin with oil, and donned with care
The raiment. And behold! Athene shed
New grace, and made him ampler and more fair.
Hued like the hyacinth his locks dispread,
Streaming in loose array from his thrice glorious head.
30
As when some artist, fired with plastic thought,
Silver doth overlay with liquid gold,
One by Hephæstus and Athene taught
Fair-shining forms, instinct with love, to mould,
She thus his shoulders did with grace enfold
And glorious head. Then silent by the main
He, clothed in beauty, glistening to behold,
Sat—whom the princess marked with wonder fain,
And thus admiring spake amid the bright-haired train:

31
"White-armed attendants, hear and I will speak.
Not wholly hated by the gods, I trow,
This man to the Phæacian race doth seek.
To me he seemed a little while ago
Strange, formless, and uncouth, who now doth show
Like to the gods who in Olympus dwell.
Fain would I in our isle such husband know,
Or that to linger here might please him well!—
But come, set food and drink his famine-pangs to quell."

32
She ended, and they hearing straight obey,
And by divine much-toiled Odysseus set
Good sustenance, his hunger to allay,
And wine. He ravenously drank and ate—
Foodless long time, nor had his lips been wet
Save with the sea. White-armed Nausicaa fair
Folded each tunic, robe, and coverlet,
And stowed them in the wain and yoked the pair
Of mules hard-hooved, and thus bespake Odysseus there:
33

"Stranger, bestir thyself to seek the town,
That to my father's mansion I may lead
Thee following, there to meet the flower and crown
Of the Phæacian people. But take heed,
(Not senseless dost thou seem in word or deed)
While 'mid the fields and works of men we go,
After the mules, in the wain's track, to speed,
Girt with this virgin company, and lo!
I will myself drive first, and all the road will show.

34

"When we the city reach—a castled crown
Of wall encircles it from end to end,
And a fair haven, on each side the town,
Framed with fine entrance, doth our barks defend,
Which, where the terrace by the shore doth wend,
Line the long coast; to all and each large space,
Docks, and deep shelter, doth that haven lend;
There, paved with marble, our great market-place
Doth with its arms Poseidon's beauteous fane embrace.

35

"All instruments marine they fashion there,
Cordage and canvass and the tapering oar;
Since not for bow nor quiver do they care,
But masts and well-poised ships and naval store,
Wherewith the foam-white ocean they explore
Rejoicing. There I fear for my good name,
For in the land dwell babblers evermore,
Proud, supercilious, who might work me shame
Hereafter with sharp tongues of cavil and quick blame.
"Haply would ask some losel, meeting me,
'Where did she find this stranger tall and brave?
Who is it? He then will her husband be—
Perchance some far-off foreigner—whom the wave
(For none dwell near us) on our island dwelle.
Or have her long prayers made a god come down,
Whom all her life she shall for husband have?
Wisely she sought him, for she spurns our town,
Though wooed by many a chief of high worth and
renown.'

"So will they speak this slander to my shame;
Yea, if another made the like display,
Her I myself should be the first to blame,
If in the public streets she should essay
To mix with men before her marriage-day,
Against her father's and her mother's will.
Now, stranger, well remember what I say,
So mayst thou haply in good haste fulfil
Thy journey, with safe-conduct, by my father's will:—

"Hard by the road-side an illustrious grove,
Athene's, all of poplar, thou shalt find.
Through it a streaming rivulet doth rove,
And the rich meadow-lands around it wind.
There the estate lies, to my sire assigned,
There his fat vineyards—from the town so far
As a man's shout may travel. There reclined
Tarry such while, and thy approach debar,
Till we belike within my father's mansion are.
Then to the town Phæacian, and inquire
(Plain is the house, a child might be thy guide)
Where dwells Alcinous my large-hearted sire.
Not like the houses reared on every side
Stands that wherein Alcinous doth abide,
But easy to be known. But when the wall
And court enclose thee, with an eager stride
Move through the noble spaces of the hall,
And with firm eye seek out my mother first of all.

She in the firelight near the hearth doth twine,
Sitting, the purpled yarn; her maids are seen
Behind her; there my sire, enthroned, his wine
Quaffs like a god; both on the pillar lean.
Him passing urge thy supplication keen
My mother's knees encasing. If but she
Think kindness in her heart, good hope, I ween,
Remains, however far thy bourne may be,
That country, friends, and home thou yet shalt live to see."

She ended, and the mules with glittering lash
Plied, who soon leave the river in their rear.
Onward continuously their swift feet flash.
She like an understanding charioteer
Scourged them with judgment, and their course did steer
So to precede Odysseus and the rest.
And the sun fell and they the grove came near.
There on the earth sat down with anxious breast
Odysseus, and in prayer the child of Zeus addressed:
"Virgin, whose eyelids slumber not nor sleep,
Hear, child of Zeus! who in the time forepast
Heardest me not, when in the ruinous deep
Poseidon whirled me with his angry blast.
Let me find pity in this land at last!"
So prayed he, and Athene heard; but she
Not yet revealed herself in form; so vast
Loomed in her eyes her uncle's fierce decree
Against divine Odysseus, ere his land he see.
BOOK VII.

ALCINOUS AND ARETE ENTERTAIN ODYSSEUS.
BOOK VII.

1
There the much-toiled divine Odysseus prayed.
She onward passed to the Phaeacian town,
Drawn by the mules. But when the royal maid
Came to her father's halls of high renown,
She by the porch drew rein. Thither came down
Her brothers, circling her, a lucid ring;
They of Phaeacian youth the flower and crown,
Like gods to look at. Soon unharnessing
The mules, into the house the raiment clean they bring.

2
She to her chamber straight ascended. There
Eurymedusa old, the chamber-dame,
Kindled the fire—who o'er the ocean-mere
Borne in swift ships from land Apeira came,
Thenceforth assigned by right of regal claim
To king Alcinous, like a god revered
In his own land, the first in name and fame.
She in the halls white-armed Nausicaa reared,
And now the fire lit well, and sweet repast prepared.
3
'Twas then Odysseus toward the city bent
His steps. Athene in her friendly care
Rolled a thick mist around him as he went,
Lest of the citizens some scorners there
Should meet him, and assail with gibe and stare,
And urge rude question of his name and place.
Just at the entrance of the city fair
Pallas Athene met him face to face,
Pitcher in hand, and like a girl in years and grace.

4
Near him she stood, and he enquired anon:
"Would you, dear child, vouchsafe to be my guide
To king Alcinous' palace? I, undone
With perils, and in sore affliction tried,
Come hither, over seas exceeding wide,
From a far land; nor know I how to make
One friend among the folk that here reside,
Who might show mercy for a stranger's sake."
Whom the stern-eyed Athene answering thus bespoke:

5
"Father, the house thou seekest I well know,
For the king dwelleth near my blameless sire.
Hist, not a word!—and I the way will show.
Bend not thine eyes on any, nor aught enquire.
The people brook not strangers, nor aspire
To love the outlandish guest. Their trust is still
In the swift ships wherewith the deep they tire;
There hath Poseidon lent them wondrous skill;
Fleet as a wing their barks, or thought flashed from the
will."
6
This spoken, toward the mansion of the king
Pallas Athene with quick steps did fare,
He in the track divine still following.
Nor the ship-famed Phaeacians were aware
Of stranger in their mid streets pacing there.
For so Athene, bright-haired goddess dread,
Appointed to befall, who always bare
Goodwill within her breast toward him she led.
She round his stately form a mist divine now shed.

7
Much did Odysseus, as he passed, admire
The smooth wide havens, and the glorious fleet
Wherewith those mariners the great deep tire,
Yea, and the spaces where their heroes meet,
And the long lofty wondrous walls, complete
With bastion fair and towery palisade.
All these he viewed, till at the last his feet
She at the king’s illustrious mansion stayed.
Him then in words bespoke the stern-eyed goddess-maid:

8
“This is the palace which you bade me show.
Here the Zeus-nurtured princes sit reclined
Feasting; now enter, and all fear forego,
Since it is always on the bold in mind,
Strange though his stock, that fortune shines most kind.
Our lady queen (Arete is her name)
Sitting within the halls you first will find,
Sprung from a line of parentage, the same
With that wherefrom the king himself, Alcinous, came.
"First to Poseidon Periboia bare
Nausithous—she of brave Eurymedon
The youngest, and of women far most fair.
Her father once high sovereignty did own
O'er the proud race of Giants, and had sown
Storms of red ruin through the land; nor yet
Died in their crime the infatuate crowd alone;
He also fell; but her Poseidon met,
Loved, and Phaeacian king Nausithous did beget,

"And he Rhexenor and Alcinous. Lo!
The first new-wed, within his halls serene,
Shot by Apollo with his silver bow,
Died, and one child, a daughter, left, I ween,
Arete, whom Alcinous made his queen,
And loved and honoured, as no wives elsewhere,
Such as in these days on the earth are seen,
Find honour; yea, like reverence she doth bear
From children, house, and people as her rightful share.

"Oft as she walks along the stately street,
Her all the people like a goddess hail
Beholding, and with salutations greet,
Since of a noble mind she doth not fail.
Yea, where she list good kindness to entail,
Even of men the quarrels to unbind
Not seldom her well-tempered words avail.
Good hope then hast thou, so the queen be kind,
Thy high-roofed house and friends and fatherland to find,"
So the stern-eyed Athene spake to him,
Then leaving Scheria, lovely isle, anon,
The broad and barren ocean-fields did skim,
And moving o'er the plain of Marathon
And through the streets of Athens, wide-wayed town,
Entered Erectheus' well-built house at last.
Odysseus to Alcinous' halls paced on,
And in his breast his stormy heart beat fast,
He pausing, ere his feet the brazen threshold passed.

For, like the sun's fire or the moon's, a light
Far streaming through the high-roofed house did pass
From the long basement to the topmost height.
There on each side ran walls of flaming brass,
Zoned on the summit with a blue bright mass
Of cornice; and the doors were framed of gold;
Where, underneath, the brazen floor doth glass
Silver pilasters, which with grace uphold
Lintel of silver framed; the ring was burnished gold.

And dogs on each side of the doors there stand,
Silver and gold, the which in ancient day
Hephæstus wrought with cunning brain and hand,
And set for sentinels to hold the way.
Death cannot tame them, nor the years decay.
And from the shining threshold thrones were set,
Skirting the walls in lustrous long array,
On to the far room, where the women met,
With many a rich robe strewn and woven coverlet.
15
There the Phæacian chieftains eat and drink,
While golden youths on pedestals upbear
Each in his outstretched hand a lighted link,
Which nightly on the royal feast doth flare.
And in the house are fifty handmaids fair;
Some in the mill the yellow corn grind small;
Some ply the looms, and shuttles twirl, which there
Flash like the quivering leaves of aspen tall;
And from the close-spun weft the trickling oil will fall.

16
For as Phæacian men surpass in skill
All mortals that in earth's wide kingdoms dwell
Through the waste ocean, wheresoe'er they will,
The cleaving keel obedient to impel—
So far their women at the loom excel;
Since all brave handiwork and mental grace
Pallas Athene gave them to know well.
Outside the courtyard stretched a planted space
Of orchard, and a fence environed all the place.

17
There in full prime the orchard-trees grow tall,
Sweet fig, pomegranate, apple fruited fair,
Pear and the healthful olive. Each and all
Both summer droughts and chills of winter spare;
All the year round they flourish. Some the air
Of Zephyr warms to life, some doth mature.
Apple grows old on apple, pear on pear,
Fig follows fig, vintage doth vintage lure;
Thus the rich revolution doth for aye endure.
18
With well-sunned floor for drying, there is seen
The vineyard. Here the grapes they cull, there tread.
Here falls the blossom from the clusters green;
There the first blushings by the suns are shed.
Last, flowers for ever fadeless—bed by bed;
Two streams; one waters the whole garden fair;
One through the courtyard, near the house, is led;
Whereto with pitchers all the folk repair.
All these the god-sent gifts to king Alcinous were.

19
Standing, Odysseus gazed his fill, then passed
The entrance, and behold! the chieftains pour
Wine to the keen-eyed Argus-slayer, the last
Ere they retire for sleep. He onward bore,
Wrapt in Athene’s mist, and paused before
Arete and Alcinous. There the queen
He clasping by the knees crouched on the floor;
Then the mist melted, which did erewhile screen
His form, and all stood breathless when the man was
seen.

20
He suppliant spake: “Arete, at thy knees,
Before thy husband and thy guests, I bow,
Child of divine Rhe xenor! O to these
May Heaven grant glory in their lifetime now,
And children after them with wealth endow,
Heirs of the office which the people gave!
But ye kind issue to my prayers allow!
Ship to convey me to my home I crave,
Who, friendless many a year, grieve sore by land and wave.”
There he made end, and on the hearthstone sate
Amid the ashes, by the fire; but all
Silent and stirless in their places wait,
And a wide lull pervades the festival;
Till at the last among them in the hall
Spake hero Echeneüs; eldest he
Of the Pheacian chiefs, and therewithal
Gifted with words and grave authority—
He now, their firm well-wisher, spake advisingly:

"Alcinous, this is neither fair nor just
That suppliant stranger on thy hearthstone sit,
Low in the embers and defiled with dust.
All wait thy word, expecting what is fit.
Come to a silver throne our guest admit,
Then from the heralds mingled wine demand,
That to the Thunderer we may offer it,
Who by the awful suppliant still doth stand;
And let the house-dame bring what food she finds at hand."

When the divine strength of Alcinous heard,
He rose and took the stranger's hand anon,
Hand of Odysseus, proved in deed and word,
And made him rest upon a glittering throne,
Displacing brave Laodamas his son,
Who always sat there, at his father's side,
His best-beloved; and of the handmaids one
From golden urn, well-chased and beautified,
Over a silver basin poured the lustral tide,
24
And spread before him the well-polished board,
Whereon the staid house-dame provision set,
Whate'er of best the palace might afford.
So the divine Odysseus drank and ate;
Nor did the king Alcinous aught forget,
But turned him to the herald, and thus spake:
"Wine mix for all, Pontonous! Resteth yet
That we to Thunderer Zeus libations make,
Who still waits near at hand for awful suppliant's sake."

25
So he the wine mixed, and to each did bear.
When they had poured and drunk, Alcinous said:
"Hear me, Phæacian chiefs, while I declare
The meaning of my mind.—Hence now to bed;
And, with more elders hither summonèd,
To-morrow we our guest will entertain
Here in the halls, and sacrifices spread
Before the gods, and convoy o'er the main
Remember, that at last forgetting grief and pain,

26
"Hence to his native land, however far,
Safe in our guidance he may sail the sea
Rejoicing, and no danger may debar,
Nor midway onset of calamity,
His foot from landing. There high Destiny
Must rule her own, whose thought can no one scan;
And he must bear the doom and the decree
Which at his hour of birth the dark Fates span,
When first his mother knew that she had borne a man."
"But if that he descended from the skies,
Immortal offspring of immortal race,
Then do the gods some other scheme devise.
For oft the gods here meet us face to face,
Oft use our glorious hecatombs to grace,
And sitting feast, as we ourselves, at will;
Yea, if one find them in a lonely place,
No mask they wear; for we are near them still,
Like the Cyclopean race and Giants rude of skill."

But wary-wise Odysseus made reply:
"Alcinous, far be such a thought from me!
Not one like those who hold the realms on high
In form or feature dost thou chance to see,
But mortal, as on earth poor mortals be.
Yea, most my case may I with theirs compare,
Whom most ye know bowed down with misery.
'Twere all too long the vast sum to declare
Of sorrow, pain, and toil the gods have made me bear.

"But let me feed in peace, though sore distrest.
Nothing more shameless is than Appetite,
Who still, whatever anguish load our breast,
Makes us remember in our own despite
Both food and drink. Thus I, thrice wretched wight,
Carry of inward grief surpassing store,
Yet she constrains me with superior might,
Wipes clean away the memory-written score,
And takes whate'er I give, and taking craveth more.
30

"Ye with the morning in these halls convene,
And lend safe escort o'er the barren main;
Yea, let life leave me, when I once have seen
My land, my servants, and my home again!"
He ended, and they all assent, right fain,
To lend whate'er the stranger may require,
For that his word with fate accordeth plain.
So having poured, and drunk their heart's desire,
All to their several chambers for the night retire.

31

Then was divine Odysseus left behind;
But god-like King Alcinous in the hall
Still with Arete near his guest reclined;
And the attendants, at their master's call,
Each means, each remnant, of the festival
Clear with quick hands; and then the queen began,
Whose eyes on that familiar raiment fall
The which herself and her own women span.
She, turning, in winged words did thus accost the man:

32

"Stranger, this question will I first essay—
Who and whence art thou? and of whom didst crave
These garments? for methought I heard thee say
Thou camest hither wandering o'er the wave?"
Then said the wary-wise Odysseus brave:
"'Hard is it, queen, in sequence due to show
My griefs; so many the celestials gave;
But this one matter, this one tale of woe,
I will to-night set forth which thou art fain to know."
"Far in the deep sea lies an island fair,
Ogygia named. A bright-haired goddess dread,
Daughter of Atlas, doth inhabit there,
Wily Calypso, aye unvisited
Alike by god and man. Me fate hath led
Lone to that hearth, o'erwhelmed with anguish dire;
For in the middle ocean's wine-dark bed
Zeus, as I wandered, the Olympian Sire,
From heaven my swift ship clave in sunder with white fire.

"There all the rest of my companions died,
But I for nine days ever onward sweep,
Whirled by the waters, on a keel astride,
Till the tenth night spread blackening o'er the deep.
Then from this nymph did I salvation reap,
Who took me to herself and cared for me,
Yea, thought to hold me in her island-keep,
Blest with an ageless immortality;
Nathless the inward heart could not persuaded be.

"Seven years I tarrying stained with many a tear
Vestments immortal by Calypso lent;
But when came on the eighth revolving year,
Whether it were that Zeus a message sent
Or that Calypso changed her own intent,
Homeward she bade me o'er the seas repair.
So on a well-compacted bark I went;
She corn and wine gave, and apparel fair,
And in my lee made stream a soft sweet harmless air.
36

"Ten days and seven my gentle course I keep;
But on the eighteenth, for the first time seen,
Loomed shadowy elevation in the deep,
Your earth—right glad was then my heart, I ween.
Ah wretched! yet remained exceeding teen!
Since dark Poseidon a long swerveless blast
Launched on my ship, now furrowing wide ravine,
Now through the deep upheaving mountains vast,
Till to the bark I groaning failed to cling at last.

37

"Her the wild storms brake up: but I swam through
The great sea-gorge, till near to this your land
Whirled by the waters and the wind I drew.
Then had the waves on your ungentle strand,
Rock-fenced, where vainly I had striven to stand,
Dashed me; but I with the retiring flood
Swam backward, and at last a spot to land,
Found, smooth of rocks, and overhung with wood,
Even at the river's mouth, wind-sheltered, calm, and good.

38

"There did I throw myself, recovering heart,
And in that stound ambrosial Night came on.
I from the rain-fed river moved apart,
And, of the woodland chambers choosing one,
Piled the dead leaves about my lair anon.
God sent a measureless rest my soul to steep,
While in the leaves I lay, with toil foredone,
Night, morning, noon, until the day was deep.
When the sun fell mine eyes looked up from their sweet sleep,
39

"And soon the handmaids of thy daughter find
With her, like goddess in their midst, at play.
Then spake I suppliant; nor of prudent mind
Failed she at all; yea hardly one would say
That youth these matters could so nicely weigh.
Always the young lack wisdom; but she sent
Both corn and wine my cravings to allay,
And washed me in the river, and garments lent.
Herein the truth I tell, albeit with anguish spent."

40

Him then Alcinous answering thus addressed:
" Stranger, my daughter was not all so wise,
Who brought you not at once to be our guest,
When to her first you prayed in suppliant guise."
To whom the sage Odysseus straight replies:
"Blame not for me thy faultless child; indeed
She pressed me; but my soul did aye advise
Me of thy royal anger to take heed,
For we, the sons of men, were ever a jealous breed."

