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1919

SHORES OF HAPPINESS

A PAGEANT WHEREOF ODYSSEUS IS HERO

BY

FRANCES O. J. GAITHER

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no 1

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

THE GOD POSEIDON.

THE GODDESS ATHENE.

SEA-NYMPHS.

EURYMEDUSA, nurse to Nausicaa.

LAODAMAS, son of Alcinous and Arete.

NAUSICAA, the princess, daughter of Alcinous and Arete.

A BEVY OF GIRLS.

HALIUS

CLYTONEUS } sons of Alcinous and Arete.

ODYSSEUS.

PONTONOUS, a page.

ARETE, queen of Phaeacia.

ALCINOUS, king of Phaeacia.

PAGES.

PHAEACIANS.

ATHLETES.

JUDGES.

DANCERS.

EURYALUS, an athlete.

DEMODOCUS, the blind bard.

OARSMEN.

SHORES OF HAPPINESS

(The scene is before the palace of Alcinous in the land of Phaeacia. There passes a chorus of Phaeacian folk singing of a raft descried at sea. When their voices have died away, the god Poseidon appears. He waves his trident, causing sea-nymphs to come with dancing steps from every direction, the stress of the sea in their movements. Poseidon moves among them, whirling his trident above his head. Just as the dance has become very turbulent, the goddess Athene appears between the tall columns at the head of the steps. At sound of her lance struck suddenly against her shield, the nymphs are startled into immobility.)

ATHENE

Hold, Poseidon, Shaker of Shores! Still the sea that Odysseus may drift in upon the white sands.

POSEIDON

Odysseus! Never shall seas be calm for him. Rather shall I gather clouds, stir the passions of the deep, summon Eurus and Notus and Zephyrus and Boreas to loose mighty tempests from the heavens. Sands, indeed! No, goddess, upon rocks shall Odysseus be pounded.

(He lifts his trident to the nymphs, but Athene coming down, strikes it down with her lance. She smiles.)

ATHENE

I say he shall not. Upon the smooth beach even now is he standing and a princess serves him.

POSEIDON

A princess?

ATHENE

Even Nausicaa of these your beloved Phaeacians.

POSEIDON

(Threatening her with his trident.)

You have done this?

ATHENE

Father Zeus decreed it. I merely arranged the details.

(Poseidon throws down his trident in anger and disperses the nymphs with a gesture of furious despair. He follows them. Athene leaves the steps still smiling and goes to stand apart. Eurymedusa comes out of the palace and looks off down the road that leads to the seashore. She is a bent old woman, as wrinkled as parchment, and, when she would descend the steps, must steady her rheumatic leg with careful hand. She shakes her head querulously when she sees no one coming, and hobbles down another step or two to look again. She mutters continually.)

EURYMEDUSA

In my youth it would never have been permitted, girls going off down the beach for the whole day! Folly, folly! What will it lead to, all this indulgence? What do parents expect? "Father dear," (She mimics.) "could you not have a chariot harnessed for me, so that I may go to the seashore to wash out tunics for you to wear to the council? And, surely, you would count it shame if my brothers went to a dance wearing clothes that were not fresh."—So. Not a word of dreams and bridegrooms!

And the doting parents—"anything, my darling child, anything you wish, mules, chariot, a chest of your favorite dainties, wine in goatskin bottle, oil in a golden flask—"

(Laodamas, a splendid, tall youth, emerges from the palace.)

LAODAMAS

Nurse, has my sister not come?

EURYMEDUSA

The gods alone know what keeps her. Maybe she has met that bridegroom she dreamed of last night. *(Laodamas laughs and points where two girls come running. Their hair is in disorder, and they shriek with laughter as they sink down on the steps before Eurymedusa.)* Where is she? Where is Nausicaa? *(They laugh and pant so that they can only shake their heads for answer and, finally, when Eurymedusa shakes them angrily, try to pull away from her.)* What have you done with the princess?

