





No. 37

25 Cts.

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Issued Weekly



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NOVEMBER 20, 1885

Subscription Price
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Extra Entered at the Post-Office at New York, as Second-class Mail Matter

THE
WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES

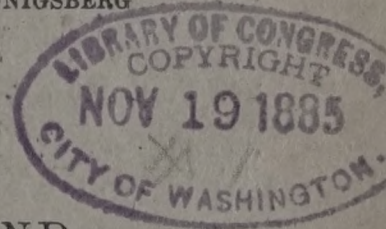
BY

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TRANSLATED BY

FRANCES YOUNGHUSBAND



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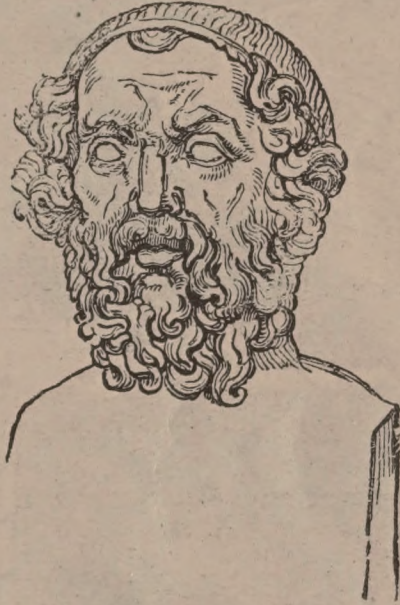
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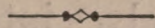
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HIMETOPNA

ULYSSES AND THE SIRENS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE



THE kind reception afforded to the 'Myths of Hellas' and 'The Trojan War' has led to the translation of the present volume (the last of those written by Professor Witt) in the hope that, like its predecessors, it may not only be welcomed as a story, but may also find its use as a holiday task, and even as a regular reading and lesson book.

In accordance with the suggestion of several reviewers, an attempt has been made, in the Index, to indicate the ordinary English pronunciation of the names, by printing with a capital letter the vowel of the syllable on which the chief accent should fall. The further question as to whether the vowel itself is to be pronounced fully is answered by the long (-) or short (.) accent placed over it.

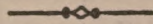
This plan has been adopted as the most convenient for those to whom the names are entirely unfamiliar. Should the book fall into the hands of classical readers, the translator must ask their indulgence for the liberty thus taken with the Greek words.

Some further explanation with regard to the diphthongs may also be useful. When two vowels occur side by side, and are pronounced *together*, they form a diphthong; and this double vowel is always *long*. The diphthongs are *ae, au, ei, eu, oe, oi, ou*, which in English are pronounced respectively as *e, or, i, u, e, oi, ow*. It sometimes happens, however, that two vowels which stand side by side do *not* form a diphthong, but divide themselves into two distinct syllables. This is always indicated by a diaeresis (··) placed upon the second of the two vowels, to show that it is to be pronounced separately, as, for instance, in Menelaüs, Noëmon, Antinoüs.

The head of Homer on the opening page is copied from a bust now in the British Museum.

The frontispiece, which is copied from a Greek vase, also in the British Museum, represents ‘Ulysses and the Sirens.’ In the opinion of Mr. Cecil Smith, a double action is portrayed in this vase painting. It is said that one of the Sirens, overcome with grief at having failed to allure Ulysses, threw herself into the sea and perished; and it is supposed that this action is here depicted, as well as that of the previous moment, when the ship of Ulysses—with the hero himself bound to the mast—passes by in safety.

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THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES.



CHAPTER I.

THE CICONIANS AND THE LOTUS-EATERS.

THE long war against Troy had at last come to an end, and the Greek heroes were now preparing to return to their homes.

To no one did this thought bring greater pleasure than to Ulysses, the King of Ithaca, for though at the call of Agamemnon he had brought twelve ships to join the army of the Greeks, and had distinguished himself throughout the war as one of the bravest of the heroes, he had longed many a time that the siege would come to an end, and leave him free to return to his own country. He loved dearly his stony little island of Ithaca, and would not have exchanged it for the most fertile country; and he now rejoiced with all his heart at the prospect of being soon restored to his wife Penelope, and his son Telemachus, who had been but a child when he left home.

The ships, which had so long been left standing high and dry upon the shore, had now their prows turned towards Greece; and when Ulysses had prayed,

and offered sacrifices to the gods, he set sail with his followers, hoping for a swift and prosperous journey.

After some days, Ulysses and his men came to the land of the Ciconians, who had taken the part of Troy in the war, and fought against the Greeks. They made a sudden attack upon the city, and the surprised inhabitants fled from it, leaving behind all their goods. Of these the Greeks took possession, and then returned to their ships.