41

To whom Alcinous: " Stranger, no such heart,
To fume at nothing, in my breast I bear.
Rather, I ween, let justice hold her part.
Yet, father Zeus, Athene, Phœbus, hear!
Would of my child thou wert the husband dear,
Such as I see thee, and with heart like mine!
House, wealth, and lands, so thou but tarry here,
I promise; yet shall none by force incline
Thy purpose; nor to such Zeus lend his will divine!
42

"But the supreme fulfilment of thy way,
Whereby the end of travail thou mayst reap,
Know that until to-morrow I delay.
Thou all the while shalt lie subdued with sleep,
And they shall smite the levels of the deep
Till thou thy home and all dear things regain,
. When thine eyes hail the land for which they weep ;
Aye, though it be much harder to attain
Than is Euboia's isle, the farthest in the main,

43

"As those among us who have seen declare,
Who once the gold-haired Rhadamanthus led
Over the watery wold, to visit there
Tityus the child of Earth. Right well they sped ;
Yea without toil their course was finished,
And on the self-same day their home-return.
My excellence in ships is lightly read.
Ere long thine own experience shall discern
How well my oarsmen bold the foam-white deep can churn."

44

Thus he his lordly purpose did declare,
And on much-toiled divine Odysseus came
Sweet stirrings at the heart, who straight with prayer
Answered, and spake a word, and named a name :
"Zeus father! O that he make good the same!
Grant that Alcinous by his promise stand !
So by this deed his everlasting fame
Shall walk the plenteous earth from land to land,
And I shall sail in safety to my native strand."
45
But when their mutual converse now was o'er,
The white-armed queen her maidens bade prepare
A couch beneath the echoing corridor,
And thereon spread the crimson carpets fair,
Then the wide coverlets of richness rare,
And to arrange the blankets warm and white,
Wherein who sleepeth straight forgets his care.
They then, each holding in her hand a light,
From the great hall pass forth and spread the robes
aright.

46
Then standing near Odysseus thus they spake:
"Now is thy couch well-furnished, stranger-guest;
Haste, to refreshful sleep thyself betake."
Glad sounded in his ears their sweet request.
There he, divine one, late so sore distrest,
Slept all night long by griefs unvisited,
Stretched loosely on the carven couch at rest.
Alcinous to his far-off chamber sped,
And there his lady wife made ready and shared his bed.
BOOK VIII.

THE PHÆACIAN GAMES—SONGS OF THE MINSTREL
DEMODOCUS.
BOOK VIII.

1
But when appeared the rosy-fingered Morn,
Rose in his sacred strength Alcinous king
And after him Odysseus, the Zeus-born,
Waster of walls. Him did Alcinous bring
To the Phaeacians' place of gathering;
(On burnished stones they sit, near the sea-strand;)
But the wide streets Athene traversing,
In form like royal herald, to the land
Of Ithaca return for brave Odysseus planned.

2
Standing by each she spake: "Make haste, repair,
Phaeacian chiefs, to the assembly all,
That of this sea-tost stranger ye may hear
Newly arrived at king Alcinous' hall,
In mien resembling a celestial."
So did she urge them; and the seats anon
Swarmed with a crowd obedient to her call,
And many a gaze admiring dwelt upon
Odysseus, proved in war, Laertes' glorious son.
3

Nor failed Athene to shed round him then
O'er head and shoulders a new grace divine,
Making him ampler in the eyes of men,
That before all Phæacians he might shine
A wonder, and to reverence each incline,
And reap much glory from the games, which they
Should for a test of virtue there assign.
So were they all assembled on that day.
Uprose Alcinous then and in the midst did say:

4

"Hear me, Phæacians, while I speak my thought!
See now, this stranger-guest, I know not who,
Hath in his wanderings my mansion sought,
From eastern realms or western. He doth sue
For escort safe. This thing let us then do:
Since from of old whoever comes to me
Not long the want of convoy here doth rue:
Come launch a prime bark, swiftest-winged, and see
That young men fifty-two, our best, selected be.

5

"When to the benches ye the oars have tied,
Come to my house and taste our festal cheer;
Right well will I for each and all provide;
Such to the youths my charge do I declare.
Ye, sceptred chieftains, to the palace fare
Forthwith, to entertain our godlike guest;
Let none draw back; and thither bid repair
Divine Demodocus, whose minstrel breast
God gave to mould at will songs sweeter than the rest."
He ended, and the chiefs his steps ensue;
Quick for the bard divine the herald sped;
Also were chosen young men fifty-two,
Who to the black ship, as the king had said,
And margin of the barren deep were led.
Right soon the ship they launch, and plant the mast,
Order the tackling, and the white sails spread,
And the tough oars in leathern loops make fast;
And in the deep they moor her, well-equipped, at last.

So having wrought the king’s command, they then
Straight to the mansion of Alcinous go.
And lo! the wide-roomed house was thronged with men
Both young and old, and the continuous flow
Filled court, enclosure, hall, and portico.
For them Alcinous twelve fat sheep did slay,
Eight swine, and trailing-footed oxen two.
These in the courtyard the Phaeacians slay
And dress, and the rich feast set forth in fair array.

Then did the herald with the bard arrive,
Whom the Muse loved, and gave him good and ill;
Ill, that of light she did his eyes deprive,
Good, that sweet minstrelsy divine at will
She lent him, and a voice men’s ears to thrill.
For him Pontonous silver-studded chair
Set with the feasters, leaning it with skill
Against the column, and with tender care
Made the blind fingers feel the harp suspended there.
9
Close at his side a table fair he placed,
With food and wine-cup ranged at distance due,
Whereof his lips, whene'er he willed, might taste.
They then their hands upon the viands threw.
But when the feast they could no more ensue,
Stirred by the Muse the bard high theme essayed,
Whereof the loud fame to the skies then flew,
How that Odysseus and Pelides made
Strife with portentous words, at sacred feast displayed.

10
And wide-realmed Agamemnon, king of men,
When he the first of the Achaians found
Stung with sharp zeal, rejoiced in spirit then;
For that long since upon the hallowed ground
Of Pytho, at the oracle renowned,
Phæbus Apollo such response unrolled,
What time he crossed the threshold's stony bound.
Then were the woes, by Zeus ordained of old,
Trojans and Danaans all beginning to enfold.

11
So sang the far-famed minstrel in the hall—
But with his mighty hands Odysseus there
Over his head drew down the purple pall,
And with his raiment veiled the features fair,
Shamed that Phæacian eyes should be aware,
He weeping. Often as the bard divine
Paused in his song, he wiped away the tear
And from his brow the covering did resign,
While to the gods he poured libations of red wine.
BOOK VIII.] THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER. 177

12
But oft as he renewed the lyric strain,
(For the Phæacian lords urged him to sing,
Charmed with his words) Odysseus then again
Over his face the purple pall did fling,
And with wet eyelids sat there sorrowing.
So from the others he his grief did shroud,
Nor any man remarked him, save the king,
Who, near him seated, heard him groan aloud,
And straight uprising spake among the sea-famed crowd:

13
“Hearken and hear, Phæacian chieftains all!
For now have we our souls well satisfied
With feast and music, which right well we call
Companion of the feast. ’Twere time we hied
Forth from this revelry, and contests tried,
That so this stranger to his friends may tell,
When in his own far home he shall reside,
How we all peoples, on the earth that dwell,
In wrestling, leap, and foot-race, and with fists, excel.”

14
So spake the king and with them went his way.
Then on the peg the herald hung the lyre,
And took the minstrel’s hand, and did essay
Outward to lead him, while the chiefs retire
From the great hall of banquet, to admire
The athletes at their games. For thousands went
Eagerly forth, inflamed with strong desire
To see them; and, on rivalries intent,
Many good youths and tall rose up to try the event.
There Nauteus and Elatreus first uprose,
Ponteus and Prymneus and Ocyalus,
Proreus, Eretmeus, and Acroneðs,
Anabesineðs and Anchialus.
Also rose Thoön and Amphialus,
The child of Polineüs, Tektôn's son,
And, peer of Ares, fell Euryalus,
And fair Naubolides, who save but one,
Laodamas, the first in form and beauty shone.

And rose the three sons of Alcinous,
Even Clytoneûs, like a god in grace,
And fair Laodamas and Halius.
First they essayed on foot to run a race,
Where from the starting-point the smooth long space
Extended. O'er the level ground their feet
Fly, and in clouds the hot dust whirl apace;
And, as a pair of mules can oxen beat
In ploughing, by so much won Clytoneûs fleet.

Next of the wrestler's art distressful test
They venture, and therein Euryalus
Won, very far surpassing all their best.
And, after this, o'er all Amphialus
Was counted in the leap victorious.
Elatreus with the discus far excelled,
And with his fists Laodamas; who thus
Spake in the midst, when he the crowd beheld
Now sated with the games, and emulation quelled:
"Friends, let us ask this stranger if he know
Some feat. No mean one doth he seem to be;
For thighs and arms and nervous neck all show
A stubborn firm-knit vigour; nor doth he
Lack youth, but is crushed down with misery—
For to confound a man, how strong soe'er,
Believe me there is nothing like the sea."
To whom Euryalus did straight declare:
"Laodamas, well said! go take him challenge fair."

Which when the good son of Alcinous heard,
He went and stood forth in the midst alone,
And, turning to Odysseus, spake this word:
"Dear stranger, let thy prowess now be shown;
'Tis likely that to thee some feats are known.
Man, while he lives, no greater fame doth find
Than that which he hath earned by strength of bone.
Come, scatter all your sorrows to the wind;
Launched is the bark e'en now, your comrades all
assigned."

To whom the man of many counsels spake
In answer: "O Laodamas, my friend,
Why of my woes do ye this mockery make,
And lightly bid me on your games attend?
Less toward such pastime than to grief I bend
My spirit. Ere this many toils I bore,
Much suffering drained. Now, dreaming of the end,
Here I sit with you on this crowded shore,
And king and people urge with supplications sore."
Euryalus answering jeered him to his face:
"Now am I, stranger, not at all inclined
To judge thee versed in wrestling and the race,
Or games that are in vogue among mankind.
Thee rather with the ship-frequenting kind
Of traders, overseers of merchandise,
Whose talk is all of cargoes, and their mind
Dreams of unjust gains, and doth bargains prize,
I class; with athletes not, if I may trust my eyes."

To whom Odysseus scowling thus replied:
"Man, thou hast not said well; a fool thou art.
Not all fair gifts to all doth God divide,
Eloquence, beauty, and a noble heart.
One seems in mien poor, but his feebler part
God crowns with language, that men learn to love
The form, so feelingly the sweet words dart
Within them. First in councils he doth prove,
And, 'mid the crowd observant, like a god doth move.

"Another, though in mould of form and face
Like the immortal gods he seem to be,
Hath no wise word to crown the outward grace.
So is thine aspect fair exceedingly,
Wherein no blemish even a god might see;
Yet is thine understanding wholly vain.
Thou with thy witless scorn hast angered me,
And stung the spirit of thy guest with pain,
And mocked me to my face in unbeseeming strain."
24

"I in these contests am not void of skill,
As thou here vauntest in thine emptiness,
But with the very best held rank at will,
While yet the nerves of youth these hands did bless.
But now you see me marred with sore distress.
Toil in the wars of heroes on me lay,
Nor hath the rage of waters tired me less.
Yet, fresh from sorrow, I your games essay
Even as I am: thy words have stung me deep this day."

25

Then, mantled as he was, he rushed in rage
And seized a huge round discus, heavier far
Than that wherewith Phæacian youths engage,
And whirled it once, and launched it on the air.
Sang the great stone, and the Phæacians there,
A ship-famed people, masters of the oar,
Crouched to the earth beneath that booming blare.
Lightly it darted from his hand, and bore,
Steady in flight, right on, surpassing every score.

26

And lo! Athene in the form of man
Pointed the goal, and spake her word and said:
"Thy mark by feeling even the blind might scan,
Not mingled with the crowd, but far ahead.
This time at least thy victory may be read.
Stranger, take heart! for no Phæacian here
Can e'er transcend or reach thee." Thus she said.
Much did the voice divine Odysseus cheer,
Who spake with lighter heart, feeling a friend was near:
27

"Come on now! Soon will I a second throw
As far or farther. Whoso list to try,
Let him come forward and his manhood show;
For ye have fired my soul exceedingly.
Box, wrestle, or run races—what care I?—
All save Laodamas. I will not fight
With one that lends me hospitality.
Hurteth himself, I ween, that brainless wight
Who in strange land to combat doth his host incite.

28

"As for the rest I fear not, scorn not, one.
I want to feel and prove you face to face.
All feats I know that are beneath the sun.
If that for archery mine arms I brace,
Even in a thick crowd can my arrow trace
His quarry, and a foeman's breast hit well,
Though walled with men that hail their shafts apace.
Me Philoctetes did alone excel,
What time the Achaians aimed, by Troia's citadel.

29

"But of all else I swear that I stand first,
Such men as now upon the earth eat bread;
Though not that strength which older time hath nursed
To rival I aspire; such heroes dread
As once was Eurytus, Æchalia's head,
And Heracles, who dared the gods in strife.
Hence the great Eurytus too soon lay dead;
Old age he knew not in his halls; so rife
The wrath of challenged Phœbus, who required his life.
30

"Also this hand so far can hurl the spear
That none with arrow may the score exceed;
'Tis at the foot-race only that I fear,
Lest some Phæacian should surpass in speed.
Much have the billows marred me; for indeed
Neither in swift ships, nor increased with food,
Me to your island-bourne the Fates did lead,
So that my limbs are loosened." Then they stood
Mute, and alone Alcinous spake, in courteous mood:

31

"Friend, for thou speakest no unwelcome word,
Willing to show thy manhood's worth, when one
With insult in the lists thine anger stirred,
And dared thee blot with open blame, as none,
Whose mind and lips knew justice, would have done—
Come, understand me, that in after years,
When wife and children thou again hast won,
Oft in mid banquet thou mayst tell thy peers
What works from sire to son Zeus to our race endears.

32

"Not blameless are we in the wrestling art;
Not with the fist in fighting we excel;
But with winged feet upon the race to start,
And cleaving keels obedient to impel—
These are the things which we do passing well.
And ever in our souls from year to year
Voluptuous dancings and the harp's sweet spell,
Rich feasts and changes of apparel fair,
Warm baths, and couch of love, we hold exceeding dear.
33

"But come, Phæacian dancers, all our best,
Lead off your pastime, that in after day
At ease within his halls our stranger-guest
Oft in the hearing of his friends may say
How far the rest of nations we outweigh
In sea-dexterities and fame of feet,
Dance and the song. Go, fetch without delay,
Some one, the shrill lyre from our house. 'Tis meet
Demodocus our bard now make us music sweet."

34

Spake in these words Alcinous, godlike king.
Whereat the herald rose incontinent
And, from its place the hollow harp to bring,
On to the royal mansion quickly went.
Then were there nine selected elders sent
All to arrange that might the pastime grace;
Who soon outclearing each impediment
Smoothed with design exact the choral space,
And for the lists made wide the shining beauteous place.

35

Scarce had they ordered all when reappeared
The stately herald, holding in his hand
The harp, which then Demodocus the bard
Received, and straightway at the king's command
Moved to the midst. Around him waiting stand,
Skilled in divine beat of the measured dance,
Youths in first bloom, the fairest in the land.
Soon did Odysseus, rapt as in a trance,
Mark the loud pulse of feet, the ever-twinkling glance.
36
But he with voice and lyre a noble strain
Lifted, and sang there of the love renowned
Of Ares, mighty in the battle-plain,
And Aphrodite beautifully crowned;
How first by stealth on the domestic ground
They mingled, and with gifts the god of war
Couch of the lord Hephæstus did confound.
But Helius watched them from his fiery car,
And of their dalliance dark the tidings brought from far.

37
Stung with the new-revealed dishonour, turned
His footsteps to the forge Hephæstus king,
And, while the deep fierce anger in him burned,
Chains that for aye inextricably cling
Forged; the huge anvil with his strokes did ring.
So he in wrath a dark entrapment wove
For Ares, worker of the evil thing,
Then sought the scene of his own spousal love,
And sowed the couch with snares around, below, above.

38
There from the roof depended countless chains,
Which through the middle air ran out and in,
That none, not even a god, his secret trains
E'er could with eyes discover—subtil, thin,
As is the fine web which the spiders spin,
So deftly were they wrought. When all was done,
His course toward Lemnos he made feint to win—
Fair is the isle and fairly built upon,
Land in his eyes most lovely underneath the sun.
Nor Ares, master of the golden rein,
Was keeping a blind watch; who, when he knew
Art-famed Hephaestus on the road again,
Back to his mansion in a moment flew,
With Cytherea dalliance to renew.
She, lately parted from Kronion dread,
Her father, sat right beautiful to view.
He through the wide halls of Hephaestus sped,
And clasped her hand in his, and spake the word and said:

“Come, dearest, let us take our fill of love
Retiring to the couch, since far away
Hephaestus doth to Lemnos-isle remove,
With the barbaric Sintians there to stay.”
He spake, and she, right joyous to essay
The sweets of love, went with him from the hall,
And on the soft couch in the chamber lay;
And lo! the artful toils from wall to wall
Close round them; they no limb can move or raise at all.

So through vain effort at the last they knew
That hope was over, no escape might be;
And lo! Hephaestus limping into view
Back from his Lemnian road came presently;
For Helius had kept watch, the thing to see,
And told their lewdness. Fired in spirit proud
Straight to the porch of his own house came he,
And stood there wild with rage and evil-browed,
And to the choir of gods called terribly and loud:
42
"O Father Zeus, and all immortals blest,
Come ye and laugh at this inveterate pair.
Me Zeus-born Aphrodite in her breast
Scorns for my lameness, and affects him there,
Ares Destroyer, being sound and fair,
While I halt from my birth. Surely for this
The genuine culprits ought the blame to bear,
My parents: for none else hath wrought amiss;
’Twas theirs not to have gotten such a child, I wis.

43
"But ye shall see them where in love they lie,
Who trod my couch, and make me groan in heart.
Much I mistake if each to other sigh
For yet a little longer ere they part.
Deep though they love, methinks e’en now they smart,
Though shameless; but the inextricable chain
Clings, till the gifts her father reimport,
Which for his lewd-faced child I gave right fain.
Fair is her form, yet passion can she not restrain."

44
Thereat the gods came trooping one and all.
Came great Poseidon who doth earth embrace,
Luck-bringing Hermes, to the brass-floored hall,
And the far-working Phoebus. But the race
Of goddesses abode within their place,
Shamed. From the fortune-giving gods meanwhile
Laughter unquenchable uprose apace,
Soon as they marked the shrewd Hephaestus’ guile;
And each to other spake with jest and mutual smile:
45

"Now mark how evil-workers thrive not well.
The swift is overtaken of the slow.
Ares, the fleetest that on high doth dwell,
Is by Hephaestus, who doth limping go,
Caught with shrewd cunning, and doth forfeit owe."
Thus they conversed; but lord Apollo spake
To Hermes: "This thing now declare and show—
Wouldst thou, constrained with bonds that cannot break,
Sleep in that couch for golden Aphrodite's sake?"

46

And him the Slayer of Argus straight addressed:
"O lord Apollo, darter from afar,
Would such might happen as thy words suggest!
Though thrice as many chains as now there are
Should from the chamber all escape debar,
And every god and goddess watch did keep,
Yet should not all this my enjoyment mar.
Little it recks whatever shame I reap,
Who all the while with golden Aphrodite sleep."

47

So Hermes spake, and laughter rang again
Among the immortals. Smileless even so
Poseidon stood, for ever entreat ing fain
The work-renowned Hephaestus to let go
Ares the war-god, his adulterous foe,
And thus to him these wingèd words addressed:
"Loose now thy captive, for all dues I know,
Yea will myself his surety stand professed,
That he before the gods will render at thy hest."
And answer made the halting god renowned:
"Holder of earth, Poseidon, not thus blind
Misdeem me; a rogue's word was ever found
Poor voucher; this thing is not to my mind.
How were I able thee in sight to bind
Of all the gods, should Ares steal away,
Leaving captivity and debts behind?"
But he replied: "Should Ares, as you say,
Prove faithless, I myself the total claim will pay."