(One of the girls points down the road and Laodamas runs lightly forth to look.)

LAODAMAS

Here she comes, old woman, with kirtle blowing and whip in air. *(Then he shouts.)* Ho, Halius! Ho, Clytoneus! Our sister is coming!

(Nausicaa drives her chariot adorned with wreaths before the palace. Beside her run a bevy of girls, their flowing hair garlanded in flowers. They carry branches of green which they wave as they run. Laodamas helps Nausicaa to dismount, kissing her upon the forehead.)

EURYMEDUSA

How you have troubled me, perverse one!

LAODAMAS

(Holding Nausicaa from him and teasing her.)

And why so happy? Did you meet a god down there by the river?

(Nausicaa struggles away from him and the girls laugh aloud. They crowd about Laodamas telling him about their adventure as Nausicaa goes up to embrace Eurymedusa. Halios and Clytoneus come down to greet her. To each in turn she lifts a careless cheek, not interrupting in the smallest degree the animated narrative which she begins for Eurymedusa's immediate enlightenment. Nausicaa is not a talkative maid, but her tongue is loosed by the miraculous occasion and her swiftly gesticulating hands are set free as well. Her voice is lost in the chorus of girlish voices—"We had just been playing—" "Or still were—" "Nausicaa threw the ball—" "No, it was I—" "He rose from the bushes—" "Like the sun—" "No, like a lion or a god—" "You ran first—" "I only screamed, you ran—" The princes lead the chariot off, and the girls go upon the steps where they continue to talk among themselves laughing and nodding.)

NAUSICAA

As I dreamed, so I met him, nurse.

EURYMEDUSA

Like a god, was he? Such a man as you never saw before? No, little one, any man would have appeared pleasing to a merry crowd of damsels. It was the blue sky and the silver beach that made him look so.

NAUSICAA

But what of my dream? Did not Athene say I should soon wed?

EURYMEDUSA

Wed! For shame to talk of wedding! A beggar whom you had to clothe! shame, shame!

(The girls laugh, and Nausicaa slips from her detaining hand to dance upon the grass. It is a dance of joy to which Nausicaa yields, of joy and of the dawn of love. When it is ended she runs back to throw her arms about Eurymedusa.)

NAUSICAA

Shall a maid be ashamed of love, grumbling one?— But I know not whether it be love, even so. I was glad when I beheld him, and my heart sang to think it was I who should save his life there on the stark beach.

(She draws a flower from her wreath and muses as she plucks it apart. Eurymedusa stares at her a moment and then turns within somewhat sadly. While Nausicaa sits on the steps plucking at her flower, the girls go down and dance upon the grass and at last go into the palace looking back and calling her, "Nausicaa! Nausicaa! Odysseus comes down the road from the seashore, and pauses when he sees her staring at the barren flower stem in youthful trance. Athene steps forth and leads him toward the girl.)

ODYSSEUS

Princess!

NAUSICAA

(Springing to her feet and thrusting her flower behind her.)

You!

(They stand looking at each other. Athene vanishes.)

ODYSSEUS

You saved my life, and now by your direction I am here to ask the hospitality of your father and lady-mother.

NAUSICAA

(As if she had not heard.)

Tell me—are you a god?

ODYSSEUS

I, a god? Not from you should such a question come to me. Rather should I ask what goddess are you, appearing miraculously with food and clothes for shipwrecked wanderer.

NAUSICAA

But the goddesses are beautiful—and tall.

ODYSSEUS

And do you not know your own loveliness? When I saw you standing there on the beach, your maidens fleeing in shrill abandon, I thought I had never seen a sight so lovely—but one time only.

NAUSICAA

And that?

ODYSSEUS

At Delos beside Apollo's altar I saw a young palm-shoot springing up.

NAUSICAA

Ah! You thought of me like that?