And answer made the halting god renowned:
"'Tis not in reason longer to deny
Thy suit." Thus he the chains from each unwound.
Thence Ares rushing forth did Thrace-ward hie.
Sweet-smiling Aphrodite straight doth fly
To Cyprian Paphos, where her grove and shrine
Flourish; and there the Graces tenderly
Bathe and anoint her with their oil divine,
And her celestial form with loveliest robes entwine.

Thus sang the famed Demodocus, and stirred
Odysseus listening to his heart's deep core.
Sat too rejoicing at the music heard
The ship-famed people, masters of the oar.
Then one the rest of king Alcinous bore
For Halius and Laodamas to dance
Alone, who all the rest ranked far before.
They then, right fair in mien and countenance,
Straight with the beauteous ball into the lists advance.
51
One, leaning backward, to the shadowy sky
The ball up-hurled; the other with light bound
Easily caught it in his hand on high,
Or ever his quivering feet regained the ground.
This practice done, they weave the dance renowned
O'er the boon earth, with many a sinuous sweep
And glimmering interchange. The youths stand round,
And chime and measure for the dancers keep,
While still the great foot-pulse sounds regular and deep.

52
Then to the king divine Odysseus spake:
"O king, pre-eminent in word and deed,
Of late thy lips the threatening vaunt did make
That these thy dancers all the world exceed—
Now have I seen fulfilment of thy rede;
Yea, wonder holds me while I gaze thereon."
So spake he, and Alcinous well did heed
That word, and in his soul rejoicing con,
And the Phaeacian chiefs sea-famed addressed anon:

53
"Wise-hearted is this stranger proved and seen.
Come, let us make fit largess to our guest.
Twelve chiefs there are, and, counting me, thirteen.
Let each a well-washed mantle, a fair vest,
Give, and a talent of pure gold the best,
Together and at once, that he may go
Rejoicing in his soul unto the feast;
And let Euryalus some gift bestow
And meet word, from whose lips unseemly speech did flow."
54
Thereto accordant for the gifts each sent
His herald, and Euryalus then spake:
"Alcinous king, o'er all pre-eminent,
This will I offer for the stranger's sake.
His mine own silver-hilted sword I make,
And ivory sheath wherein the sword I gird,
Fitting for me to give, for him to take."
Thus on Odysseus he the gift conferred,
And in the midst, him greeting, spake this wingèd word:

55
"Hail, guest and father! If were said or done
Aught unbecoming, now from where we stand
Let the winds whirl it in oblivion!
And thee, long grieved and friendless, from our strand
Heaven render back to wife and fatherland!"
To whom Odysseus: "Friend, thou too thrice hail!
Heaven give thee blessings with an open hand,
And for this dear sword no regrets entail,
Offered with welcome words mine ire to countervail!"

56
Straight he assumed the silver-hilted brand;
And, the sun falling, stately heralds bring
Into Alcinous' halls the presents grand;
Which soon the children of the blameless king
Safe in their mother's charge depositing
Range in resplendent order. Homeward went
Alcinous, all his chieftains marshalling,
Who there arrived sit proudly eminent.
He then the queen bespake, unveiling his intent:
"Bring now, dear wife, a chest exceeding fair.
Therein a well-washed robe and tunic place.
Ye, kindling fire, warm water straight prepare,
That, washed, and having seen these gifts' full grace,
Brought by the blameless princes of our race,
He may delight himself with feast and song.

I give this cup, which beauteous themes enchase,
All-gold, whence he may pour, his friends among,
To Zeus and all the gods, my name remembering long."

Then did Arete to her train command
There on the fire huge tripod to set quick.
They on the crackling wood the vessel stand,
Which with bright tongues the sinuous flame doth lick.
Meanwhile Arete from her chests doth pick
The choicest, and range well the presents rare,
Both shining gold and fine-spun raiment thick;
Last, her own gift, a robe and tunic fair
Laid in the chest, and thus bespoke the stranger there:

"Take now this lid, and deftly bind it on
That none despoil thee taking thy sweet sleep
In the black ship." He at the word anon
Knotted the complex cord, all fast to keep,
As Circe taught him in her island-steep.
Then to the warm bath him the house-dame brought,
Glad in his heart; for since he sailed the deep
From fair Calypso's bowers, for ever fraught
With all celestial sweets, of comfort he knew nought.
Him then the maidens bathe and rub with oil,
And in rich robe and tunic clothe with care.
He from the bath, cleansed from the dust of toil,
Passed to the drinkers; and Nausicaa there
Stood, moulded by the gods exceeding fair.
She, on the roof-tree pillar leaning, heard
Odysseus; turning she beheld him near.
Deep in her breast admiring wonder stirred,
And in a low sweet voice she spake this wingèd word:

"Hail, stranger-guest! when fatherland and wife
Thou shalt revisit, then remember me,
Since to me first thou owest the price of life."
And to the royal virgin answered he:
"Child of a generous sire, if willed it be
By Thunderer Zeus, who all dominion hath,
That I my home and dear return yet see,
There at thy shrine will I devote my breath,
There worship thee, dear maid, my saviour from dark
death."

He spake, and by Alcinous sat; but they
Portioned the meat to each, and mingled wine.
Then came the herald, leading on his way
Beloved Demodocus, the bard divine,
Whom in the middle space he made recline,
Leaning on shaft magnificent and tall;
Then carving a choice portion from the chine
Of white-toothed boar, with fat enfolded all,
Thus to the herald spake Odysseus in the hall:
63

"Herald, take this, and bid the minstrel eat!
Greet him from me. All mortals reverence pay
That tribe whose voice the loving Muse made sweet,
And taught their fingers on the harp to play."
Then did the herald the choice gift convey
To great Demodocus, who silent smiled.
They eager' hands upon the banquet lay,
And sate their spirit with the dainties piled.
Then to the bard spake forth Laertes' godlike child:

64

"Demodocus, thy strain exceeds my thought
Of minstrelsies; thee first of bards I hold,
Whether the Muse, the child of Zeus, thee taught,
Or great Apollo did thy music mould;
Since excellently well thou hast unrolled
The doom of the Achaians in thy song,
Their works and toils and sufferings manifold,
As thou thyself hadst languished in them long,
Or from eyewitness heard their sorrowings deep and strong.

65

"Come now, pass over this lamented theme,
And for my sake lift up thy strain and sing
That Horse, Epeius' and Athene's scheme,
And how by policy the wondrous thing
Odysseus to the Acropolis did bring,
Filled with the heroes who laid Ilion low.
If to this story thou thy harp shalt string,
And paint it truly, all I meet shall know
What songs divine some god on thee deigns to bestow."
Then did the god the minstrel's heart inspire,
And he the strings swept, and took up the lay
Where the Achaions to their camp set fire,
And in the war-ships seem to sail away;
While in the Horse their chiefs in armed array
Lurk with renowned Odysseus on the steep
Of Ilion—by the Trojans drawn that day
Clean past the bulwarks of their central keep.—
These round the great bulk urge deliberation deep.

Three ways their counsel tended—to break through
The hollow timber with the ruthless steel,
Or down the rocks to hurl it out of view,
Or leave it hallowed, wrath divine to heal;
Which thing by destiny their doom did seal—
For, so the Fates enacted, they must fall
When through their gates the wooden Horse they wheel,
Whence, from dark lair, should Argive heroes all
Burst to wreak murderous bale on Trojans great and small.

Anon he sang how issuing from the lair
With sword and fire the guardless town they smite,
While each on several way the chieftains fare;
How to Deiphobus at dead of night
Odysseus came, like Ares fierce in fight,
With Menelaus, and did aye ensue
Conquest not bloodless by Athene's might.
All this he sang. Odysseus, melted through,
Sat listening while the tears his pale worn cheek bedew.
69

Even as a wife, who sees her husband die,
Flings herself round him with a piteous wail,
Where he the foe met in his people's eye,
And fell down, pierced, beneath their iron hail,
And all to ward off wrong and bitter bale
From home and fatherland and children dear;
Him, when her help can now no more avail,
Dying she marks and the last sob can hear;
Deep in her arms she folds him; the long shriek rings clear.

70

And lo! the foemen to her side advance,
Led by the wildness of her yearning cry,
Spurn the weak shoulders with the shafted lance,
Unclasp her, and to doom of slavery,
Alone in sorrow, weeping bitterly,
Lead her—too hard in their inhuman haste!—
Thenceforward in extremest agony
Wrongs undeserved, the living death, to taste;
While still the thin white cheeks for ever pine and waste—

71

Wrung with like misery Odysseus shed
Full many a feeling tear from eyes dark-browed,
Tranced in far thought and dreaming of the dead,
But kept his weeping secret from the crowd.
Only Alcinous marked him, as he bowed
Over his breast in pain, and evermore
Traced the salt tear-drops which he fain would shroud,
And, near him seated, heard him groaning sore:—
He then with voice harangued those masters of the oar:
"Hear now, ye chiefs that feast within our hall,
And let Demodocus his shrill-voiced lyre
Stop; what he singeth is not sweet to all;
For since the minstrel whom the gods inspire
First from his lips let fall the hallowed fire,
We all the while in silence feasting on,
This stranger, veiling with his dark attire
His tear-dimmed eyes, hath never ceased to groan;
Haply the strain hath struck some mournful inward tone.

"Cease then the song, that we may pleasure take,
Both host and guest; for it is nobler so—
These things are done for reverend strangers' sake,
On whom with grudgeless hand we aye bestow
Safe-conduct and sweet gifts, that they may know
How from a lavish soul our love we shed.
For unto every man in whom doth glow
One spark of kindliness in heart or head,
The suppliant stranger still doth count in brother's stead.

"Thou too, no longer by thy speeches fair
And fine evasions fence with my request.
Now is thine hour the full truth to declare.
Make known, then, in what name thou art addrest
By father, mother, neighbours, and the rest;
Since none, however we esteem his worth,
Whether we rank him with the worst or best,
Lives altogether nameless on the earth;
Always the parents fix some title at the birth.
75

"Also thy people and thy land make plain,
That nought the instinct of our ships delay.
For unto us no pilots appertain,
Rudder nor helm which other barks obey.
These, ruled by reason, their own course essay
Sharing men's mind. Cities and climes they know,
And through the deep sea-gorges cleaving way,
Wrapt in an ambient vapour, to and fro
Sail in a fearless scorn of scathe or overthrow.

76

"Natheless of old I heard Nausithous say,
My father, how Poseidon liked not well
That we send all men harmless on their way;
And this old prophecy he used to tell—
How on a day, while we good course impel
Homeward, Poseidon should the convoy break,
And hide with hills the city where we dwell—
Such was the prophecy the old man spake,
Whereof the god or failure or fulfilment make!

77

"But come now, tell me this and tell me true—
Where thou hast wandered, to what lands hast gone,
And of the well-built cities fair to view,
And of the tribes of men whom thou hast known,
Despiteful, wild, unjust, and those which own
Fear of the gods and love the stranger well.
Nor fail to show me why thy breast did groan,
And why the dark tear from thine eyelids fell,
Hearing how Danaan Argives did fair Ilion quell.
78

"Thus the gods fated, and such ruin wove,
That song might flourish for posterity.
Didst thou by castled Ilion lose a love,
Near thee by marriage? for such ever be,
Next to our own blood, dear exceeding.
Or in that field did some companion fall,
One generous, brave, and good, and knit to thee?
Surely the friend whom love makes liberal
Not even to a brother yields in worth at all!"
BOOK IX.

BOOK IX.

1

Then said Odysseus: "Thrice renowned king,
Sweet is it minstrelsies like these to hear,
Framed by a bard who like the gods can sing.
Find me a joy to human heart more dear
Than is a people's gladness, when good cheer
Reigns, and all listening pause in deep delight,
While in mid feast the bard his song doth rear,
What time the board with all good things is dight,
And for each guest the herald fills the wine-cup bright.

2

Methinks that nothing can more lovely be!
But thou my soul art turning to a tale
Heavy with heartache even in memory.
Ah! which then first, if I uplift the veil,
Which of my sorrows shall I last bewail?—
Woes in such number the celestials poured.
First I my name unfold, that when from bale
Resting hereafter, to my land restored,
I, though far off, may greet your faces at my board.
3
I, then, Odysseus am, Laertes' son,
For all wise policies a name of fear
To men; my rumour to the skies hath gone.
And sunward Ithaca my country dear
I boast. Hill Neritus stands waving there
His green trees visible for many a mile,
Centre of soils divine, which clustering near,
Stars of the blue sea, round about him smile,
Dulichium, Same steep, Zacythus' wood-crowned isle.

4
Thus lies the land high-tabled in the main
Westward; the others take the morning sun;
Rough, but a good nurse, and divine in grain
Her heroes. Never can I gaze upon
Land to my mind so lovely as that one,
Land not to be forgotten—aye, though me
Calypso in her caves would fain have won,
And Circe, deep-embowered within the sea,
Held me with artful wiles her own true love to be.

5
Never could these the inward heart persuade,
Never make sweet the cold unfaithfulness.
More than all pleasures that were ever made
Parents and fatherland our life still bless.
Though we rich home in a strange land possess,
Still the old memories about us cling.
But hear, while I the bitter woes express,
Which, as from Troia I my comrades bring,
Zeus, the Olympian Sire, around my life did fling.
6
Me winds to Ismarus from Ilion bear,
To the Ciconians. I their town lay waste,
And wives and wealth with my companions share,
That none for me might sail away disgraced.
Anon I urged them with quick feet to haste
Their flight, but they, infatuate fools, forbore—
There the red wine they ever dreaming taste,
While carcasses of sheep lie many a score,
And trailing-footed beeves, slain, on the barren shore.

7
But all this while, on other works intent,
Loudly the Cicons to the Cicons call,
Who more and braver hold the continent.
These both from horseback cope with heroes tall,
Or foot to foot can make their foemen fall.
Wrapped in the morning mist they loom in view,
Thick as the leaves and flowers ambrosial,
Children of Spring. Onward the dark fate drew,
Big with the woes which Zeus had destined for our due.

8
Hard by the swift ships, each in ordered line,
With steely spears the battle they darryne.
While toward the zenith clomb the day divine,
We, though much fewer, their assault sustain.
But when toward loosing of the plough did wane
The slanting sun, then the Ciconian host
Turned us to flight along the shadowy plain.
Six of our comrades from each ship were lost,
But we the rest fled safely from the Thracian coast.
Then on our course we sail, distressed in heart,
Glad of our lives, yet grieving for the dead;
Nathless we list not from that shore depart,
Ere thrice with cries we hailed each fallen head
Of those whose blood the fierce Ciconians shed
In the wide plain. Ere yet we ceased to weep,
Zeus on our fleet the rage of Boreas dread
Launched, and with black clouds veiled the earth and deep,
While the dark Night came rushing from heaven’s stormy steep.

Headlong the ships were driven with tattered sails.
These having furled we drove our keels ashore,
Fearing destruction from the raving gales.
Two nights and days we eating our heart’s core
Lay till the third light beauteous Dawn upbore;
Then we the masts plant, and the white sails spread,
And sitting lean to the laborious oar.
Wind and good pilotage the brave barks sped;
Soon had I scatheless seen my native earth ahead,

But me the current and fell Boreas whirl'd,
Doubling Malea's cape, and far astray
Beyond the rude cliffs of Cythera hurled.
So for nine days along the watery way,
Teeming with monsters, me the winds affray
And with destruction ever seem to whelm:
But, on the afternoon of the tenth day,
We reached, borne downward with an easy helm,
Land of the flowery food, the Lotus-eating realm.
I2
Anon we step forth on the dear mainland,
And draw fresh water from the springs, and there,
Seated at ease along the silent strand,
Not far from the swift ships our meal prepare.
Soon having tasted of the welcome fare,
I with the herald brave companions twain
Sent to explore what manner of men they were,
Who, on the green earth couched beside the main,
Seemed ever with sweet food their lips to entertain.

I3
Who, when they came on the delightful place
Where those sat feeding by the barren wave,
There mingled with the Lotus-eating race;
Who nought of ruin for our comrades brave
Dreamed in their minds, but of the Lotus gave;
And whoso tasted of their flowery meat
Cared not with tidings to return, but clave
Fast to that tribe, for ever fain to eat,
Reckless of home-return, the tender Lotus sweet.

I4
These sorely weeping by main strength we bore
Back to the hollow ships with all our speed,
And thrust them bound with cords upon the floor,
Under the benches: then the rest I lead
On board and bid them to the work give heed,
Lest others, eating of the Lotus, yearn
Always to linger in that land, and feed,
Careless for ever of the home-return:
Then, bending to their oars, the foamy deep they spurn.
Thence we sailed onward overwhelmed in heart,
And to the land of the Cyclopes came,
An undiscerning people, void of art
In life, and trampers on the sacred claim
Of laws which men for civil uses frame.
Scorners of common weal no bounds they keep,
Nor learn with labours the rude earth to tame;
Who neither plant nor plough nor sow nor reap;
Still in the gods they trust, still careless wake and sleep.

There all good fruits on the spontaneous soil
Fed by the rain of Zeus for ever grow;
Unsown, untended, corn and wine and oil
Spring to their hand; but they no councils know
Nor justice, but for ever lawless go.
Housed in the hills they neither buy nor sell,
No kindly offices demand or show;
Each in the hollow cave where he doth dwell
Gives law to wife and children, as he thinketh well.

Skirting their harbour, neither near nor far,
A little island lies, with forest crowned,
Wherein wild goats in countless numbers are;
Since there no track of mortal men is found
Who hunt in hardship over mountain ground,
And never plough hath pierced the woodland glen.
Unvisited it lies the whole year round.
None their tame flocks amid those pastures pen,
Feeding wild goats, and widowed of the race of men.
Not to Cyclopian brood doth appertain
Skill in the seas, or vermeil-painted fleet
Of barks, which, sailing o'er the azure main,
Pass and repass wherever seemeth meet,
And all the covenants of men complete;
Nor have they shipwrights who might build them such;
Else would they soon have colonized this seat.
Not worthless is it, but at human touch
Would take the seasons well, and yield exceeding much.

Fast by the margin of the hoary deep
Lie soft well-watered meadows. There the vine
Would bloom for ever. If to plough and reap,
Observant of the hours, one's heart incline,
Black with fertility the soil doth shine.
Smooth is the haven, nor is need at all
Of anchor, cable, and shore-fastened line.
Floating in shelter of that firm sea-wall
Sailors at will may wait till prosperous breezes call.

There a white waterfall beneath the cave
Springs forth, and flashes at the haven-head;
Round it the whispering alders darkly wave.
Thitherward sailing through the night we sped,
Yea, some divinity the swift ships led
Through glooms not pierceable by power of eye.
Round us the deep night-air swung listless, dead;
Nor moon nor stars looked down from the wide sky,
Hid by the gross cloud-curtain brooding heavily.
21
No mariner beheld the nearing strand,
Helmsman expert or wielder of the oar,
Nor marked the long waves rolling on the land.
Still with a steady prow we onward bore
Till the keels grated on the shelving shore.
Then we the sails take down, and, past the line
Of ripple, landing from the waters hoar,
Along the margin of the deep recline,
And sound-asleep wait dreaming for the Dawn divine.

22
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn came on,
Child of the mist, we wondering rose apace
The beauteous island to explore anon.
And lo! the Nymphs inhabiting the place
Stirred in our sight the creatures of the chase,
That so my comrades might have food to eat.
Straight to the ships for bows and spears we race,
And, parted in three bands, the thickets beat;
Soon did the god vouchsafe large spoil exceeding sweet.

23
Me twelve ships followed, and for each we won
Nine goats; but for myself I chose out ten.
Thus all day long, till falling of the sun,
We sat there feasting in the hollow glen;
Cheerly I ween the red wine circled then;
Since of the liquor there remained much more
Sealed safely in the ships; for when our men
Sacked the Ciconian citadel, good store
Of wine in earthen vessels to our fleet they bore.
24
And on the land of the Cyclopes near
We looked, and saw their smoke, and heard their hum.
Also the bleatings of their flocks we hear,
Till the ambrosial Night made all things dumb.
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn was come,
I called my friends, and said: 'Stay ye the rest,
While I go forward to explore with some,
Mine own ship's crew, what folk this shore infest,
Despitful, wild, unjust, or of a gentle breast.'

25
Forthwith I march on board, and bid my crew
With me their captain the tall bark ascend,
And the stern-cables vigorously undo.
They to their several tasks with zeal attend;
Then, sitting, to the oars' long sweep they bend,
And smite in unison the billows hoar.
Right quickly to the continent we wend;
And lo! a huge deep cave our eyes before,
Shaded about with laurels, very near the shore.

26
And all around the flocks and herds recline,
Parked by a rough-hewn fence of mountain stone,
All overhung with oak and towery pine.
There dwelt the monstrous keeper all alone,
Who in his breast no kindred ties did own,
But, far apart, ungodly ways pursued;
Sight not resembling human flesh and bone,
But like a mountain-column, crowned with wood,
Reigning above the hills in awful solitude.
27
Then of my comrades I the rest command
To guard the well-bench'd ship, remaining there,
But I the while with my twelve bravest land,
And of dark wine an ample goatskin bear,
Which Maron, venerable priest and seer
Of lord Apollo, the divine defence
Of Ismarus, because we held him dear,
Son of Euanthes, gave us to take thence,
Whom with his wife and child we saved in reverence.

28
Deep-foliaged grove his dwelling doth enfold,
Phœbus Apollo's, who there keeps his shrine.
Rich gifts he gave me—talents seven of gold
Which curiously was wrought and well did shine,
And bowl of silver, and twelve jars of wine,
Which in his halls lay hidden out of view,
Mellow with age, unmingled, sweet, divine;
Known but to him the priest and other two,
His wife and chief house-dame, of all his retinue.

29
When they the red wine drank, he filled one cup,
Which when in twenty measures he did pour
Of water, and the scent divine rose up,
'Twere hard to hold one's cravings any more.
Thereof a goatskin filled I with me bore,
And in a wallet did provision crowd,
For my brave heart at once foreboded sore
How I a man should meet, unpitying, proud,
Lawless and void of right, with giant strength endowed.
30
Soon to the cave we came, nor him there found,
Who 'mid the pastures with his flocks did stay.
We then the crates admire with cheeses crowned,
And the pens, packed with kids and lambs, survey
Where in his place each kind distinguished lay.
Here rest the firstlings, there the middle-born,
And further on the yearlings. Brimmed with whey
Pails, ranged in ordered rank, the walls adorn—
Wherein his flocks he wont to milk at eve and morn.

31
With strong persuasion me my friends besought
To steal some cheeses, and return with haste
To the swift ship, and thither having brought
Both kids and fat lambs, from their pens displaced,
Sailing to vanish o'er the watery waste.
I to our loss would not persuaded be,
Wishing to see him and his cheer to taste,
If chance he lend me hospitality—
Alas! to my poor friends no welcome host proved he!

32
We then for holy offerings kindle flame,
Eat of the cheeses, and till eventide
Wait. Then with flocks and herds the Cyclops came
Bearing a mighty pile of pinewood dried,
Wherewith his evening meal might be supplied.
Down with a crash he cast it in the cave;
We to the deep recess ran terrified.
Anon his flocks within the walls he drive,
But to the males a place without the courtyard gave.
33
Forthwith a rock stupendous with his hands
He lifted, and athwart the entrance flung.
Firm-rooted o'er the cave's deep mouth it stands.
Not two-and-twenty waggons, four-wheeled, strong,
Ever could move the mighty bulk along.
Then sat he down and milked each teeming ewe
And she-goat, and anon their eager young
Under the dams disposed in order due;
And all the while thick bleatings rang the wide cave through.

34
Half the white milk he curdled, and laid up
On crates of woven wicker-work with care;
And half he set aside in bowl and cup
To stand in readiness for use, whene'er
Thirst should invite, and for his evening fare.
Thus he his tasks right busily essayed,
And at the last a red flame kindled there;
And, while the firelight o'er the cavern played,
Us crouching he espied, and speedy question made.

35
'Strangers, who are ye? from what strand unknown
Sail ye the watery ways? After some star
Of purpose, or on random courses blown
Range ye like pirates, whom no perils bar,
Who risk their own lives other men to mar?'
So made he question, and our dear heart brake,
Scared at the dread voice searching near and far,
The rough rude accent, and the monstrous make.
Nathless, though sore cast down, I thus responding spake:
36

‘We sons of Argos, while from Troy we keep
Straight homeward, driven by many storms astray,
Over the wide abysses of the deep,
Chance on another course, a different way.
Haply such doom upon us Zeus doth lay.
Also of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son,
Soldiers we are, and his command obey
Whose name rings loudest underneath the sun,
City so vast he sacked, such people hath undone.

37

‘So in our wanderings to thy knees we come
If thou the boon of hospitality
Wouldst furnish to our wants, or render some
Of those sweet offices which none deny
To strangers. Thou at least the gods on high
Respect, most noble one! for theirs are we,
Who now poor suppliants on thy help rely;
Chiefly revere our guardian Zeus, for he
Avenger of all such is ever wont to be!’

38

So did I speak: he ruthlessly replied:
‘O fool, or new from some outlandish place,
Who by the fear of gods hast me defied!
What then is Zeus to the Cyclopian race,
Matched with whose strength the blessed gods are base?
Save that I choose to spare your heads, I trow
Zeus will not much avail you in this case.
But tell me where your good ship ye bestow,
At the land’s end or near, that I the truth may know.’
39
Thus spake he, urging trial of our state,
Nor caught me, in experience manifold
Well versed. With crafty words I answered straight:
'Mighty Poseidon, who the earth doth hold,
Near the far limits which your land enfold,
On the sharp rocks our vessel did impel.
Thither a great wind from the deep us rolled.
I with these comrades from the yawning hell
Of waters have alone escaped, the tale to tell.'

40
He nought replied, but of my comrades twain
Seized, and like dog-whelps on the cavern-floor
Dashed them: the wet ground steamed with blood
and brain.
Straight in his ravin limb from limb he tore
Fierce as a lion, and left nothing o'er;
Flesh, entrails, marrowy bones of men just killed,
Gorging. To Zeus our hands, bemoaning sore,
We raised in horror, while his maw he filled,
And human meat devoured, and milk in rivers swilled.

41
After his meal he lay down with the sheep.
I, at the first, was minded to go near,
And in his liver slake my drawn sword deep;
But soon another mind made me forbear;
For so should we have gained destruction sheer,
Since never from the doorway could we move
With all our strength the stone which he set there.
We all night long with groans our anguish prove,
Till rosy-fingered Dawn shone forth in heaven above.
42
At dawn a fire he kindled in the cave,
And milked the famous flocks in order due,
And to each mother her young suckling gave.
But when the morning tasks were all gone through,
He, of my wretched comrades seizing two,
Gorged breakfast as became his savage taste,
And with the fat flocks from the cave withdrew.
Moved he the stone, and set it back with haste,
Lightly as on some quiver he the lid replaced;

43
Then toward the mountain turned with noise; but I
Sat brooding on revenge, and made my prayer
To Pallas, and resolved this scheme to try:
For a huge club beside the sheepfold there,
Green olive-wood, lay drying in his lair,
Cut for a staff to serve him out of doors,
Which we admiring to the mast compare
Of some wide merchantman with twenty oars,
Which the divine abysses of the deep explores.

44
Therefrom I severed as it were an ell,
And bade my comrades make it smooth and round.
Then to a tapering spire I shaped it well,
And the green timber in the flame embrowned
For hardness; and, where dung did most abound,
Deep in the cave the pointed stake concealed.
Anon my comrades cast their lots all round,
Which should with me the fiery weapon wield,
And twirl it in his eye while sleep his huge strength
sealed.
45
Then were four chosen—even the very same
Whom I myself should have picked out to be
My comrades in the work—and me they name
The fifth, their captain. In the evening he
Came, shepherding his flocks in due degree,
Home from the hills, and all his fleecy rout
Into the wide cave urged imperiously,
Nor left one loiterer in the space without,
Whether from God so minded, or his own dark doubt.

46
Soon with the great stone he blocked up the cave,
And milked the bleating flocks in order due,
And to each mother her young suckling gave.
But when the evening tasks were all gone through,
He of my wretched comrades seizing two
Straight on the horrible repast did sup.
Then I myself near to the Cyclops drew,
And, holding in my hands an ivy cup
Brimmed with the dark-red wine, took courage and
spake up:

47
‘Cyclops, take wine, and drink after thy meal
Consumed of human flesh, that thou mayst know
The kind of liquor wherein we sailors deal.
This a drink-offering have I brought, that so
Thou mightest pity me and let me go
Safe homeward. Thou alas! with fury extreme
Art raving, and thy fierceness doth outgrow
All bounds of reason. How then dost thou dream
Others will seek thy place, who dost so ruthless seem?’
48
He then received and drank and loudly cried
Rejoicing: 'Give me, give me more, and tell
Thy name, that some good boon I may provide.
True, the rich earth where the Cyclopes dwell,
Fed by the rain of Zeus, in wine doth well,—
But this is nectar, pure ambrosia's soul.'
So spake he. Thrice I gave the fatal spell;
Thrice in his foolishness he quaffed the whole.
Then said I, while his brain with the curling fumes did roll:

49
'Cyclops, thou askest me my name renowned—
Now will I make it known; nor thou withhold
That boon whereeto thy solemn troth is bound—
Hear then; my name is Noman. From of old
My father, mother, these my comrades bold,
Give me this title.' So I spake, and he
Answered at once with mind of ruthless mould:
'This shall fit largess unto Noman be—
Last, after all thy peers, I promise to eat thee.'

50
Therewith his head fell and he lay supine,
Tamed by the stroke of all-subduing sleep;
And the vast neck heaved, while rejected wine
And morsels of men's flesh in spasms did leap
Forth from his throat. Then did I rise, and deep
In the live embers hid the pointed stake,
Urging my comrades a good heart to keep.
Soon the green olive-wood the fire did bake;
Then all a-glow with sparkles I the red brand take.
Round me my comrades wait. The gods inbreathe
Fierce ardour. In his eye we thrust the brand,
I twirling from above and they beneath.
As when a shipwright at his work doth stand
Boring ship-timber, and on either hand
His fellows, kneeling at their toil below,
Whirl the swift auger with a leathern band
For ever;—we the weapon keep whirling so,
While round the fiery point red blood doth bubbling flow.

And from the burning eyeball the fierce steam
Singed all his brows, and the deep roots of sight
Crackled with fire. As when in the cold stream
Some smith the axe untempered, fiery-white,
Dips hissing; for thence comes the iron’s might;
So did his eye hiss, and he roared again.
Loudly the vault rebellowed. We in flight
Rushed diverse. He the stake wrenched forth amain,
Soaked in the crimson gore, and hurled it mad with pain;

Then, bursting forth into a mighty yell,
Called the Cyclopes, who in cave and lair
’Mid the deep glens and windy hill-tops dwell.
They, trooping to the shriek from far and near,
Ask from without what ails him: ‘In what fear
Or trouble, Polyphemus, dost thou cry
Through night ambrosial, and our slumbers scare?
Thee of thy flocks doth mortal violently
Despoil, or strive to kill by strength or treachery?’
54
And frenzied Polyphemus from the cave
This answer in his pain with shrieks out-threw:
‘Never by strength, my friends, or courage brave!
Noman by treachery doth me subdue.’
Whereto his fellows wingèd words renew:
‘Good sooth! if no man work thee injury,
But in thy lone resort this sickness grew,
The hand of Zeus is not to be put by—
Go, then, in filial prayer to king Poseidon cry.’

55
So they retiring; and I laughed in heart,
To find the shrewd illusion working well.
But the dread Cyclops over every part
Groped eyeless with wild hands, in anguish fell,
Rolled back the massive mouthstone from the cell,
And in the door sat waving everywhere
His lightless arms, to capture or repel
Any forth venturing with his flocks to fare—
Dreaming to deal with one of all good prudence bare.

56
Seeking deliverance ’mid these dangers rife,
So deadly-near the mighty evil pressed,
All thoughts I weave as one that weaves for life,
All kinds of scheming in my spirit test;
And this of various counsels seemed the best.
Fat rams there were, with goodly fleeces dight
Of violet-tinted wool. These breast to breast
I silent link with osiers twisted tight,
Whereon the ill-minded Cyclops used to sleep at night.
57
By threes I linked them, and each middle one
Carried a man: one walked on either side:
Such was our plan the monster’s rage to shun;
And thus three rams for each man we provide.
But I, choosing a beast than all beside
Fairer, in length more large and strength of spine,
Under his belly in the woolly hide
Clinging with both hands resolutely recline;
And thus, groaning in soul, we wait the Dawn divine.

58
But with the rosy-fingered Morn troop thence
The fat rams toward their pastures eagerly,
While bleat the unmilked ewes with udders tense,
Distressful. So their lord, while each went by,
Feeling their backs with many a bitter sigh,
Dreamed not that we clung bound beneath the breast.
Last came the great ram, trailing heavily
Me and his wool, with cumbersome weight oppressed.
Him mighty Polyphemus handling thus addressed:

59
‘Ah! mine own fondling, why dost linger now
So late?—far other wast thou known of old.
With lordly steps the flowery pastures thou
First ever seekest, and the waters cold,
First too at eve returnest to the fold.—
Now last of all—dost thou thy master’s eye
Bewail, whose dear orb, when I sank controlled
With wine, this Noman vile with infamy,
Backed by his rascal crew, hath darkened treacherously?’
60

'Whom let not vaunt himself escaped this debt,
Nor think me quenched and poor and powerless;
Vengeance may chance to overtake him yet.
O hadst thou mind like mine, and couldst address
Thy master, and the secret lair confess
Wherein my wrath he shuns, then should his brain
Dashed on the earth with hideous stamp impress
Pavement and wall, appeasing the fell pain
Which from this Noman-traitor nothing-worth I drain!'

61

Thus spake he, and the great ram from his doors
Dismissed. A little outward from the cave
Borne with the flock we passed, and left his floors
Blood-stained behind, escaping a dire grave.
First mine own bands I loosened, and then gave
My friends their freedom: but the slow fat sheep,
Lengthily winding, to the ships we drave.
Joy stirred within our comrades strong and deep,
Glad of our help from doom, though forced the slain to weep.

62

Natethess their lamentations I made cease,
And with bent brows gave signal not to wail;
But with all haste the flock so fine of fleece
Bade them on shipboard set, and forward sail.
So they the canvass open to the gale
And with timed oarage smite the foamy mere.
Soon from such distance as the voice might hail
A landsman, and by shouting make him hear,
I to the Cyclops shrilled with scorn and cutting jeer:
63

'Cyclops, you thought to eat a poor man's friends
Here in your cavern by sheer brutal might.
Go to: rough vengeance on thy crime attends;
Since, in thy soul not reverencing the right,
Thy guests thou hast devoured in foul despite,
Even on thine own hearth. Therefore Zeus at last
And all the gods thine evil deeds requite.'
So did I blow wind on his anger's blast.
He a hill-peak tore off, and the huge fragment cast

64

Just o'er the blue-prowed ship. As the mass fell,
Heaved in a stormy tumult the great main,
Bearing us landward on the refluent swell.
I a long barge-pole seize and strive and strain
To work our vessel toward the deep again,
Still beckoning to my crew to ply the oar;
Who stoop to the strong toil and pull right fain
To twice the former distance from the shore.
Then stood I forth to hail the Cyclops yet once more.

65

Me then my friends with dear dissuasions tire
On all sides, one and other. 'Desperate one!
Why wilt thou to a wild man's wrath add fire?
Hardly but now did we destruction shun,
So nigh that hurling had our bark undone.
Yea, let a movement of the mouth but show
Where through the billows from his rage we run,
And he with heads will strew the dark sea-flow,
And break our timbered decks—so mightily doth he
throw.'
So spake they, but so speaking could not turn
My breast large-hearted; and again I sent
Accents of wrath, his inmost soul to burn:
'Cyclops, if mortal man hereafter, bent
To know the story of this strange event,
Should of thy hideous blindness make demand,
Asking whence came this dire disfigurement,
Name thou Laertes-born Odysseus' hand,
Waster of walls, who dwells in Ithaca's rough land.'

Then did he groaning in these words reply:
'Gods! the old oracles upon me break—
That warning of the antique prophecy
Which Telemus Eurymides once spake—
Skilled seer, who on our hills did auguries take,
And waxed in years amid Cyclopian race.
Of all these things did he foreshadowings make,
And well proclaimed my pitiable case,
And how this lightless brow Odysseus should deface.

'But always I some great and beauteous man
Expected, one in awful strength arrayed,
So to assail me as the legend ran.
Now one unworthy by unworthy aid
Doth blind me helpless, and with wine waylaid,
And all-to strengthless doth surpass the strong.
But come, Odysseus, let respect be paid
To thee my guest, and thou shalt sail ere long,
By the Earth-shaker wafted, free from scathe and wrong.
69
‘His child am I, my sire he boasts to be,
Who if he will, none else of mortal seed
Or of the blest, can heal my wound.’ Thus he:
But I made answer: ‘Now in very deed
I would to heaven this right arm might succeed
So surely in thy death, as I am sure
That not Poseidon even, at thy need,
Thee of thine eyelessness hath power to cure.
Know well thy fatal hurt for ever shall endure.

70
Then to the king Poseidon he made prayer,
Lifting his hand up to the starry sky:
‘Hear now, great monarch of the raven hair;
Holder of earth, Poseidon, hear my cry,
If thou my father art indeed, and I
Thy child! Or ever he the way fulfil,
Make thou Laertes-born Odysseus die,
Waster of walls! or should the high Fates will
That friends and home he see, then lone and late and ill

71
‘Let him return on board a foreign ship,
And in his house find evil!’ Thus he prayed
With hand uplifted and indignant lip;
And the dark-haired one heeded what he said.
He then his hand upon a great stone laid,
Larger by far than that he hurled before,
And the huge mass in booming flight obeyed
The measureless impulse, and right onward bore,
There 'twixt the blue-prowed bark descending and the shore,
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72
Just short of ruin; and the foaming wave
Whitened in boiling eddies where it fell,
And rolling toward the isle our vessel drave,
Tossed on the mane of that tumultuous swell.
There found we all our fleet defended well,
And comrades sorrow-laden on the sand,
Hoping if yet, past hope, the seas impel
Their long-lost friends to the forsaken strand—
Grated our keel ashore; we hurrying leap on land.

73
Straight from the hollow bark our prize we share,
That none might portionless come off. To me
The ram for my great guerdon then and there
My well-greaved comrades gave in courtesy;
Which I to Zeus, supreme in majesty,
Killed on the shore, and burned the thighs with fire:
But to mine offering little heed gave he;
Since deep within his heart the cloud-wrapt Sire
Against both friends and fleet sat musing deathful ire.

74
So till the sun fell did we drink and eat,
And all night long beside the billows lay,
Till blushed the hills 'neath morning's rosy feet;
Then did I bid my friends, with break of day,
Loosen the hawser, and each bark array;
Who take the benches and the whitening main
Cleave with the sounding oars, and sail away.
So from the isle we part, not void of pain,
Right glad of our own lives, but grieving for the slain.
BOOK X.

THE NARRATIVE OF ODYSSEUS CONTINUED—ÆOLUS,
THE LÆSTRYGONIANS, CIRCE.
BOOK X.

1
So to Æolia came we on, where dwelt
Æolus, god-loved child of Hippotas.
All round the island stretched a lucid belt,
Based on the sheer rock, a long mount of brass.
There his twelve children the sweet seasons pass,
Six sons, six daughters, (each hath wedded one),
And evermore lies piled a fragrant mass
Of dainties on the board from sun to sun,
While with their mother dear and sire they still feast on.

2
Round the fair court the steamy halls all day
Murmur. At night within his wife’s embrace
Each on elaborate couch of fine array
Sleeps. We came down unto their beauteous place;
And a whole month with feast and courtly grace
He, the king, loved me, and did ask me there
Of Ilion and the ships and Argive race,
How they sailed homeward. These things I declare
In full, and convoy ask that I may home repair.
3
He, not at all refusing, stripped the hide
Of a nine-seasoned steer, and gave it me.
Therein the courses of the winds he tied,
He their one keeper by the Sire's decree,
At will to quench and raise by land or sea.
So with a silver cord he bound them fast,
Escapeless; only Zephyr he left free,
To waft us home. Far otherwise at last
Chanced! Through our own vain will to bitter doom
we passed.