ODYSSEUS

How else? And on the instant I thought, too, of how happy must be the father and mother of such a daughter—and the brothers, too, surely their hearts warm within them when they see you swaying like a blossom in the dance.

NAUSICAA

But of course one's own kindred—

(She pauses vaguely with depreciating gesture.)

ODYSSEUS

I, too. In my heart, I envied them, and then I envied more the man who should some day come and lead you from your father's house to his own home.

NAUSICAA

You envied him?

ODYSSEUS

Yes.

(Eurymedusa appears at head of steps.)

EURYMEDUSA

Princess!

(Nausicaa goes in, bending her head before the reproaches of Eurymedusa. Odysseus watches them. Then he mounts to head of steps and beats with his staff upon a column and shouts, "Ho, within." The page Pontonous comes out to him.)

PONTONOUS

What will you, stranger?

ODYSSEUS

Audience of King Alcinous and his honored Queen Arete.

PONTONOUS

But stand lower, sir. Alcinous and his court come now.

(Pages bring through the doorway behind him three thrones, which they place upon the steps. Odysseus descends and stands waiting while the court ranges itself about the thrones. Attendants with lances and shields take their stand under the portico between the columns. Pages unroll a crimson carpet. Alcinous leads Arete to her throne. Her women follow and array themselves formally upon the steps. The sons of Alcinous stand behind the thrones. Alcinous, inviting Laodamas by gesture to sit upon the middle throne and turning about to seat himself sees Odysseus.)

ALCINOUS

Whence comes this stranger?

ODYSSEUS

A wanderer, Alcinous, cast upon your shores by anger of Poseidon and saved from death by your daughter the princess. I come to ask of you and honored Arete, aid and comfort.

(He prostrates himself before Arete, clasping her knees.)

ALCINOUS

Rise, Laodamas, and seat the stranger. May he yet bless the wrath of Poseidon that hurled him on Phaeacian sands. May these shores be the shores of happiness for you, O, stranger! We are a joyful folk and shall delight to make you joyful, too. Are you a god that you come wandering to far-off Phaeacia?

ODYSSEUS

(*Sadly.*)

Call me not a god, Alcinous. Too well I know death to be named an immortal. But for chance I might now be lying where vultures sweep. There was once when I felt the cold spear pressing my breast—no, no, only a man, weary and sore hungry.

LAODAMAS

Where was this fight you speak of?

ARETE

(*Rising.*)

Shall the host be greedy of tales while the guest hungers? Come, stranger.

(*She leads Odysseus within, some of her women following. Nausicaa comes out and stands behind her father, putting her hands before his eyes. He pulls them down about his neck, and she laughs as she comes before him. When she is seated cozily at his feet, her maidens come in whispering by twos and threes to sit upon the steps on either hand.*)

NAUSICAA

How do you like my stranger?

ALCINOUS

I have seen worse.

NAUSICAA

(Suddenly serious.)

He has a far look in his eyes. Father, I know not whether it is what he has seen or what he longs to see. But it is as if he dreamed of other lands than Phaeacia. What if he will not stay?

ALCINOUS

Do you want him to stay?

NAUSICAA

Yes.

ALCINOUS

Then he shall change his dreams. Who can fail to be happy here? Who can dream of aught beside if Nausicaa, the white-armed, be his? Laodamas, and you, Halios and Clytoneus, send abroad through Phaeacia the summons to all young men and athletes. Games we shall have in honor of the stranger that he may lose that far look from his eyes. Call the dancers and those who wrestle. Assemble the nine grave judges who shall award the laurels. *(His sons go off, followed by attendants.)* And do you, Pontonous, bring hither the sacred bard, Demodocus, the blind. In his songs may the stranger joy as in the very acts of valor, so like to life he sings of heroes' deeds. *(Pontonous goes into the palace.)* And we must have feasting. Let there be got ready for the sacrifice twelve sheep, eight white-toothed swine, two swing-paced oxen. Go damsels, bring fruit and flowers. *(He turns within, followed by the remaining attend-*

ants. Nausicaa is left alone sitting on the steps before her father's vacant throne. Odysseus comes forth and stands looking down at her. Without turning, she speaks.)

NAUSICAA

Did you mean what you said?

ODYSSEUS

About the palm-tree?

NAUSICAA

No, no. About envying *him*—because if you did, you need not.

(Odysseus comes down and stoops to look into her face.)

ODYSSEUS

If I did, I need not—what?

NAUSICAA

Ah, must I say the syllables to you slowly as to a little child! Envy, stranger, it is envy for which you have no need. Alcinous, my father, has said you may have all that you long for, present comfort and in time to come you would naturally share Phaeacia with my brothers. He says you shall come to bless the storm that tossed you on our shores.

ODYSSEUS

He offers me you?

NAUSICAA

(Nodding serenely.)

Yes.

(Odysseus gathers her extended palms into one of his

own and lifts her to her feet. He looks into her upturned eyes a moment and then turns his own away sadly. Suddenly he seems very old and worn beside her rose-hued youth. He hesitates long before he speaks.)

ODYSSEUS

Child, you do not understand. Alcinous decrees the impossible.

(She tries to read his averted face.)

NAUSICAA

Then you did not mean it. You did not envy him whom I shall wed.

ODYSSEUS

Listen, Nausicaa. You love Phaeacia. To you it is the land of happiness. *(She nods.)* What Phaeacia is to you, so is Ithaca to me.

(She studies his rapt face.)

NAUSICAA

Ithaca is your home, then. Is it so fair as Phaeacia? Has it tranquil orchards and lush meadows? Do curved-prowed ships ride on the still bosom of its harbor? Do tall men and lovely women move gladly among high-roofed houses? In Ithaca does the west wind breathe on the fruits so that some are mellow while some are yet in bud? I will not believe that anywhere but Phaeacia does pear ripen upon pear and fig upon fig—

ODYSSEUS

Ithaca is my home.

NAUSICAA

But not so fair as Phaeacia.

ODYSSEUS

More rugged, a land of cliffs and thick woods, a land far seen, lifting gaunt headlands against the western sky. Oh, Nausicaa, I have traveled far, but no sweeter spot have I seen than my own land.

NAUSICAA

And will the people welcome you and make you merry with games and feasting such as my father has ordered in your honor?

ODYSSEUS

Sternier deeds wait to be done in Ithaca—but, Nausicaa, can you not see that in such things, rather than in merry-making, a man might hope to forget?

NAUSICAA

Forget?

ODYSSEUS

(Standing away from her and drawing himself to his full height.)

I am Odysseus. I saw Ilium fall.

(Before this, Nausicaa seemed almost on the point of understanding him, but at this revelation her youthful excitability gets the better of her. She forgets her own sadness and Odysseus' love of home. Even the grievous sadness with which he speaks has no meaning for her now. She clasps her hands to her breast and gazes at him with worshipping joy. It is as if she exulted in this proof of all her intuitions about the greatness of the stranger.)

NAUSICAA

Odysseus! What stories you can tell us at the feast! You talk of forgetting—but that is just your modesty. All heroes are modest. You shall tell us everything—how Achilles looked in his god-like armor; and how the Greeks leaped from the wooden horse and dashed through the streets; and how the plumed head of Hector was laid low. I shall tell no one who you are until Demodocus has sung your fame. (*She runs up the steps and pauses at the top, lifting her arms.*) You shall forget your home-sickness in games, and then you shall see what Phaeacia thinks of a hero!

(Odysseus puts out his hand as if to stop her and then lets it fall again. He turns away as she vanishes through the door.)

ODYSSEUS

A child, simply. She dreams not what war does to women. If it were not cruel I might name to her Cassandra, Andromache, Mécuba. They knew, as does she who waits through weary nights—Penelope.