4
Nine days and nights we sailed; the tenth revealed,
Hard by, the dear rocks of our native strand;
Yea, we saw men tend fires amid the field.
Then sweet sleep came upon me, for my hand,
Trustless of other, set the helm for land,
O'er-wearied, hoping to deliver us.
Then spake in whispers my unfaithful band,
How I much gold and silver carried thus
From child of Hippotas, large-hearted Æolus.

5
'Ye Gods!' quoth they, 'how loved beyond all price,
Wherever he resort, this man doth seem!
Huge plunder, curious works of rich device,
Brings he from Troy, and doth with treasures teem.
We, who an equal freight of ills extreme
Have suffered, empty-handed take our way.
Come (for he slumbers in oblivious dream),
This gold and silver, his peculiar prey
Tied up, the god's love-gift, now haste we to essay!'
Thus, their ill thought prevailing, they untied
The skin—whom straight the battling tempests bore
Far from their country o'er the ocean wide,
Weeping. Half-stunned with the tumultuous roar
I, scared from slumber, sat debating sore
Whether to die beneath the rolling heap
Of waters, or bear life a little more.
Soon to a dark lair muffled-mute I creep,
And brood there, while the barks drive headlong through
the deep.

Back to Æolia groaning we descend,
There disembark, draw water, drink, and eat.
Soon with the herald and one else I wend
On toward the house, the king of winds to greet.
Him with his wife and children couched at meat
We found within his halls magnificent.
There entering, on the ground we take our seat
Hard by the doors, as from some dire event.
Then all with one accord spake, wondering what it
meant.

'Whence comest thou, Odysseus? what bad fate
Lays hold upon thee? Surely, with due care,
Armed with each means, we sent thee hence of late,
To fatherland and home, and wheresoe'er
Thy mind incline thee through the seas to fare.'
I grieving: 'Faithless friends, my doom have wrought
And sleep pernicious. O the loss repair,
For ye are able!' Wrapt in silent thought
Paused they awhile, till he, the sire, this answer brought:
9
'Out and avaunt, thou worst of souls alive!
How can I cherish, or dismiss with love,
One whom the blessed gods will not let thrive?
Hence! Thou art hated by the powers above!'
So did he make me from his halls remove
Deep-groaning; and thenceforward on our way
In sorrow through the briny seas we drove.
Then did the men's hearts fail them night and day,
Tired with the grievous oar, while guideless far we stray.

10
So for six days and nights we laboured on;
But with the seventh unto Lamos drew,
And the wide-gated Læstrygonian town,
Where shepherd calls to shepherd, entering through
The portals, and the other makes answer due.
There might one sleepless earn a double wage,
Tending white flocks and hornèd oxen too,
Since in that region, rich in pasturage,
Night with the day doth move, and measure equal stage.

11
There came we to the rock-surrounded bay
Whence fronting headlands at the mouth outrun,
Leaving a little narrow entrance-way,
Wherethrough they drive the vessels one by one,
And in the hollow haven bind them down,
Each near to each; since wave nor great nor small
Ruffles the silver surface. I alone
Guarded my black ship far aloof from all,
Bound to the outer cliff, to wait what should befall.
So to a rocky outlook; whence appear
Nor works of men nor oxen; but we see
Vapour of smoke up-rolling through the air.
Forthwith I send the herald, chief of three,
First to find out what manner of men they be,
There feeding. These a track, worn deep and brown
With timber-laden wains, selecting, see
Child of the Læstrygonian coming down
To fair Artacia's well for water from the town,

And, standing near, accost her and inquire
Who of that land may wield the sovran right.
She then the high-roofed mansion of her sire
Points, and the pathway to his portals bright.
They entering find his wife, a loathly sight,
Large as a mountain-column, keeping ward.
She toward the marketplace with all her might
Screams for Antiphates her noble lord;
Who came, and, seizing one, prepared his meal abhorred.

Straight rushed the twain unto the ships in flight,
He through the city raising hue and cry;
While Læstrygonians to the left and right
Trooped forth in thousands, not to human eye
Like men, but giants. There they hurled on high
Handfuls of rock against our ships, and lo!
Shrieks, as of wounded seamen ere they die,
Passed, and the crash of timbers, to and fro.
Spearing our friends, like fish, their bloody spoil they stow.
15
While these were dying in the haven deep,
I my sharp sword unsheathing from my side
Severed the cord that linked us to the steep,
And stern and loud to my companions cried,
Swift with their oars the dark waves to divide,
And rush from ruin sounding in our rear:
Who straight with one accord their task well plied,
Till the glad vessel of the cliffs ran clear;
But all the rest lay welmed in one destruction sheer.

16
Thence we sail onwards, overwhelmed with pain,
Glad of our lives yet grieving for the dead,
And to the isle Ἀέα safe attain,
Where dwelt the bright-haired Circe, goddess dread,
Voiced like a mortal; from the self-same bed
Sprung with Ἀετῆς, of the luminous Sun,
By Perse, Ocean's child. We, onward led,
Thither by guidance of some god came down,
And the commodious haven in calm silence won.

17
Eating our hearts two days and nights we lay.
When the Dawn shining-haired the third light brought,
With spear and sword I took my lonely way
Forth from the ship, intent on mine own thought,
And on the cliffs commanding outlook sought,
If human works I might discern, or hear
Murmur ascend, with mortal language fraught.
Then marked I, o'er the greenwood rising clear,
Smoke from the wide-wayed earth by Circe's halls appear.
Gazing, in soul I doubted to inquire
What this might mean; but seemed it at the last
Best to my bark and comrades to retire,
And send forth others, after due repast.
So as I moved on toward the ocean vast,
Some god, compassioning my poor estate,
Showed full in front an antlered hart, that passed
Down from the deep glades, for the heat was great,
There in the river-streams his fever to abate.

Him through the middle chine as forth he came
I with my spear smote, and the iron head
Clave the moist bone, so deadly was the aim.
Low in the dust he moaned; his spirit fled.
I on the carcase plant my lusty tread,
And tug the weapon from the wound. Anon
Twisting some tough green withs, the monster dread
I fasten foot to foot, and so pass on,
And to the black ship bear the prize my hand had won.

Slung round my neck I bear the load, and went
Leaning with labour on my shafted spear,
Such was the beast's vast volume. Soon, half-spent,
I cast it by the ship, and standing near
Called to my crew, each several heart to cheer:
'Friends, for not yet until the fated day
Shall we go down, whatever woes appear,
To Hades, eat and drink while yet ye may,
Nor let the fangs of famine waste our lives away.'
They at my voice the sunlight and cool sands
Seek heart-renewed, and on the mighty beast
Slake their mute wonder, and then wash their hands,
And all day long partake the glorious feast
Till the sun fell and their desire had ceased;
Then, wrapt in silence under Night's dark pall,
Sleep, till their heavy eyelids Dawn released.
Straight a full council of my friends I call,
There on the barren beach, and thus harangue them all:

'Hear now my words, though many griefs ye feel!
For now we know not which is East or West,
Nor where the Sun, the world's great lamp, shall wheel
Downward, or issue from his couch of rest.
Come let us shape, my friends, within our breast
Some counsel—yet no hope doth seem of ease;
For, when I gazed from yonder cliff's tall crest,
I found an isle zoned in with boundless seas,
And with mine eyes beheld smoke curling through the trees.'

Therewith I ended: ere my speech was o'er
Their dear heart brake for very load of woe,
Calling to memory the anguish sore
Which from the Læstrygonians late did flow,
And from the fury of the Cyclops grow,
Eater of men. So were they fain to steep
Their eyes, and weather-beaten cheeks below,
With salt tears, lifting up their voice to weep;
Nathless there came no help from lamentations deep.
24

Then in two bands I numbered all my train,
Each with its chief. One to myself I took;
One did to fair Eurylochus pertain.
Then we the lots in steely helmet shook,
And his leapt forth; nor he the work forsook,
But passed with twain-and-twenty ranged around,
Weeping; we after them yearned many a look
Weeping. So in the woods the house they found
Of Circe, stone well-hewn, and on conspicuous ground.

25

Wolves of the mountain all around the way,
And lions, softened by the spells divine,
As each her philters had partaken, lay.
These cluster round the men's advancing line
Fawning like dogs, who, when their lord doth dine,
Wait till he issues from the banquet-hall,
And for the choice gifts which his hands assign
Fawn, for he ne'er forgets them—so these all
Fawn on our friends, whom much the unwonted sights appal.

26

Soon at her vestibule they pause, and hear
A voice of singing from a lovely place,
Where Circe weaves her great web year by year,
So shining, slender, and instinct with grace,
As weave the daughters of immortal race.
Then said Polites, nearest, first in worth
Of all my friends: 'Hark! through the echoing space
Floats a sweet music charming air and earth!
Call! for some goddess bright or woman gave it birth.'
Thus spake he, and they lifted up their voice
And called her. She the brilliant doors anon
Unfolding bade them in her halls rejoice;
Who entered in not knowing, save alone
Eurylochus, misdoubting fraud. Full soon
Benches and chairs in fair array she set,
And mixing meal and honey, poured thereon
Strong Prannian wine, and with the food they ate
Beat up her baleful drugs, to make them quite forget

Their country. They receiving drank, unwise.
Forthwith she smote them with her wand divine,
And drave them out, and shut them close in styes,
Where they the head, voice, form, and hair of swine
Took, but the heart stayed sane, as ere the wine
Confused them; they thus to their lairs retreat;
She food, whereon the brutish herd might dine,
Furnished, mast, acorns, their familiar meat,
Such as earth-grovelling swine are ever wont to eat.

Then sought Eurylochus the swift black ship,
The bitter fortune of his friends to tell;
Nor, when he came there, could he stir a lip,
Nor the thing show that in his soul did swell.
Tongueless he stood, heart-wounded, weak to quell
The agony within; a dark dumb rain
Of weeping ever from his eyelids fell;
Much did we wonder and inquire his pain,
Till words at last he found his anguish to make plain.
'Searching as thou, Odysseus, didst command,
We a fair palace in the woodland gain,
Where one that plied the distaff with her hand
Sang sweet—divine or mortal. Then my train
Called her, and she, the brilliant portals twain
Unfolding, bade them to her halls; but I,
Doubtful of guile, without the doors remain.
There all the rest are vanished utterly;
Sitting long time I watched; not one could I descry.'

Forthwith my silver-hilted sword I take,
Arrows and bow, and bid him go before;
But he with both hands clasped my knees, and spake
Accents of winged words, bewailing sore:
'Force me not, hero, to that hated door!
Drag me not hence to perish! for I know
Thou and thy comrades will return no more.
Rather with these right quickly let us go,
And save our souls through flight, and shun the evil
woe.'

But I: 'Eurylochus, abide thou here
Fast by the hollow ship, and drink and eat;
But I will hence. Necessity severe
Constrains me.' Thus I passing turned my feet
On through the glens for the divine retreat
Of Circe; and a youth, in form and mould
Fair as when tender manhood seems most sweet,
Beautiful Hermes, with the wand of gold,
Met me alone and there my hand in his did fold.
33

'Whither,' he said, 'wouldst thou thy steps incline,
Ah! hapless, all unweeting of thy way?
Thy friends lie huddling in their styes like swine;
And these wouldst thou deliver? I tell thee nay—
Except I help thee, thou with them shalt stay.
Come, take this talisman to Circe's hall,
For I will save thee from thine ills this day,
Nor leave like ruin on thy life to fall,
Since her pernicious wiles I now will tell thee all.

34

'Drink will she mix, and in thy food will charm
Drugs, but in vain, because I give thee now
This antidote beyond her power of harm.
When she shall smite thee with her wand, do thou
Draw thy sharp sword, and fierce design avow
To slay her. She will bid thee to her bed,
Fearing thy lifted arm and threatening brow.
Nor thou refuse, that so her heart be led
To loose thy luckless friends, and on thee kindness shed.

35

'But by the grand oath of immortals blest
First bind her, ere thou yield, that she no wrong
Scheme for thy ruin in her secret breast,
Lest, naked and unmanned, thou linger long
Pent in vile durance with her swinish throng.'
Therewith the root he tore up from the ground,
Black, with a milk-white flower, in heavenly tongue
Called Moly, and its nature did expound—
Hard to be dug by men; in gods all power is found.
Then to the far Olympus Hermes went,
Sheer through the woodland isle; but I repaired
Onward to Circe's halls magnificent,
And with a heaving heart the danger dared.
Soon to the shining vestibule I fared,
And lifted up my voice and loudly called.
Then came she forth, dread goddess, gleaming-haired,
And, bright gates of her mansion marble-walled
Unfolding, bade me in, heart-pained yet unappalled.

So to a silver-studded carven chair
My steps she led, and made me rest thereon;
Under my feet there lay a footstool fair;
And in a goblet of pure gold anon
Mixing a philter, like that former one,
She the pernicious poison did instil,
Then gave me, and I drank—but change came none.
Last with her mystic wand, intending ill,
She smote me, and thus spake, her dread charm to fulfil:

'Now to the styre, and with thy comrades sleep!'
But my sharp steel unsheathing from my thigh
On the enchantress, as in rage, I leap,
Armed, with the flash of murder in mine eye.
She, screaming, clasped my knees, in dread to die—
'Who then art thou?' she cried: 'Where is thy place,
Thy parents, who these philters canst defy?
Never before did lips of mortal race
Drink of this cup, and still retain their former grace.
39

‘Tis thy breast alone a charmless heart doth hold.
Art thou Odysseus many-wiled, whom he,
The golden-wanded Hermes, oft foretold,
That from far Troia wandering o'er the sea
He to this coast should sail, and visit me?
But come, return thy sword into his sheath,
And afterward ascend my couch, that we
Mingled together, this my roof beneath,
Of loves may take our fill, and mutual trust inbreathe.’

40

I answering spake: ‘O Circe, sue me not
For friendship, who hast changed to swine my crew,
And with false love wouldst make their doom forgot,
That naked and unmanned I here may rue
Thy sorceries dark. This thing will I not do,
Save that the grand oath of the gods thou swear,
That in thy heart thou mean'st not evil new.’
Therewith I ended, and the goddess sware,
And, after, I went up her couch of love to share.

41

Meanwhile four handmaids, Circe's household train,
Who of the fountains and the forest spring
And sacred streams that to the ocean main
Flow forth for ever, for the banquet bring
Each her own tribute. Purple covering
One o'er the thrones doth beauteously unfold,
And the fine linen underneath them fling,
And one the silver table's massive mould
Widely in front displays, and vessels of pure gold.
42
The third in silver wine doth mix full sweet,
And golden beakers on the board array:
The fourth brings water in her hands, to heat,
And in huge caldron on the fire doth lay;
Soon in the bickering brass the bubbles play.
Then to the bath she led me, and, with care
Tempering a warmth delicious, made it stray
Smoothly adown my shoulders, face, and hair,
Till from worn limbs the toil did wholly disappear.

43
Then from the bath anointed, robed in fair
Apparel, forth she led me to the hall,
And placed me in a silver-studded chair,
Rich, dædal, covered with a crimson pall,
And bade me eat; but mirth and festival
Displeased me, for I pictured evil things.
Therefore when Circe marked my visage fail,
And me through sorrow’s forced imaginings
Loathing to eat, she came and urged these questionings:

44
‘Why then, Odysseus, like one dumb dost sit
Eating thy heart, not tasting drink or food?
Art thou foreboding new enchantments yet?
Come, let vile fear be banished from thy blood,
Since I have sworn to thee an oath for good.’
Whereto I answered: ‘Who could bear to feast,
O Circe, were but justice understood,
Till the sore durance of his friends had ceased?
Nay, let these eyes first see my true ones all released.’
45
I ended. Forthwith Circe, wand in hand,
Moved from the hall, and opening wide the stye
Forth drave them; who before the goddess stand
Like swine nine-seasoned. She, approaching nigh,
Smeared over each a different drug, whereby
The hairs dropped from them which the former bane
Had nurtured, and like men in majesty
To their old semblance they returned again,
But with new beauty dowered, a taller younger train.

46
Also they knew me and clasped eagerly
My hand, and happy lamentation rose
Of voices yearning as in agony,
Till the wide arches seemed to ring with woes.
She then herself, with pity pierced, bestows
These words: 'Divine Odysseus, hasten hence!
First draw thy bark aground, and deep enclose
In the sea-caves thy tackling, and dispense
Safely thy goods, then bring thy loyal comrades thence.'

47
So spake she, and my manly heart obeyed;
And to the ship descending and the shore
I found my friends, with miseries o'erweighed,
Shedding the frequent tear-drop evermore.
As when a sort of country calves doth pour
Thick round their grass-filled mothers, and with blare
Of welcome urge their eager pastime, nor
Can the close fences round about their lair
Confine them, stung with joy, still leaping here and there,—
48
So when these saw me with their eyes, they pressed
Not without tears around me, and their blood
Stirred with such pulses in their yearning breast
As on the much-desired sweet earth they stood
Of Ithaca’s rough island crowned with wood,
Their country-home, where they were born and bred.
Mourning they spake: ‘At thy return such mood
We feel, as far from sorrows we had sped
To Ithaca: but haste, inform us of our dead!’

49
I in soft words made answer: ‘From the waves
First hale we to the sandy continent
Our bark, and shelter in the chambered cave
For all our wealth and naval arms invent.
Thence unto Circe’s halls magnificent
Move in my train, that ye your friends may find
Eating and drinking, who nowise repent
Their sojourn, such good cheer is there assigned;
Plenty untold they reap and all things to their mind.’

50
So spake I, and Eurylochus alone
Withstood me to my friends: ‘Poor fools!’ he cried,
‘Who love your own loss, urgent to be gone
To Circe, who our manly forms will hide
In swine, wolves, lions, there to guard her pride
Maugre ourselves. Think how the Cyclops wrought,
When in his slaughter-house our comrades died,
Ay, mark me well, by the foolhardy thought
Of even this same Odysseus to destruction brought.’
51
Thus while he spoke I doubted if to draw
My sword and whirl to the earth his recreant head,
Kin to mine own; but when the others saw
My purpose, each in soft dissuasion said:
‘Him will we leave, Zeus-born, to his own dread,
But lead thou us to Circe.’ Thereupon
Inland together from the shore we sped;
Nor did Eurylochus remain alone,
But followed, fearing sore my wrath against him shown.

52
But all this while within her stately halls
Circe my friends bathed and anointed fair
With oil, nor fine-spun tunics and rich pallis
Of purple fabric did for raiment spare;
Whom feasting in her presence found we there,
And each perusing other face to face
Lifted his voice and wept, that far and near
Rang the deep echoes through the high-roofed space;
And the divine one spake uprising in her place:

53
‘Wail ye no longer! I too understand
In the fish-teeming deep what ills ye bore,
And how barbarians scathed you on the land.
Eat food and drink wine—is there not good store?—
Till the same courage that ye felt of yore,
When first from Ithaca ye sailed, come back.
Now strengthless, and unnerved in your heart’s core,
Ye languish, and old griefs your memory rack,
The wanderings to and fro, the long-lost homeward track.’
54
So spake she, and our manly heart obeyed.
Then all the livelong days through seasons clear
We feasted, till the waning months had made
Full cycle, and completed a whole year.
Then whispered me apart my comrades dear:
‘Remember now our fatherland, and warn
Thine heart, if Fate yet grant thy ears to hear
The language of the land where thou wast born,
And view the high-roofed halls whence thou hast long
been torn.’

55
They ended, and my manly heart obeyed,
And all day long, until the falling sun,
We ate and drank, in festal robes arrayed,
Till light departed, and the cloud came on.
Then through the shadowy halls they passed each one
To slumber. I the while with Circe lay,
And by her knees made prayer: ‘Fulfil thy boon,
O Circe, for my heart breaks day by day
With wailings of my friends, when thou art gone away.’