(He sinks upon the center throne and takes small account of the activity and bustle that begins about him. The Phaeacian populace assembles to the sound of gay music and much talk. The twelve Phaeacian kings with their attendants range themselves upon the steps. Torch bearers mount the pedestals of the balustrade on either hand, colored streamers looping the torch of each with that of his fellow. Girls come from the palace with dancing steps. They carry flowers which figure in their dance and in the subsequent festal effect, garlanded columns, scattered petals, and

the like. Athletes come up from the throng and gather in knots. The judges arrive. Pages bustle about at everybody's beck and call.—Through it all, Odysseus sits thoughtful and curiously alone in the midst of the rejoicing folk. The music changes to a processional and the court of Alcinous comes out of the palace, Alcinous leading Arete to her throne as before. His sons are hailed from the athletes on the ground, "Ho, Laodamas! Ho, Halius! Ho, Clytoneus!" Alcinous stills the chattering groups with lifted hand.)

ALCINOUS

Hearken, Phaeacian Captains and Councilors, a stranger has come to our shores (*Odysseus bows in acknowledgment*), and it is fitting that we make games and rejoicing in his honor. Let us revel in the feast, the harp, the dance, as is our wont, that he may bless the wrath of Poseidon that cast him among the happy Phaeacian folk. Go, fetch Demodocus and his tuneful lyre.

(Pontonous springs to obey, and leads Demodocus forth from behind one of the great columns of the portico. The bard is blind and follows the page haltingly. When they have come to the center of the steps below Odysseus' chair, Demodocus sits down, Pontonous placing the harp beside him and guiding his fingers to the strings. He sings of magic Phaeacia.)

A SONG OF PHAECIA.

With kin of gods, come live in Phaeacia, where
A heavenly magic warms to ripeness pear on pear,
Where deep are harbors, trim are ships,
And high are palisades,
Where every day too quickly slips
In joy for men and maids.

Chorus.

Such a sunlight on the green
Surely cries for dancing.
Such a breeze can only mean,
"Follow me and dance!"

Let others toil and fret their lives away,—
In pleasant Phaeacia we have found a better way:
So gay the feast, so glad the song,
So swift the twinkling feet,
That Phaeacian hours seem half as long,
And every hour is sweet.

(During the first lines of the song, Nausicaa steals through the crowd between the columns and comes down to stand listening enthralled. As Demodocus sings on, she looks up to see if Odysseus is moved. She sees his abstraction relax until, at end of the song, he is smiling at her. When the song is over A herald mounts the steps and summons the athletes to the various events. Nausicaa leads Demodocus to one side and sits down by him.)

HERALD

Ho, Laodamas! Ho, Halius! Ho, Clytoneus! (*As they come down, he turns back to populace.*) Ho, Acro-neus, Ocyalus, Elatreus, Nanteus, Prymneus, Anchialus, Eretmus, Ponteus, Proreus, Thoon, Anabasimeus, Amphialus,—Ho, all ye Phaeacian athletes! Stand upon the mark and see which shall be fleetest in the foot-race.

(The judges stand in their places and even Alcinous rises from his throne with interest. The people elbow each other for room upon the margin of the course, cheering their favorites. When Clytoneus has won, the other athletes bring him back upon their shoulders, a shouting throng pressing close behind. The judges confer, and Alcinous crowns him with laurel, the herald proclaiming him victor. At sound of music, the crowd falls back, and dancing-girls come down and dance a mimicry of the games. Then follow javelin-throwing, relay racing, discus-throwing, with the same ceremony. At discus-throwing Elatreus is winner and at boxing, Laodamas. After the award for discus-throwing is made, Euryalus speaks to Laodamas.)

EURYALUS

The stranger whom the games honor appears not over-pleased with them. Challenge him if he can do better.

LAODAMAS

(Shouting.)

Stranger, will you come down and try for glory with us?

ODYSSEUS

(Shaking his head sadly.)