56
I ended, and the goddess made reply:
‘Zeus-born Odysseus, dwell not here with me
Unwilling; yet remaineth that ye try
Other adventure, the dark realms to see
Of Hades and revered Persephone,
There from Tiresias the truth to know,
Blind seer, but whole in spirit, on whom she,
Queen of the dead, great wisdom doth bestow
Even there; but all the rest flit shadowy to and fro.’
Thus answered Circe, but my dear heart brake;
And from the couch I rose and sat thereon,
Weeping for sorrow at the word she spake,
Nor any longer wished to see the sun.
But when my tossings and my tears were done,
These wingèd words I uttered in my pain:
‘Ah! by what guidance shall this way be won?
Never did black ship yet that coast attain,
O Circe!’ Thus I sighed. She answering spake again:

‘Zeus-born Odysseus, brave Laértiades,
Fret not thyself for guidance, but thy mast
Plant, and unfurl the white sails to the breeze,
And thee reclining shall the Boreal blast
Drive onward. When the ocean thou hast passed
And reached the soil of dark Persephone,
Sown with the fruitless willow, withering fast,
And poplar, hale thy bark from the deep sea,
And move towards Hades’ house gloom-bound eternally.

‘There into Acheron Cocytus glides,
Streaming from Styx, and Pyriphlegethon;
Under a great rock meet the sounding tides.
There, hero, land, and scoop a trench anon
One cubit square, and give the dead their own
Drink-offerings, mead, then wine, and water last;
And sprinkle the white meal, and call upon
The shades, and vow, when all thy toils are passed
A heifer choice and pyre where all good things are cast.
60

‘And, after, promise to the Theban seer
One sheep all-black; thy best of sheep, to kill.
So when thou shalt have-ended all thy prayer
And in the dead tribes a propitious will
Wrought by just vows, thy purpose to fulfil,
Then sacrifice a ram and sable ewe
Toward Erebus: but thou thyself bend still
Thine eyes upon the rivers, and all the crew
Of strengthless shades shall flock thy sacrifice to view.

61

‘Then bid thy comrades haste those sheep to flay
Slain with the knife, and burn them down with fire,
And to Persephone and Hades pray.
But thou with drawn sword seated near the pyre
Warn from the blood those shades, till thou inquire
First of Tiresias, the blind old seer.
He from the crowd advancing, noble sire,
All thy long voyage shall foretell thee clear—
How through the deep fish-teeming thou mayst safely steer.’

62

She ended, and the Morning golden-throned
Came, and she then arrayed me in rich vest
And mantle; but the Nymph her own form zoned
With golden girdle underneath her breast,
Over a silver-flowing robe, and drest
With gleaming veil her head: but I forth paced,
And, near each standing, gently made behest:
‘No more cull slumber, and the boon hours waste!
Circe our way makes plain. Rise up, my friends, and haste!’
63
So did I speak, and they obedience gave;
Yet could I not take all, from losses free;
For one there was, our youngest, not too brave
In war, nor apt for good, Elpenor. He
Weighted with wine lay drowsing heavily
High in the cool; who, when the hurrying call
Rose and the beat of footsteps, suddenly
Started, and mindless of the ladder tall,
Sheer from the high-built roof unto the ground did fall.

64
So were his neck-bones broken, but the soul
Swift to the gloomy house of Hades fled.
Then to my comrades I made known the whole
Of Circe's counsel: 'Haply, friends,' I said,
'Ye hope to your own country to be led;
But Circe other road appointed has—
To Hades and Persephone most dread—
Soul of the Theban seer Tiresias
There to consult, and learn what change may come to
pass.'

65
Therewith I ended, and their dear heart brake,
And sitting down they wailed and tore the hair;
Yet came no rescue for their sorrow's sake.
Still weeping to the ship we made repair,
And found a ram and black ewe tethered there,
The destined guerdon of the shades below,
By Circe; for she passed us, without care
Invisible; for who with eyes may know
Against their will immortals moving to and fro?
BOOK XI.

THE NARRATIVE OF ODYSSEUS CONTINUED—THE VISIT TO HADES.
BOOK XI.

1
So to our ship descending and the deep,
Her we launch first upon the noble main,
Then set the masts and sails, and take the sheep
Embarking, filled with sorrow and tears and pain.
Natheless the fair-haired Circe to our gain
After the blue-prowed vessel sent a breeze,
Our good companion, bellying with high strain
The sails, and, we reclining at our ease,
Steersman and prosperous wind impelled us through the seas.

2
All the day long the silvery foam we clave,
Wind in the well-stretched canvass following free,
Till the sun stooped beneath the western wave,
And darkness veiled the spaces of the sea.
Then to the limitary land came we
Of the sea-river, streaming deep, where dwell,
Shrouded in mist and gloom continually,
That people, from sweet light secluded well,
The dark Cimmerian tribes, who skirt the realms of hell.
Never the Sun that giveth light to men
Looks down upon them with his golden eye,
Or when he climbs the starry arch, or when
Slope toward the earth he wheels adown the sky;
But sad Night weighs upon them wearily.
Thither we came, and ran the keel ashore,
Landed the victims, and paced silent by
The great sea-river, that with sullen roar
Rolls, till the spot we reached by Circe shown before.

Then Perimedes and Eurylochus
The victims held; but I my gleaming sword
Tore from the scabbard, and dug thus and thus,
A cubit square, and all the shades implored.
Honey and milk, wine, water, forth I poured,
Their due libations, and the white meal gave,
And oft with prayers the strengthless heads adored,
Vowing hereafter, should heaven deign to save,
A heifer choice, and pyre heaped up with treasures brave.

And to Tiresias, for himself alone,
I vowed a ram coal-black, our best, to slay,
Even a peculiar offering and his own,
In Ithaca, on my returning day.
So when at last I made an end to pray,
I took in hand the victims, and beside
The foss implunged the weapon, and made way
Through the dark veins, to broach the steamy tide.
Thus with the crimson life-stream all the trench was dyed.
6
Forthwith from Erebus a phantom crowd
Loomed forth, the shadowy people of the dead,—
Old men, with load of earthly anguish bowed,
Brides in their bloom cut off, and youths unwed,
Virgins whose tender eyelids then first shed
True sorrow, men with gory arms renowned,
Pierced by the sharp sword on the death-plain red.
All these flock darkling with a hideous sound,
Lured by the scent of blood, the open trench around.

7
Then did pale dread possess me; but I stood
Urging my valiant peers to flay with speed
The victims which lay weltering in their blood,
Slain by the steel as Circe had decreed,
And burn them, and by prayers to intercede
With Hades and revered Persephone.
But I my sword unscabbarding gave heed
To scare the feeble phantoms, till that he,
The blind old Theban seer, first taste and answer me.

8
Forth in the front Elpenor's phantom stept,
Our comrade, whom alone in Circe's hall,
Shareless of earth, unburied and unwept,
We left, by other labour, other call
Demanded. Him discerning first of all,
Deep in my inmost soul I pitied him,
And wept and spake in wingèd words withal:
'Elpenor, how beneath the darkness dim
Cam'st thou, on foot more swift, than I with sails that skim
'The ocean?' Thus I spake, but he replied,
Much groaning: 'O Laertes' child divine,
Odysseus many-wiled, alas! I died
By stroke of fate and the dread fumes of wine.
For where the bowers of Circe did assign
Cool resting-place, I dreaming heard a sound,
And rose up and essayed the steep incline,
Not turning; thence fell headlong; and the ground
Brake my neck-bones; my soul in Hades refuge found.

'Now by the names thou lovest far from here,
Thy wife, the father who thy childhood nursed,
And by Telemachus thine offspring dear,
Lone in thy halls, since thou for Ilion erst
Didst sail, O hear me! for I know that first,
Wending from Hades, thou shalt Circe's isle
Revisit. O remember! nor accurst
Leave these my lifeless bones, unhonoured, vile,
Flung to the winds, unwept, without a funeral pile.

'Else surely deep into the after-time
Zeus for my sake shall keep alive his ire,
And sad disaster burgeon from thy crime.
Thou therefore burn me with mine arms entire
Near the sea-billows, on the sacred pyre,
And build of one unblest memorial sign,
Whose story far-off ages may inquire;
And thereon plant the oar that men called mine,
When with my peers in life I ploughed the watery brine.'
I2
There in such wise did he my grace entreat,
And so made ending of his piteous speech;
Wherefore myself gave answer as was meet:
'These things, forlorn one, as thy lips beseech
Will I discharge in full!' Thus each with each
Conversing, still we lingered in our pain.
I all the while my glittering sword outreached
Over the blood; he 'mid the phantom-train
Hearkeneth my words aloof, and answer breathes again.

I3
And next before me my dead mother's shade
Came, Anticleia, daughter of the brave
Autolycus,—whom, when the barks conveyed
Me and my bands to Ilium o'er the wave,
Living I left in Ithaca. Now the grave
Possessed her, and I weeping yearned, nor yet
Taste of the blood nor any access gave,
Till that Tiresias his lips should wet
First in the foss, and show what doom the Fates had set.

I4
Then came the spirit of the Theban seer,
Holding a golden sceptre in his hand,
Who knew me and thus spake: 'Why art thou here,
Zeus-born Odysseus, or at whose command,
To see dead phantoms and a loveless land?
Ah, wretched! wandering from the sun's dear light!
Nathless I pray thee from this trench to stand,
And from the blood withdraw thy falchion bright,
That I may drink, and thee with oracles requite.'
Thus then Tiresias spake. I at the word
Drew backward from the trench, and in a wink
Deep to the hilt my silver-studded sword
Thrust in the scabbard. To the bloody brink
He stooped, and with his shadowy lips made shrink
The sacrificial pool that darkling lay
Beneath him. Having made an end to drink,
Uprose the blameless seer, nor longer stay
Demanded, but forthwith in words began to say:

Zeus-born Odysseus, brave Laértiades,
Fain wouldst thou ask me of thy sweet return—
Which yet God wills not to be made with ease;
Nor the Earth-shaker, as I think, will learn
Those fiery angers to assuage, which burn
For his son's sake, by thee bereft of light.
Nathless e'en yet may ye avail to spurn
Doom from your lives, and to elude his might,
If thou thine own lusts rein and rule thy friends aright.

When first, escaping from the billows dark
And leaving angry tempests in thy lee,
Thou, to Thrinacian coast the well-built bark
Advancing, on the upland plains shalt see
The sun's sleek herds and pasturing flocks, which he,
Who all things overlooks and overhears,
There guardeth for his own continually—
If scatheless ye pass by those sacred steers,
Ithaca yet were yours, albeit with many tears.
'But scathe them, and the gods, I well discern,
Shall on thy sailors and thy ship fulfil
Utmost revenge; and though thyself return,
Yet lone, and late, and overwhelmed with ill,
On foreign shipboard, at a stranger's will,
Shalt thou go back companionless, and find
Wrongs in thy palace, evil men, that still
Woo thy divine wife, and assail her mind
With gifts, and of thy goods no remnant leave behind.

'Yet shall thy virtue wreak against them all
Full judgment; but remember, having slain
By the sharp iron in thy kingly hall,
Whether by fraud or force, the suitor-train,
To take an oar up, and depart again,
Till at the last thou light upon a race
Which eat not salt, nor know the rolling main,
Nor vermeil ships, whose sails from place to place
Waft them like wings, nor oars that sweep the marble
face

'Of ocean. And this notable clear sign
I show, not easy to escape thy care:
When that a man shall meet thee in thy line
Of travel, and accost thee, and declare
That on thy noble shoulder thou dost bear
A winnowing-van, then fix upright thine oar
In that same spot, and sacrifices fair,
A ram, a bull, and a swine-mounting boar,
Slay to Poseidon, monarch of the waters hoar.
21

'Then return home, and sacred hecatombs
To the immortal gods in order due,
To all and each that dwell beneath the domes
Of heaven, present; and lastly shall ensue
Thy calm death, wafted from the billows blue;
And thou shalt fall in a serene old age,
Painless and ripe, with nothing left to do,
While a blest people at thy gates engage
Thy sovereign care. Such future my true lips presage.'

22

Therewith he ended, and I made response:
'Tiresias, well may be this ordinance
Came from the gods themselves. But now pronounce
Why sits my mother's shade and thus askance
Eyes the dark blood, silent as in a trance,
And will not look her own son in the face,
Nor speak one word, nor to my side advance?
Show me some means whereby she may retrace
These features as they are, and know me in this place.'

23

So spake I, and he answered where he stood:
'This word is very simple. Each whomso
Thou suffer of these shades to taste the blood,
Truth will reveal, but if thou nought bestow
Will turn aside.' Thus the seer's shade did go
Toward Hades, having told the fates; but I
Stood yet in sentry by the trench, and lo!
My mother came and drank, and suddenly
She knew me, and winged words poured forth with
many a sigh:
24

‘My child, how cam’st thou under this dark gloom,  
Yet living? Hard it is for mortal eyes  
To view these realms, ere yet the stroke of doom  
Send them down sunless. In the midst there lies  
The great sea-river, scornig the emprise  
Of pilgrims. Cam’st thou from the Ilian strife,  
Tost on the waves beneath tempestuous skies,  
And with thy friends bewailing a sad life,  
Nor to thy native isle hast sailed, nor seen thy wife?’

25

She ceasing, I made answer: ‘Mother mine,  
’Twas hard necessity that led me here,  
To Hades, craving the response divine  
Of old Tiresias the Theban seer.  
Not yet Achaia’s realms have I come near,  
Nor on my native earth set foot, but still  
Have wandered in my woes this many a year,  
Since first I sailed at Agamemnon’s will  
For Ilion horse-renowned, to work the Trojans ill.

26

‘But say what doom destroyed thee, whether pain  
Of sickness, or the shafts of Artemis  
Silently falling in a sweet death-rain—  
And of my sire and son declare now this,  
If to mine honour they succeed, or miss  
Due sovereignty, and men usurp their right,  
And think me fall’n from old supremacies—  
And if my wife dwell with my child, or slight  
The household, and hath wed some Argive, chief in might.’
27

I ended, and the venerable shade
Gave answer: 'Yea, within the house thy wife
Bears yet a loyal soul and undismayed;
Natheless the nights and days her flower of life
Waste slowly, with continual weepings rife—
None hath as yet usurped thy regal right;
Telemachus inherits without strife
Thy fields, and him the chieftains all invite
To banquets that besem his dignities aright—

28

'And, leaving evermore the town unsought,
Lone in his farm abideth still thy sire,
Nor of rich coverlet nor couch takes thought.
In winter he in ashes near the fire
Sleeps with his servants, clothed in mean attire;
Through summer and the golden harvesting
Nought save a lair of leaves doth he require,
Where for thy sake he lies down sorrowing,
While grief a hard old age upon his bones doth bring.

29

'So have I also perished ere my time;
I too, thy mother, by such fate was slain;
Nor arrows of the Huntress-queen sublime,
Silently falling in a sweet death-rain,
My life invaded, nor the lingering pain
Of sickness, that all strength drags to decay—
But love, my child, that cuts the heart in twain,
Thy love, thy dreamèd sweetness night and day,
Made bitterness my bread and reft my soul away!'
Therewith she ended, and a deep unrest
Urged me to clasp the spirit of the dead,
And fold a phantom to my yearning breast.
Thrice I essayed with eager hands outspread,
Thrice like a shadow or a dream she fled,
And my palms closed on unsubstantial air.
Then was I whelmed in disappointment dread,
Sterner calamity, more quick despair;
And sadly in winged words I spake appealing there:

‘Ah! mine own mother, tell me, tell me why
Thou scornest to abide my fond embrace.
Could we but clasp each other feelingly,
Even in Hades might we yet find place
To slake our sorrows, and enjoy long space
Of weeping. Or hath proud Persephone
Sent me a shadow with thy form and face
Only to mock me, that I yet might see
Some bitterness beyond my former misery?’

I ceased, and she made answer: ‘O my child,
’Tis not Persephone deludes thee here.
This is their portion who, from light exiled,
Dying descend into these regions drear,
Sinewless, fleshless, boneless. On the bier
All substance was burnt out by force of fire,
When first the spirit, her cold flight to steer,
Left the white bones, and fluttering from the pyre
Straight to these shadowy realms did like a dream retire.
33
‘Now quickly to the sunlight reascend,
And in thy soul remember what hath been,
That in the future, when thy labours end,
Thy wife may hearken what thine eyes have seen.’
Thus we remained conversing; but the queen
Persephone poured forth a clustering cloud
Of women. These around the trench convene:
Daughters and wives they were of chieftains proud:
And still to the dark blood right eagerly they crowd.

34
Whom soon as I beheld, my heart and mind
Waded in doubt what best were to be done;
Nor than this counsel could I worthier find—
From my strong thigh my sweeping sword anon
To draw forth, and forbid them to rush on
In crowd together toward the pool of gore.
Then did they all come forward, one by one,
And each, to each succeeding evermore,
Her lineage told, and I made question as before.

35
First Tyro, daughter of a house renowned,
Seed of Salmoneus, as she told me there,
Who unto Cretheus was in wedlock bound,
I spake with. She divine Enipeus fair,
Lovely beyond all waters everywhere,
Loved; and the great Earth-shaker, in like mould
And semblance, to the river made repair,
And, where the seaward outlet eddying rolled,
Did in his amorous arms her tender form enfold.
36
There the dark wave curled round them like a hill;
And the god, couched upon his azure bed,
Loosened the zone unseen, and took his fill,
And ending clasped her by the hand and said:
‘Hail, lady, for thy love! When the year hath fled,
(Since a god’s seed gives fruit, not void of worth)
Twins shalt thou bear, to be like heroes bred.
Farewell! nor name this secret till the birth—
I am the great Poseidón, Shaker of the Earth.’

37
This spoken, he beneath the surging main
Passed from her side; and she conceived and bore
Pelias and Neleus, servants in the train
Of high-throned Zeus. Inhabited of yore
Pelias the wide Iolcos, with good store
Of pasture, and rich flocks, with fleeces white;
Neleus held sandy Pylos. And she bore
To Cretheus three: the first-born, Æson hight,
Pheres, and Amythaon, the brave chariot-knight.

38
And, after her, I saw Antiope,
Child of Asopus, who in love’s embrace
With high Zeus boasted to have slept; and she
Bare him twin children, famed of strength and grace,
Amphion styled and Zethus. These the base
Of Thebe seven-gated first did lay,
And built a wallèd rampire round the place;
Since to hold Thebe void of rampire’s stay,
Though first in feat of arms, were but a vain essay.
39
Alcmena next I saw, Amphitryon's wife,
Of whom, in arms of Zeus encompass'd,
Came Heracles, that lion-hearted life—
Then Megara, child of Creon, whom he wed.
Also I saw among the phantoms dead
Œdipus' mother, Epicasta fair,
Who in her blindness wrought a fact most dread,
And in love's link with her own son did pair,
Who his dear sire destroyed, and of his couch was heir.

40
All this the gods divulged among mankind;
But he in lovely Thebe, forced to weep,
Ruled the Cadmeians, as the gods assigned.
Fair Epicasta in her anguish deep
Sought Hades, who the iron gates doth keep,
And with beam-fastened cord herself did kill,
Leaving behind her such a fatal heap
Of vengeance as a mother's Furies still
Through long revolving years on guilty men fulfil.

41
And Chloris, beautiful exceedingly,
Next I beheld, whom Neleus chose of yore
For beauty's sake his bride, and did outvie
All suitors with all gifts in countless store.
Her father famed Orchomenus ruled o'er,
Amphion, of the seed of Iasus.
She Pylos swayed, and to her husband bore
Nestor her eldest child, and Chromius,
And the brave-hearted strength of Periclymenus.
42
And lastly she conceived again, and bare
Pero, the wonder of mankind, whom all
The princes round about with love-gifts rare
Entreated and with suit imperial,
Urgent for marriage, in her father's hall.
Yet must she follow by her sire's decree
Him only, who the oxen should enthrall
Held by majestic Iphicles in fee,
Hard to be won, and drive them safe from Phylace.

43
Nor was there any save the blameless seer
Found for that bold emprise; who yet by fate
Was hindered, and the ordinance severe
Of Heaven, nor less by chains importunate
Wherewith rude herdsmen did his fire abate.
But when the months a full year's orb had run,
Through prophesyings from the lordly state
Of Iphicles that see his freedom won;
Thus the great cause of Zeus went working slowly on.

44
Moreover I saw Leda, the fair wife
Of great Tyndareüs, who sons had twain,
Tamer of horses Castor, and in strife
Of boxing Polydeukes void of stain.
Both, though alive, doth the boon earth contain.
They in the sunless land this guerdon draw
From Zeus—one day reviving, and again
Dying in order of alternate law—
And share an equal honour with the gods. I saw
45
Iphimedeia next, Aloëus' wife,
Who high Poseidon boasted to have known.
Sons had she twain, cut off in early life,
Otus and Ephialtes, largest-grown
Of all whom Earth nursed ever, and, save alone
Orion, far her fairest. Seasons nine
For breadth nine cubits, and for height had shown
Nine fathoms. And they strove in fiery line
Of onset and wild war to shake the powers divine.

46
They on Olympus Ossa fain would roll,
On Ossa Pelion's leaf-querivering hill,
To violate thereby the starry pole—
Who, had they once been able to fulfil
Youth's measure, had accomplished their whole will:
But he, the child of Leto beauteous-haired
And Zeus, both rebels in one day did kill,
Ere down of manhood on their cheeks appeared,
Or yet their white chins mantled with the blooming beard.

47
Then Phædra, Procris, Ariadna fair
I saw, king Minos' child, whom Theseus led
From Crete for Athens, nor enjoyed her there;
For Dionysus swore against her head,
And she too soon by Artemis lay dead
In sea-lashed Dia. Mæra, Clymene,
Next I beheld, and Eriphyle dread,
Who for her husband's life took gold in fee.
Yet can I not name all whom there mine eyes did see,
48
Daughters and wives of heroes. Night, I fear,
Would fail me; and the hour is ripe for sleep,
Whether on shipboard I lie down or here.
Ye and the gods in memory will keep
My convoy.” He then ending, silence deep
Came on them, touched with power of eloquence;
And through the shadowy halls there seemed to creep
Wonder and sweet illusion, stealing sense,
Till the white-armed Arete did this speech commence:

49
“Phæacians, are not beauty, strength, and mind
Found in this man, my guest, a grace to all?
Urge him not hence, nor stint with hands unkind
Gifts from that wealth the indulgent gods make fall
To your fair portion each and several.”
Then aged Echeneis rose and said:
“Not from the mark, nor wide of honour’s call,
Speaks the sage queen; and may her thought be sped!
Yet both for deed and word Alcinous is our head.”

50
Forthwith the brave Alcinous answering spoke:
“Surely this word shall be fulfilled, if I
Living am lord of the Phæacian folk.
Yet let our guest, though homeward fain to fly,
Natheless endure beneath our roof to lie
This night, that we with the return of day
May the whole measure of our gift supply;
And all shall charge themselves to speed his way,
I most, whose sovereign rule the citizens obey.”
51
He of the many counsels straight replied:
"Chief of the people, great Alcinous king,
What if ye bid me for a year abide,
And lend me convoy, and rich presents bring?
Gladly would I consent to such a thing
That so to Ithaca with weightier hand
Returning I might find all reverencing
My virtue, and seem dearer in the land,
Even to all who knew me on my native strand."

52
Where to the brave Alcinous spake again:
"Odysseus, gazing on thee face to face
Far other sort thy nature’s mould we feign
Than of mean tricksters, whose deceiving race
Swarms in the dark earth, as from place to place
They wander, lying so like truth that none
May know them. Thy pure words, instinct with grace,
Crown a good heart, who like a bard hast shown
This story, Argive woes revealing and thine own;

53
"But of a truth I pray thee this declare—
If of that company, which fought of old
With thee by Ilion’s towers and perished there,
Any in those sad realms thou didst behold.
For now the night trails its slow length untold;
Nor yet the hour draws near our couch to seek.
Thou, therefore, all thy wondrous works unfold.
Fain would I linger till the morning break,
While in our ears thee listeth of thy toils to speak."
54
Whom wary-wise Odysseus straight addressed:
"Chief of the peoples, lord Alcinous,
Night is the time for converse, night for rest;
And if indeed thou love to linger thus,
Hear on! for yet remaineth to discuss
The fortunes of my friends, far heavier tale,
Who, though from Troy they wrought safe exodus,
Escaping the wild war-shout's deadly bale,
For a bad woman died while homeward they made sail.

55
Soon as Persephone the female host
Dispersed, came pacing from the shadowy train
Silent in sorrow Agamemnon's ghost,
With souls all round him by Ægisthus slain.
Soon having quaffed the blood he knew me plain,
Wailed, and with feeble arms, shorn of their force,
Yearned to embrace me. Then I, touched with pain,
Wept when I marked him, and with kind remorse
Of pity the cold shade addressed in winged discourse:

56
'O glorious Agamemnon, king of men,
What destiny too cruel dashed thy joy,
And hurled thee realmless to this darksome den?
Did then Poseidon his fierce gales employ
Unenviable, and all thy ships destroy?
Or thee from earth did rude barbarians sweep,
While thou wast plundering, on thy road from Troy,
Beeves, and their beauteous flocks of fruitful sheep,
Or for their wives and walls red battle wast waging deep?"
Thus I inquired. He answering spake in turn:

'Zeus-born Laërtiades, Odysseus brave,
Neither through storms unenviable did stern Poseidonwhelm me in the rolling wave,
Nor rude barbarian hands my death-blow gave;
But dark Ægisthus working doom and death,
Leagued with my cursed wife, hurled me to the grave,
While feasting in his house, without one breath
Of warning, as some churl a stalled ox murdereth.

'So by the worst of dooms I died, and all
My friends like white-toothed swine around me bled,
Which in a wealthy noble's banquet-hall
Die for some revel, or when their lord is wed.
Thou of a truth hast witnessed thousands dead,
Whether in secret slain or the strong flood
Of onset, yet were this compassionèd
More than all else, couldst thou have seen where stood
Full tables, foaming bowls, while the floor smoked with blood.

'There did I hear Cassandra's piercing shriek,
Daughter of Priam, as she fell down slain
By crafty Clytæmnestra, fierce to wreak
Her murderous bale. I, falling, in wild pain
Clutched the wet steel with dying hands in vain.
That shameless cursèd woman where I lay
Tare out my life, and scorned with fell disdain
Eyelids of one then passing on his way
Toward Hades to seal down, and press the lips' cold clay;
60
'Since nought exists more horrible and bold
Than evil in the breast of womankind,
When she to her own lust herself hath sold;
Even as this fell monster in her mind
Against the husband of her youth designed
Black murder. I, the while, poor dreamer, thought
Good words from children and from slaves to find;
But she, by the foul sin she planned and wrought,
On the mere name of woman eternal shame hath
brought.'

61
Grieving he ceased, and I made answer then:
'Too oft, by Heaven, dread suffering and disgrace
Far-seeing Zeus, the king of gods and men,
Hurls in his anger on the Atrean race
From the beginning, and through all their days
Hath, for the plots of women, piled a cloud
Of ruin o'er their house! In a far place
For Helena died many a hero proud—
Next against thee dark murder Clytæmnestra vowed.'

62
'Never for this, hereafter in thy life,'
He answered, 'make parade of tenderness,
Nor the whole matter even to thy wife
Show forth, but part reveal and part suppress;
Albeit I ween she is no murderess,
Icarius' daughter, sage Penelope—
One rather whom the gods with forethought bless,
Apt for good counsels, wise exceedingly,
And not from hands like hers shall ruin alight on thee.
63
‘Her a new bride we left, when at my hest
Soldiers of Argos crossed the rolling sea,
Her only child an infant at the breast,
Helpless and void of power, who now, may be,
Sits with the noble chieftains. Happy he!
Whom on the dear hearth his returning sire
Shall gaze on, when the old calamity
Is ended, while with equal fond desire
Both, twined in mutual arms, their mutual love respire!

64
‘She did the sight of mine own son deny,
So quick she slew me.—But remember thou
On thine own coast to land in privacy;
No more are women to be trusted now.
But of my child whate’er thou knowest, avow!
Whether in famed Orchomenus he bide,
Or sandy Pylos—some true word allow—
Or if with Menelaüs, in Sparta wide—
Since on the earth not yet hath brave Orestes died.’

65
I answered: ‘Why this question? I know not
His life or death. We talk but idle air.’
So we in converse rooted to the spot
Stood weeping; and Achilleus’ shade came near,
Antilochus, Patrocleus, Aias fair
Beyond all Danaans after Peleus’ son;
And, while I looked, that spirit knew me there,
Swift-foot Aiacides, and spake anon;
Mixing with wingèd words full many a bitter moan:
66

'Zeus-born Laërtiades, Odysseus brave,
Where in thy desperate counsels wilt thou cease?
How durst thou seek these kingdoms of the grave,
Wherein the dead, mere phantoms, reasonless,
Inhabit?' Whom I answering there address:
'O lord Achilleus, name invincible,
First of Achaians, I Tiresias
Came to consult, if he some word might tell
Whereby this long return I might accomplish well.

67

'Not yet Achaia's realm have I come nigh,
Nor on my native earth one footprint set;
Still am I held in sore adversity.
But than thyself, Achilleus, no man yet
Was happier, nor shall one hereafter get
Such glory as the gods on thee bestow,
Who like a deity didst reap our debt
Of praise above, and now art lord below—
Wherefore, though dead, take heart, nor vex thyself with woe.'

68

'Scoff not at death,' he answered, 'noble chief!
Rather would I in the sun's warmth divine
Serve a poor churl who drags his days in grief,
Than the whole lordship of the dead were mine.
But came my brave son to your wars, to shine
First in the front of arms?—This also tell:
If to the blameless Peleus men assign
Due reverence in the land, or if he dwell
Spurned in his weak old age, and not regarded well.
69
'Since to his help I can no longer wield
Under the sun that valour famed of yore,
Such as men knew me in the Trojan field,
Smiter of heroes, bulwark of the war.
Could I but once unto my father's door,
Such as I was, return a little space,
Soon would I make those caitiffs to abhor
My hands inviolable, who now disgrace
Rights nobler than their own, and scorn his kingly place.'

70
Therewith he ended, and I answered thus:
'Of blameless Peleus I no tidings bear;
But of thy dear son Neoptolemus
My faithful lips shall make thee soon aware;
Who with myself in hollow ship did fare
From Scyros, in the Achaian army's wake.
He in our siege-deliberations bare
High part, still first the loud appeal to make—
Nestor alone and I with weightier reasons spake.

71
'Nor in the battle-plains thy son was found
Mixed with the vulgar throng, but ever ran
Far foremost, and to no one bating ground
Drenched his fierce iron in the fiery van
Of conflict. Who could number man by man
His dead? Eurypylus I name alone
There fallen, with the bravest of his clan,
Bribed through their women. Under Ilion
Such beauteous chief I saw save godlike Memnon none.
72

‘But when the Epeian horse our noblest manned,
Proved warriors, and the charge was given to me,
I marked in each brave hero of our band
Tears and the hurrying glance and trembling knee.
There of the Danaan chieftains only he
Changed not his colour, brushed aside no tear,
But still with prayers implored to be let free,
And clutched his sword-hilt ever, and steely spear,
Yearning with Trojan blood to slake his wrath severe.

73

‘And when the town we sacked—our end of toil—
He on the ships embarking from the war,
Graced with a good division of the spoil,
Came from that country without scathe or scar,
Nor pierced with shaft nor sword, as thousands are,
Through indiscriminate rage of Ares fell.’
So spake I, and Achilleus’ shade afar
Passed striding through the fields of asphodel,
Pleased from my lips to hear his son commended well.

74

Thus the dim shades pressed forward, one by one,
Still in my ears rehearsing sad lament;
But never Aias, child of Telamon,
Came near me, but with gloomy brows and bent
Stood far aloof, in sternness eminent,
Eating his heart for that old victory
Against him given by clear arbitration,
Concerning brave Achilleus’ arm, which she,
Thetis, his reverend mother, set for rivalry.
75
O that Athene and the sons of Troy
Had never by the ships their rede unrolled,
Sentence divulging that cut off from joy
That brave one; since for this the earth doth hold
Aias, the fairest in corporeal mould,
And first in exploit after Peleus' son!
Then I in words the darkling shadow cold
Bespake; 'O Aias, child of Telamon,
Wilt thou not even here thine anger leave forgone,

76
'Nor ever those pernicious arms forget,
By gods put forth to work the Argives woe?
For else hadst thou, our tower, been living yet.
Now equal tears among the Achaians flow
For thee and lost Achilleus. Well I know
None other was the cause, but Zeus in hate
Willed to afflict the Danaan swordsmen so,
And forced upon thy life this evil fate.
O hear me, noble chief, and thy proud soul abate!'

77
He nothing answered, but severely stern
Toward Erebus involved in darkness dim
And to the other shades his feet did turn,
Where none the less this sullen ghost and grim
Even yet should have addressed me, or I him,
But that within my breast more strong desire
Impelled me, passing from the pool's dark brim
Into the deeper regions to retire,
And view the other souls, and of their state inquire.
78
There Minos, child of Zeus, sceptred with gold,
I saw dividing justice to the dead,
Who round his throne in the wide-gated hold
Of Hades stand or sit, and him, their head,
Cry to, for judgment: next, Orion dread,
Still hunting through the plains of asphodel
Shades of the creatures wild, whose life he shed
Under the sun in lonely mount or dell,
Wielding his iron club, for aye unbreakable.

79
There also Tityus, of glorious Earth
The offspring, I saw stretched upon the plain.
His wondrous stature and gigantic girth
Nine roods extended. Ever vultures twain
Slash from each side his liver, and with fierce pain
Their probing beaks within his entrails hide,
While he to scare them waves wild hands in vain—
For that he Leto forced, illustrious bride
Of Zeus, toward Pytho wending through the champaign wide.

80
There also Tantalus in anguish stood,
Plunged in the stream of a translucent lake;
And to his chin welled ever the cold flood.
But when he rushed, in fierce desire to break
His torment, not one drop could he partake.
For as the old man stooping seems to meet
That water with his fiery lips, and slake
The frenzy of wild thirst, around his feet,
Leaving the dark earth dry, the shuddering waves retreat.
81
Also the thick-leaved arches overhead
Fruit of all savour in profusion flung,
And in his clasp rich clusters seemed to shed.
There citrons waved, with shining fruitage hung,
Pears and pomegranates, olive ever young
And the sweet-mellowing fig: but whensoe'er
The old man, fain to cool his burning tongue,
Clutched with his fingers at the branches fair,
Came a strong wind and whirled them skyward through
the air.

82
And I saw Sisyphus in travail strong
Shove with both hands a mighty sphere of stone.
With feet and sinewy wrists he labouring long
Just pushed the vast globe up, with many a groan;
But when he thought the huge mass to have thrown
Clean o'er the summit, the enormous weight
Back to the nether plain rolled tumbling down.
He, straining, the great toil resumed, while sweat
Bathed each laborious limb, and the brows smoked with
heat.

83
And after him the strength of Heracles
I gazed on, a mere shadowy counterfeit;
(He, the true form, among the gods at ease,
Wed to fair-ankled Hebe, still doth sit,
Feasting). While round him the dead phantoms fli,
Like of bewildered birds a clang there came.
He, dark as Night, with bent bow, seems to fit
Shaft to the naked nerve, and eyes his game,
Dreadfully crouching down, as one in act to aim.
Also a wondrous sword-belt, all of gold,
Gleamed like a fire athwart his ample breast,
Whereon were shapes of creatures manifold,
Boar, bear, and lion sparkling-eyed, expressed,
With many a bloody deed and warlike gest.
Whoso by art that wondrous zone achieved,
Let him for ever from art's labours rest!
Soon as the shade my nearing form perceived,
He knew me, and thus spake in wingèd words, sore-grieved:

'Zeus-born Laèrtiades, Odysseus wise,
Is thy life sad like mine beneath the sun?
I was the child of Zeus, but miseries
Bore without number, the bondsclave of one
Far meaner, who much taskwork, hardly done,
Laid on me, and to these realms of the dead
Sent me to fetch the dog, (for task seemed none
Heavier than this), whom yet to the air I led
From Hades, safe by Hermes and Athene sped.'

This spoken, he within the portals went
Of Hades, but I lingering stood my ground
To watch if any other his dark steps bent
Thither—some hero of the names renowned
Who died in the old time. Then had I found
Whomso I wished, Pirithous, Theseus dread,
Children of gods; but with portentous sound
Ev'n then the thousand thousands of the dead
Flocked thickening, and pale fear possessed me, and I fled;
Fled, for strange terror did my heart embrace,
Lest chance from Hades high Persephone
Should to my bale send forth the monstrous face
Of the dire Gorgon. To the bark I flee,
And bid my valiant comrades speedily
Loose the stern-cables, and the benches man;
Who, straight obedient, toward the outer sea
Down Ocean’s rolling river their course began.
Thus holpen, first with oars, then wind, the swift ship ran.
BOOK XII.

BOOK XII.

1
But when the Ocean river in our wake
Streamed afar off, borne through the wide-wayed deep
Straight for Ææa’s isle our course we take,
To where the young-eyed Morning loves to keep
Her pastime, and the Sun wakes up from sleep.
Thither arrived on the smooth shore we run
The keel, and to the land our sailors leap,
And, all night slumbering on the sands, each one
Waits for the Dawn divine and the returning Sun.

2
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn was come,
Child of the mist, my comrades forth I sent
To fetch the dead Elpenor from the home
Of Circe. Then to the utmost cape we went,
And cut wood, and with tears and sad lament
Paid the funereal rites. So when with all
His arms the dead was burned, a monument
Of earth, and grave-stone to record his fall
We reared, and in the midst the shapely oar sprang tall.
3

We then, reminded of our labours past,
Talked over all that we had seen and known;
And Circe knew that through the billows vast
From Hades' realms we had returned, and soon
In shining raiment to the shore came down,
While in her train paced many a maiden fair,
Who corn and flesh, and sparkling wine, the crown
Of banquets, in white hands uplifted bare.
Then, standing in the midst, spake the divine one there:

4

'Ah! desperate, who have trod with living feet
The house of Hades and the sunless way,
Twice dead, while others die but once! Haste, eat
Both corn and flesh in plenty while ye may,
And, sitting here, drink wine the livelong day!
Hence in the morning shall ye sail, and I
Will point your path, nor any more delay
To warn you and each danger signify,
Lest or by land or wave you find adversity.'

5

She ended, and our manly heart obeyed.
So through the livelong day on corn, flesh, wine,
We feasted, till the sun fell and the shade
Descended. Then the mariners recline
Hard by the black ship; but the queen divine
Led me apart from my companions dear,
And lay with me, and asked each word and sign
Of the late work; which I unfolded clear;
And at the last spake Circe in my listening ear:
These things are ended. Hearken now my word!
Yea, God himself shall call it to thy mind.
First shalt thou reach the Sirens who, once heard,
Charm with their strains the souls of all mankind.
If unawares come floating on the wind
That clear sweet music which the Sirens pour,
He who hath quaffed it with his ears shall find
No voice, no welcome, on his native shore,
Shall on his dear wife gaze and lisping babes no more.

For the shrill Sirens, couched among the flowers,
Sing melodies that lure from the great deep
The heedless mariner to their fatal bower,
Where round about them, piled in many a heap,
Lie the bleached bones of mouldering men that sleep
For ever, and the dead skins waste away.
Thou through the waves thy course right onward keep,
And stop with wax thy comrades’ ears, that they
Hear not the sweet death-songs which through the wide
air stray.

But if thyself art fain to hear their song,
Let thy companions bind thee, hands and feet,
Upright against the mast with cordage strong.
So mayst thou hearken to the voices sweet
Of the twin Sirens, as thy white sails fleet
Along the perilous coast; yet, though thou yearn
To linger, and with tears thy friends entreat,
Let them remain hard-hearted, doubly stern,
Yea, with more chains enwind thee, and thine anguish spurn.
9

'These once escaped, no more I plainly tell
Which way be safer; thou shalt think; but I
Both will proclaim; for there wild rocks upswell
Vast, overshadowing, round whose bases cry
Dark Amphitrite's billows. Gods on high
These rocks call Wanderers; and no wingèd thing
That place hath passed, or can pass, harmless by—
No, not the doves, those tremblers, wont to bring
Ambrosia, heavenly food, to Father Zeus their king.