Your challenge mocks my sorrow, Laodamas. I have suffered too much to have a heart for games.

EURYALUS

(Laughing.)

I thought as much. You look less like an athlete than some trader whose mind is taken up with cargoes and filthy gains.

(Odysseus rises and measures with his eye the impudent youth mocking him from the ground.)

ODYSSEUS

And you—well, the gods have fashioned you an excellent appearance, but your words betray the quality of your brain!

(As everybody laughs, and Euryalus turns with a shrug, Odysseus comes quickly down the steps and seizes the discus. From the radius of his powerful arm, the spectators and athletes draw away. Nausicaa rises to see the better. The discus goes far ahead of the mark scored by Elatreus, and the crowd bursts into cheers. Alcinous advances to lead Odysseus back to his seat, apologizing in low tones for Euryalus' unmannerliness.)

ALCINOUS

(Aloud.)

Come, Euryalus, you shall give satisfaction to the stranger by word and gift for your unmannerly taunt.

(Euryalus comes forward and offers a sword, "brazen, with hilt of silver and sheath of fresh-cut ivory.")

EURYALUS

May the winds bear away my rude words!

(Odysseus bows and accepts the sword. The athletes applaud. Alcinous calls, "And now the dance!" Halios and Laodamas dance with a purple ball. When they have finished, pages and damsels, moving to music, bring flowers, platters of fruit and food, silver flagons of wine, to the twelve kings and the athletes reclining on the lower steps. Others serve Alcinous, Arete, and Odysseus on their thrones.)

ALCINOUS

Sing, Demodocus, sing! There is no sauce like a sweet song.

(Nausicaa leads the singer back to his central place before Odysseus. He gropes vainly for his harp.)

DEMODOCUS

What shall I sing?

NAUSICAA

(Bending over him to guide his fingers.)

Sing of Ilium and of him whose cunning brought about its fall.

SONG OF ODYSSEUS.

Who crosses the plain where corpses lie?

It is a slinking Trojan spy

In wolfskin prowling over the dead,

His javelin ready, his helm on head.

He stops, he trembles in deadly fright,

The clink of armor sounds in the night.

Odysseus then he dimly sees—

And with him brave Diomedes.

With crafty word and many wiles,
Odysseus the man beguiles:
"Take heart, truly of Troy's allies,
Where encamped, their strength, and their planning,
likewise."

Thus cunning from witless much knowledge does hear
Ere he slays the fool and bestrips him of gear,
Ere speaking lips with dust are a-hush
And helmet swings from tamarisk bush.

Odysseus, of the hardy heart,
Of all has heard a single part;
That of Rhesos' horses so swift and so white,
His chariot fair and his armor bedight.

Though night is awane and the dawn glimmers nigh,
He burns to follow the heron's cry
To Thracians sleeping in rows on the ground,
By every man his horses well-bound.

See midmost are the coveted, glorious pair
Of Rhesos, alert and so wondrously fair!
Then swords with desire run a swift, scarlet race.
And deal a sure death to the men of Thrace—

The horses quiver. They sniff the dead.
To tread their lords they are sorely afraid.
Odysseus, with bow of might,
Subdues them, driving them through the night.

(As Demodocus sings, Odysseus looks first horror-stricken and then crushed. Toward the end, he draves his cloak before his eyes and sits sunk in grief.)

When the song is over, and a page has led Demodocus in, Alcinous touches Odysseus' arm.)

ALCINOUS

Why do you grieve, stranger? These things are now past. The gods brought death to men in those days that we, sitting happy at the banquet, might have a song of glory.

(He tries to draw Odysseus' cloak away from his eyes. Odysseus rises and slowly lowers his arm from his haggard face. With bowed head he speaks.)

ODYSSEUS

I am Odysseus. *(The Phaeacians take the announcement as did Nausicaa. There is the beginning of cheer. The athletes start forward in enthusiasm. Odysseus checks the tide of excitement.)* At Ilium I fought as a man must. What was to be, I endured. But to be sung a hero now, that I cannot endure.