10

'One of their number the fell rock doth slay,
But aye another doth the Father send
His convoy to complete. Nor by that way
Ever did bark of mortal oarage wend,
For waves and fiery storms the timbers rend,
And the men murder. Of all ships that sail
Argo, beloved one, did alone transcend
That ruin. She too had been brought to bale,
But that queen Hera's love for Jason did prevail.

11

'Guarding a narrow gulf two rocks there are,
Whereof the one, sky-threatening, a black cloud
Not pierceable by power of sun, moon, star,
Doth everlastingly with gloom enshroud.
Summer nor autumn to that pile dark-browed
Lends a clear ether, nor could mortal wight,
Albeit with twenty hands and feet endowed,
Climb or descend that sheer and perilous height,
Which, smooth as burnished stone, darts heavenward out of sight.
I2

'Deep in the mid rock lies a murky cave,
Whose mouth yawns westward to the sullen dark
Of Erebus; and thou, Odysseus brave,
Must by this way direct the hollow bark.
Nor yet could any archer taking mark,
No, not a strong man in his life's full bloom,
A swift-winged shaft from that same hollow bark
Shoot to the vault, within whose hideous womb
Scylla in secret lurks, dread-howling through the gloom.

I3

'Her voice is like the voice of whelps new-born,
Yet she such monster as no eyes can meet
Rejoicing, or with glance of careless scorn,
Not though a god should pass her dire retreat.
Twelve feet she has, twelve huge misshapen feet,
And six long necks, wherefrom she quivereth
Six heads of terror, and her prey doth eat
With grim jaws, armed with triple ranks of teeth,
Frequent and thickly sown and teeming with black death.

I4

'Her waist is hidden in the hollow cave,
But all her heads from the infernal lair
She thrusts, to fish with, in the whirling wave,
And, feeling round the rock with eager care,
For dolphins dips and sea-dogs, or if there
Perchance some larger weightier bulk she catch,
Such as the deep in myriads feeds—and ne'er
Have mariners eluded her dire watch,
Who for each head one victim from the ship doth snatch.
15

'The other rock, a little space remote,
(Yea with an arrow thou couldst reach it well)
More flat by far, Odysseus, shalt thou note
Crowned with a fig-tree wild. Charybdis fell
Sucks the black water in her throat's deep hell
Beneath it; thrice disgorges in the day,
And thrice again sucks up the eddying swell.
Heaven from that suction keep thee far away!
Not the Earth-shaker's self could then thy doom delay.

16

'Rather to Scylla's rock, whate'er befall,
Cleave in thy steering, when thou passest by,
Since it is better to lose six than all.'
Therewith she ended and I made reply:
'This one thing more, kind goddess, signify—
If I may yet take counsel not in vain
Whirling Charybdis to evade or fly,
And ward off Scylla, ere my friends be slain?'
I ceased, and the divine one answering spake again:

17

'* Ah! desperate heart! and wilt thou never turn
From weariest toil and feats of warlike fame,
Nor even to the gods submission learn?
She is no mortal whom thou fain wouldst tame,
This mischief, but of race immortal came;
Fierce and unconquerable and wild and strong,
No force compels her and no steel can maim.
There is no remedy against this wrong—
Flight is your help; one moment's tarrying were too long.
18

'For by the rock but linger to equip
Thy limbs for battle, and in sooth I fear
Lest she again forth issuing on the ship
Find thee with all her ravenous heads, and bear
Six more aloft of thy companions dear.
Thou rather drive impetuous through the main,
And on Kratais call, that she may hear,
Mother of Scylla, who brought forth this bane
Of mortals: she her child forth issuing will restrain.

19

'Soon shall thy bark Thrinacia's island reach,
Where feed the Sun's sleek oxen and fat sheep;
Seven are the herds and fifty kine in each,
And of the flocks like reckoning he doth keep.
Seed have they none; nor do the seasons reap
Aught of their vigour. Nymphs with flowing hair
Attend them in their pastures by the deep,
Bright Phaëthusa and Lampetia fair,
Whom to the heavenly Sun divine Naera bare.

20

'She to Thrinacia sent them, there to dwell
Tending their father's flocks and herds. These leave
Unscathed, and all may in the end be well,
Though to your land returning sore ye grieve;
But scathe them, and the gods, I well perceive,
Shall break your bark up and your sailors kill;
And though thine own life they may chance reprieve,
Yet to thy country, at a stranger's will,
Shalt thou come lone and late and overwhelmed with ill.'
She ceasing, came the golden-thronèd Morn. 
Then passed the goddess inland; but I went
And bade the men embark. They, outward borne,
Winnow with oars the foaming element.
Soon in our lee the fair-haired Circe sent
A helpmate good, a canvass-swelling breeze.
We, on the tackling of our bark intent,
All things arranged; then sitting at our ease
Steersman and prosperous wind impelled us through the seas.

Then sorely grieving I the tidings break:
‘Friends, it is fitting that not one nor two
Should know the oracles which Circe spake,
Divine one, in these ears; but all my crew
Shall hear them, that together we may rue
Death not unknowingly, if death should chance,
Or haply, should we yet pass safely through
These perils, then in no blind ignorance
We may awhile escape Fate’s evil ordinance.

‘First of the Sirens, couched among the flowers,
She warns us fly from the delusive song.
I only, as we pass the fatal bowers,
Have leave to listen; yet with many a thong
Need is ye bind me, and with cordage strong,
Against the socket of the mast upright,
Lest I should move; and though I urge you long
To loose me, and implore with all my might,
Still bind me with more cords and strain them yet more tight.’
24
Thus were my comrades of each several charge
Admonished; and the well-built ship meanwhile
Cut lightly through the waves, and neared the marge
Of that fell coast, the sister-Sirens' isle.
Anon the wind slept, and for many a mile
Some god in silence hushed the marble mere.
Forthwith our men the canvass furl, and pile
Safe in the hollow ship their naval gear,
Lean to their oars, and whiten the blue waters clear.

25
Then did I haste to sever with iron keen
In morsels a great roll of wax, which lay
Stored in the hollow ship, and in between
My strong palms pressed and chafed it every way.
Soon the wax warmed, for the great Lord of Day,
Hyperion's offspring, the imperial Sun,
Came to my succour with his burning ray.
So when the mass with heat was nigh to run,
I filled my comrades' ears, in order, one by one.

26
Then did they bind me by the hands and feet
Upright against the mast with cordage strong,
And each again retiring to his seat
Smote the calm sea with furrows white and long.
We, lightly drifting the blue waves among,
Soon in our course such interval attain
As that the ear might catch the Sirens' song.
Nor did the swift ship moving through the main
Escape them, while they sang this sweet soul-piercing strain:
27

Hither, Odysseus, great Achaian name,
Turn thy swift keel and listen to our lay;
Since never pilgrim near these regions came
In black ship, on the azure fields astray,
But heard our sweet voice ere he sailed away,
And in his joy passed on, with ampler mind.
We know what labours were in ancient day
Wrought in wide Troya, as the gods assigned;
We know from land to land all toils of all mankind.

28

While their sweet music took my spirit thus,
I with drawn brows made signal for release;
But Perimedes and Eurylochus
Bind me yet faster and the cords increase,
Nor for my passion would the seamen cease
Their rowing. When no more the Sirens’ song
Thrilled the deep air, and on my soul came peace,
My trusty mariners unsealed ere long
Their ears, and from my limbs unwound the cordage strong.

29

When we had left the island in our lee,
I looked, and straight in front toward heaven uprolled
Smoke, and the noises of a roaring sea,
So that with terror every heart sank cold,
And from the feeble fingers’ trembling hold
Each oar dropt, whirring in the downward flood.
Dead paused the ship, no longer now controlled
By slantless oar-blades; and I passed and stood
Near each, and thus essayed to calm his fearful mood:
30
‘Friends, we are not in dangers all unlearned,
Nor have we lighted on a vaster woe
Than when the Cyclops, who all justice spurned,
Held us immured, disdainful to let go
His captive guests. Yet verily even so
This mind and arm a great deliverance wrought.
And surely at this hour I feel, I know,
That we shall yet live to recount in thought
These labours. Come take heart, obey me, as ye ought.

31
‘Lean to your oars and the wild breakers sweep,
If haply Zeus vouchsafe our souls to spare.
Thou, steersman, in thy breast this mandate keep,
Since of the hollow ship thou hast chief care
And at thy will dost wield her here and there:—
Hold her well clear of this smoke-clouded sea,
And hug the adverse rock, lest unaware
We to the whirling gulf drift violently,
And thou o'erwhelm us all in dire calamity.’

32
I spake, and they right readily to my hest
Attended; but not yet did I unfold
Aught touching Scylla, that destroying pest
Inevitable, lest they by fear controlled
Should cease from toil, and huddling in the hold
Let the ship drive. Moreover a brave alarm
There in a moment from my spirit rolled
All Circe’s counsel to avoid new harm,
Who for my own head’s sake adjured me not to arm.
33
I my illustrious mail assuming now,
Holding in each hand a long-shafted spear,
Move to the black ship’s bulwark near the prow,
First on that side expecting to appear
Rock-lurking Scylla, destined soon to bear
Such dread disaster to my comrades brave.
Nor yet could I discern her anywhere,
Though still my tired eyes straining glances gave,
And pored both far and deep to pierce her murky cave.

34
We groaning sailed the strait. Here Scylla lay,
And there divine Charybdis, with huge throat
Gorging salt waves, which when she cast away
She spumed with hisses (as when fire makes hot
Some caldron) and the steamy froth upshot
Wide o’er both rocks. But when she gorged again,
Drunk with abysmal gurglings, one might note
The dark sands of the immeasurable main
Gleam iron-blue. The rocks loud-bellowing roared
amain.

35
We pale with dread stared at her, fearing death.
But ravenous Scylla from the hollow bark
Six of our bravest comrades at a breath
Seized with her six necks. Turning round I mark
Their forms quick vanishing toward the cavern dark,
And feet and fingers dangling in mid air;
Yea, and my ear each several voice could mark
Which for the last time shrieked, with no one there
To help them—on my name they called in wild despair.
36
As when some fisher angling in the deep
Casts with a long rod for the smaller fry
Baits, and a bull’s horn, from some jutting steep,
And hurls the snared prey to the land close by
Gasping, so these were to the rocks on high
Drawn gasping, and the monster gorged them down
Stretching their hands with a loud bitter cry
Toward me their captain. This was my grief’s crown—
Never in all my toils like anguish have I known.

37
Escaped from Scylla and Charybdis fell
We, sailing, to the blameless isle came near,
Where the Sun’s sheep and wide-browed oxen dwell.
I lowing herds and bleating flocks could hear
Even on the deep. That word of the blind seer,
Theban Tiresias, then rose anon
And of Ææan Circe—still to steer
Our forward course, and above all things shun
The island-pastures green of the bliss-giving Sun.

38
So I within my spirit grieving sore
Turned to my comrades bold, and thus begun:
‘Hearken, though pressed with ill, while I tell o’er
How Circe and Tiresias bade me shun
The blameless isle of the bliss-giving Sun.
There—so they warned me ever with warnings dread—
In some dire evil shall we fall undone.
Ye then obey what holy lips have said,
Nor linger near this land, but steadily steer ahead.’
39
So did I charge them and their dear heart brake,
And thus in answer to my warning tongue
Eurylochus in bitter accents spake:
‘O man, thou art unfeeling, overstrong,
Nor can thy limbs grow tired, though sore and long
Thy labours; iron are thy nerves and bones.
But we, thy servants, are a feeble throng,
And thou wilt drive us, half asleep with groans
And toil, nor let our feet touch the earth’s welcome stones.

40
‘Here in this sea-girt isle we might prepare
A dainty meal; but thou through the whole night
Bidd’st us at random in a murky air
Still wander on the waters void of light;
While in the darkness hard winds rave, that smite
Fleets—and if suddenly fierce Zephyr blow
Or Notus, whither could one take to flight?
These winds, despite what the god-kings can do,
Often with torn ship-timbers the wild ocean strew.

41
‘Nay rather let us yield to the black night,
And here beside our swift ship on the shore
Prepare a feast, and with the morning light
We on the waves will launch our bark once more,
And lean again to the life-wearying oar.’
So spake Eurylochus, and all the rest
Consented. Then I knew that some dark store
Of doom the god was hoarding in his breast;
And lightly in winged words him answering I addressed:
42

'Surely, Eurylochus, ye now constrain
One man, yourselves being many. Come then all,
Swear me a strong oath, neither void nor vain,
That should our glances on a rich flock fall
Of sheep, or herd of beeves majestical,
None in the folly of his heart will slay
Or ox or sheep, but each his leader's call
Hearken, and with that food his hunger stay
Which the immortal Circe in our ship did lay.'

43

So spake I, and they swore; and having sworn
And ended all their oath, the bark they bring
For shelter to the hollow haven-bourne;
There quickly disembark, near a fresh spring,
And turn with pleasure to their banqueting.
But when desire had ceased of drink and meat,
Wailing they wept, those lost remembering
Whom Scylla from our ship did seize and eat,
Till their grief-streaming eyes were sealed in slumbers sweet.

44

But in the third watch of the night, when now
The stars had wheeled, and all were sunk in sleep,
Zeus sent a whirling hurricane forth to blow,
While with thick clouds he veiled both land and deep,
And Night came rushing from heaven's stormy steep.
We, soon as Dawn appeared, our bark advance
Into a far recess, where the Nymphs keep
Soft seats, and lawny levels for the dance—
There I a council called and spake this ordinance:
45

'Friends, in our stores lie corn and wine. Let none
Dare for his life to touch these sacred steers.
These are the sheep and beeves of the dread Sun
Who all things overlooks and overhears.'
So did I charge them, and my valiant peers
Assented. All that month the south wind blew
Unceasing, without pause, nor ever veers
Save to the eastward. They, while yet they drew
Sustenance from the ship, nor sheep nor oxen slew.

46

But when the whole was finished, then they snared
Fishes and birds, whatever came to hand,
Gnawed by sharp famine. I myself repaired
With secret steps some issue to demand
From heaven, and in a spot of sheltered land
Washed, and with prayers besought the Olympian race.
They with sweet sleep my weary eyelids fanned,
Then rose Eurylochus with counsels base,
And thus to their own ruin urged my friends apace:

47

'Friends, though to wretched man all deaths are dire,
Yet is it far most miserable to pine
With pangs of famine and for want expire.
Come, let us choose the best of the Sun's kine,
And seek with sacrifice the powers divine;
Then for the rest, if haply we attain
To Ithaca, snatched from the perilous brine,
Soon might we build Hyperion a rich fane,
And with full many a gift his noble shrine sustain.
BOOK XII.] THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER. 303

48

‘But if, for these horned beees majestical,  
Anger he feel, and yearn our ship to smite,  
And win thereto all powers celestial,  
Then would I rather, once for all, outright  
Choke in the billows, and eternal night  
Inherit, than waste piecemeal day by day,  
With slow disease and withering undelight,  
Pent in a desert island.’ Thus did say  
Eurylochus. The rest that fatal word obey.

49

Quickly the best of the Sun’s kine they drave,  
Which then not far from the cerulean prow  
Of the swift ship stood feeding by the wave,  
Horn-twisted, beautiful, and wide of brow.  
These they encircle, pouring many a vow  
In supplication to the gods on high,  
And strip young leaflets from the shadowy bough  
Of lofty-foliaged oak, since no supply  
Of the white barley-meal within the ship did lie.

50

After their prayers, when they had killed and flayed  
The victims, from the trunk they cut the thighs,  
Folded them in with fat, and overlaid  
With pieces raw. But nought could they devise  
To pour upon the burning sacrifice  
Save water, since for wine vain were the quest.  
So did they roast the inwards. When the thighs  
Were burned, and entrails tasted, then the rest  
They carved in pieces small and on the sharp spits dressed.
In that same hour sweet slumber fled mine eyes,
And I moved downward to the barren shore.
Soon as I neared the bark there seemed to rise
A savoury steam which the wind inland bore.
Then to the gods I cried in anguish sore:
'O Father Zeus, and ye immortals blest,
Surely to work me ruin for evermore
Ye with a ruthless sleep mine eyelids pressed;
These to such heinous act meanwhile their heart addressed.'

Swift with the tidings to Hyperion came
The flowing-robed Lampetia. He on high
Harangued the immortals with his heart aflame:
'O Father Zeus, and each divinity,
Avenge me on Odysseus' company,
Who in their insolence have slain my kine,
Wherein rejoicing I both scaled the sky
And earthward sloped! Do thou exact full fine,
Else will I hide in Hades, on the dead to shine!'

And cloud-compelling Zeus in answer said:
'O Sun, do thou among the immortal train
Shine on, so surely, and kind influence shed
For mortal men on vale and fruitful plain,
As I now thunder upon these fools profane,
And splinter with white fire, for this thy word,
Their swift ship i' the midst of the wine-dark main!'
This fair Calypso told me, who averred
That from the herald Hermes she the story heard.
54
But when I came down to the bark and sea,
There did I each upbraid in my fierce heat
Of anger, yet could find no remedy.
The sacrilege was done, the sin complete;
And there the beeves lay dead before our feet.
Soon there appeared full many a wondrous sign;
For the skins crept, and on the spits the meat
Sent forth a lowing sound, omen divine,
Both roast and raw. The voice was as the voice of kine.

55
Six lights they feasted. On the seventh day
The wind ceased raving. Then the mast we rear,
Spread the white canvass-wings, and sail away.
But when the island was no longer near,
Nor from the deep did any land appear,
Nor aught was visible but sea and sky,
Then Zeus Kronion in his wrath severe
Hung forth a thick cloud iron-dark on high;
And round the hollow ship the sea gloomed suddenly.

56
Not long she ran. Soon in wild fury passed
Loud-roaring Zephyrus. The storm of wind
Snapt like a thread both fastenings of the mast,
Which then fell backward, o'er the stern inclined,
With all its tangled armour drawn in blind
Confusion to the hold. Destruction dread
Seized on the pilot at his post assigned,
Such a resistless ruin upon his head
Smashed the skull-bones, and smote him in a moment dead.
57
He like some diver of the deep I ween
Shot from the bulwarks, and the manly soul
Passed from his bones. Zeus o'er the gloomy scene
Made his loud thunder-peals in tumult roll,
And rived the ship with lightnings from the pole.
While in the blazing volley of Zeus she reeled
Filled with red fire and smoke of sulphurous coal,
Men in the waves like sea-gulls shone revealed,
Till their returnless eyes the god for ever sealed.

58
I through the ship kept hurrying to and fro,
Till sundered from the ribs the keel at last
Rushed naked on the surge. Some chance did throw
Lengthwise upon the keel the covering mast,
Twined with a thong of ox-hide. Firm and fast
Both did I lash together, and sat thereon,
Borne by the furious winds. Soon Zephyr's blast
Ceased, and wild Notus following made me groan,
Doomed to behold once more Charybdis' pools alone.

59
All night I drifted on the billowy swell,
And on the next day with the rising sun
Came upon Scylla and Charybdis fell
She the salt brine was gorging; but I won,
Lifted sublime, the fig-tree, and thereon
Clung like a bat; but vainly everywhere
Sought resting to my feet, for stay was none.
Far were the roots, the branches wide in air,
Long, large, and overshadowing her abyssmal lair.
60
Grimly I clung, till she the mast and keel
Disgorge; and to my prayer they came at eve,
What time a chief doth rise up for his meal,
And tired with suits the place of judgment leave.
I at the sight my shuddering clasp unweave,
And drop with dread sound in the foaming tide,
There the long timbers in my reach perceive,
Which oaring with my hands I fled, unspied
By Scylla, so willed Zeus—else surely I had died.

61
Thence for nine days upon the deep I rode,
And to Ogygia's isle on the tenth night
Came, guided by the gods, to the abode
Of a fair nymph divine, Calypso bright,
Voiced like a mortal, who did well requite
With tender ministration toil and pain.
But why of these things prate, which yesternight
Yourselves have heard me in these halls explain?
The wordy tale, once told, were hard to tell again."

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