NAUSICAA

But you are a hero. Look how the Phaeacians long to honor you and make you happy.

LAODAMAS

(Mounting the steps toward Odysseus by enthusiastic leaps followed by Halios and Clytoneus.)

Forbear modesty, Odysseus. Give us the story of Ilium.

PHAËACEANS

The story! The story!

LAODAMAS

Pity youths who have not seen the glorious deeds on the plains of Ilium! Like nurselings we can but stammer the heroic tale. Only Damodocus' songs have we. You had the rumble of chariot wheels, the flash of armor, the splendid facing of death.

PHAEACEANS

Odysseus! The story!

LAODAMAS

We play at games of war. You fought beside Agamemnon.

(Girls in double columns come down opposite sides of the steps with shields and spears. They pause on the steps and threaten each other with weapons. Then they descend to the grass and dance the glory of battle. All watch eagerly except Odysseus who covers his face with his hands. When it is over, Alcinous turns to Odysseus.)

ALCINOUS

Surely not to the victor does the tale of war bring sorrow.

ODYSSEUS

Alcinous, of war there is but one vision for victor and vanquished, a vision of the happiness of women blighted by death.

(Nausicaa understands at last. She comes down and dances on the grass, a dance of the cruelty of war. When it is ended she goes to sit at her mother's feet. Arete puts her arm about her and they both bend toward Odysseus.)

ARETE

It is the women who suffer most in wars?

(Odysseus comes down several steps, standing before Arete.)

ODYSSEUS

Men only die, but women wait. Oh, Penelope. *(The name bursts from him as if against his will.)*

NAUSICAA

Penelope?

ODYSSEUS

Her I left when I sailed for Ilium.

NAUSICAA

Ah, in Ithaca. *(He nods.)* She is divinely fair?

ODYSSEUS

Fair? No, there are many fairer, but she is—Penelope.
(Nausicaa draws her mother down and whispers to her pleadingly. Arete, assenting, rises.)

ARETE

Let us send Odysseus home, Alcinous, to Ithaca, where Penelope waits even as I for you were the Phaeacians warriors. *(Nausicaa comes around and stands beside her father, coaxing him.)*

ALCINOUS

(To Odysseus.)

I had thought you would find happiness here. *(He looks up fondly at Nausicaa.)*

ODYSSEUS

Phaeacia is a land of fair pleasures, but for the war-weary—

NAUSICAA

I understand. Before Ilium he might have been happy here.

ARETE

It is the shores of the homeland he longs for, Alcinous, the rough familiar crags of Ithaca where wait for him homely duties and his Penelope.

(At her speech a light breaks over Odysseus' face which Nausicaa scrutinizes now with perfect understanding, tinged with sadness.)

ALCINOUS

(Rising so that he stands, too, beside Odysseus.)

Hearken, ye Phaeacian Captains and Councilors, our guest longs for other shores than these, and I, your lord, say he shall not long in vain. *(Nausicaa looks proudly up at her father as he speaks.)* Launch a lofty ship, fit the oars into their leathern slings, spread the white sail. By the magic of our seamen, Odysseus shall tomorrow be in Ithaca.

ARETE

Shall the guest leave Phaeacia empty-handed, Alcinous?

ALCINOUS

Go, bring gifts to load the vessel. Ye sceptered kings bring presents commensurate with your rank; spotless tunics, talents of gold, and brazen tripods. Then will

Odysseus bless Phaeacia and the ship that bears him home.

ARETE

And I will have my women store the vessel with bread and ruddy wine and deck its high-curving prow with garlands.

LAODAMAS

I will summon the oarsmen.

(All go off, the dancing girls gathering up the flowers from the steps and the pages carrying the thrones inside. When they are all gone, Odysseus is left standing alone. Nausicaa has gone above him and stands half hidden by one of the columns. Girls come down and dance a fragment of their early dance, this time wistfully. Odysseus is so intent on the road that leads seaward that he does not heed them. They go within, and Nausicaa calls, "Odysseus!" He does not hear her. Oarsmen approach singing, and he starts with a happy gesture toward them. As they pass, he follows them a little way until he is checked where the steps end. Even when Nausicaa speaks his name again, he is still absorbed in his far vision of the oarsmen. Poseidon appears with his nymphs who dance the gentle movements of the calm seas for a brief moment and then go off. Athene appears between the central columns of the portico.)

ATHENE

Odysseus!

(He turns, but she has disappeared. Only Nausicaa is standing there with hand extended.)

NAUSICAA

Odysseus, farewell!

(Odysseus comes to her and kneels.)

ODYSSEUS

Farewell, princess! Zeus grant you long life in Phaeacia, the fairest land I have seen in my wanderings.

NAUSICAA

(A little sadly.)

Not fairer than Ithaca.

ODYSSEUS

For you, Nausicaa, because you are young, and for the unscarred youth who will some day come as you dreamed last night.

(She shakes her head at that, but smiles up at him bravely before she turns away. He watches her go, and she looks back over her shoulder to smile again. At top of the steps, she turns with a gesture of farewell, but he has already faced about to watch another group of oarsmen going down to the seashore singing the refrain of their song. When Nausicaa has gone inside the palace, the rest of the court comes out to sound of processional music, and the populace gathers below in pageant formation, groups bearing tripods and vases aloft, robes, gay silk banners, chests, trays of fruit, leather bottles of wine, garlands and baskets of flowers, one group playing on pipes, another leading a heifer decked with garlands. Group after group pauses before the steps and offers its gifts to Odysseus before taking its place in mass formation.)

The flower girls enter dancing a few measures of their dance, the oarsmen singing the refrain of their song. Before Odysseus they sing the whole.)

THE OARSMEN'S SONG.

To sea we shall slip as on magical wings,
Decks apile with riches in bales.
Then launch the black ship, fit the oars in their slings,
Fling aloft the white, spreading sails.

Refrain

Toss up the spray with a vigorous oar,
Toss up the bright, briny spray.
Speed the swift ship to the beckoning shore,
Speed her afar on her way.

When sails are a'fling, and the oars all agree,
'Taut are muscles, miles race behind.
'Tis sweet then to sing with the lift of the sea,
Steer by stars and fly in the wind.

(A page brings a gold cup to Alcinous. He takes it and holds it aloft as he speaks.)

ALCINOUS

Take my cup, Odysseus, in token of my wish that our seamen shall land you safely on Ithacan shores. There may you forget the strife that haunts you.

ODYSSEUS

(Taking the cup.)

Grant Alcinous' wish and bless the kindly Phaeacians,
O, Athene!

(He holds the cup on high and pours a libation as he

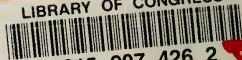
prays. *When the stream of wine pours from the cup, Athene appears between the columns; and the people fall back on either hand and drop to their knees, Odysseus at the feet of the goddess.*)

ATHENE

The gods are mindful of Phaeacia. It is you, Odysseus, whom I would bless. I would bring you again to Ithaca where you who have looked on death may see again the homely sights, the early sun on the gaunt crags, the swineherd husbanding your flocks. You are war-weary, but duties invite where pleasures only pall. Go, take ship for home and Penelope.

(There is the sound of music, a glad but stately procession, and Odysseus rises with transfigured face to follow where Athene's lifted arm suggests. At bottom of the steps he pauses and seems about to speak, lifting his arm as did Athene. But, silent and still radiant, he lowers his arms and goes off. Behind him, group by group, the pageant forms and follows toward the sea. Athene is left alone. When the last of the pageant is moving away, she comes slowly down.)

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