Ulysses was of opinion that it would be best, after this, to proceed without delay; but his companions were unwilling to leave until they had made a great feast on the shore, and he yielded to their wish. Sheep and cattle were slain and roasted, and great jars of wine opened; and after they had revelled till far into the night, they lay down near the ships and went to sleep.

But meanwhile the Ciconians had summoned their neighbours to come and help them, and scarcely had the morning dawned when the sleeping Greeks were awakened by the clash of weapons and the approach of a great army. They sprang up quickly and made a brave resistance, though they were far outnumbered by their enemies,—Ulysses fighting always in the foremost rank. Till mid-day neither side could be said to have gained any advantage, but as evening approached, the Greeks found it impossible to hold their ground, and at last they turned and fled in confusion to their ships, leaving behind them the corpses of their comrades.

Seventy of their number had fallen, and as it was impossible to pay them the last funeral honours, Ulysses caused a herald to cry aloud the name of each one

three times following. This was all that could be done, for they were obliged to hasten away from the land of the Ciconians, and continue their voyage with all speed.¹

They had not proceeded far, when for the first time they saw the mountains of Greece in the distance before them, and hoped within a few days to be at home again. But their happiness was short-lived, for there came a storm which lasted for nine days, and drove them about first in one direction and then in another, till on the tenth day they came to some land where they resolved to stop and rest.

Ulysses sent forward some of his men to discover what sort of people the inhabitants were, and report whether they would be likely to receive them kindly; but when a long time had passed by and they did not return, he feared they had met with some misadventure, and resolved to go himself to see what had become of them.

He found them, however, well and happy, and apparently quite at home already among the people of the country. As soon as they saw him they hastened towards him, holding out some of the fruit that hung in quantities on the trees, and said, 'Eat, Ulysses, and thou wilt no longer have any desire to return to thy home. Nowhere is life so pleasant as in this land.'

¹ The Greeks believed that the souls of those whose bodies remained unburied had no rest in the Lower World, and the burial of the dead was therefore a sacred duty. In extreme cases, however, it was considered sufficient to sprinkle a little dust over the corpse and pour out libations to the gods (see *Myths of Hellas*, p. 222), or, if even that was impossible, to call aloud three times the names of the departed.

It was the country of the Lotus-eaters, and the fruit was the magic lotus, which has such power over the hearts of men that when once they have tasted it they forget everything else. Ulysses was obliged to bring his companions back by force, and when they were again in the ship, he bound them with cords to the rowing-seats, or they would have returned without delay. He then ordered the ships to be put out to sea again immediately, that the rest might not also be tempted.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEKS IN THE CAVE OF THE CYCLOPS.

AFTER sailing for some days, they arrived, late one evening, at an island, where they landed and lay down to sleep on the shore. In the morning they found that the island to which they had come was a very small one, close to another that was larger. Having ascended a hill from which they could overlook the country, they saw no trace of human habitation on the smaller island, but rich grass and corn land all around them, and great numbers of wild goats. Spears and bows were accordingly fetched from their ships, and having divided themselves into three hunting-parties, they brought back such a rich booty that nine of the goats they had killed were placed in each of the twelve ships, and ten were reserved for Ulysses. They were thus in no danger of starving for the present, and they feasted merrily on the goat's flesh and the red wine which they had taken from the Ciconians.

On the following day, Ulysses said that he would sail with the men who belonged to his own ship to the larger island, to see what sort of people they were who lived there—whether wicked and barbarous, or friendly, and such as feared the gods. He had seen smoke rising in many places and had heard the bleatings of

sheep and goats, so that he knew the island must be inhabited.

They set out therefore, but if Ulysses had known whose guest he was going to be, he would certainly have remained away. It was the island of the Cyclops, a race of savage one-eyed giants, who did not even keep up friendly intercourse among themselves, but lived apart, each with his wife and children, and his cattle, which he led out each day to pasture. Foolish indeed it would be for any stranger to expect a welcome in such a country as this.

Ulysses landed in a creek of the island, and chose out the twelve bravest of his men to go forward with him; and as a present to his host, whoever he should be, he carried on his shoulder a skin of his best wine. It had been given to him in the country of the Ciconians by a priest of Apollo whom he had spared with his wife and child when the city was sacked, and was so strong that even if it were mixed with twenty times its own quantity of water, the odour of the wine could be perceived from afar.

They pressed on into the country till they came to a cavern with an entrance of enormous height; laurel-bushes grew all around, and outside the cavern were enclosures for housing cattle at night. Inside, the appearance of the cave was hospitable and pleasant enough. Countless cheeses lay spread out on trays of net-work, and a number of pails and bowls stood side by side in rows, full of rich new milk; there were moreover a great many partitions in which lambs and kids were penned, who were calling and bleating to one another.

The men did not, however, feel secure in the place, and they begged Ulysses to let them take some of the cheeses and lambs and return at once to the ship. But Ulysses was unwilling to forego the stranger's present which he expected to receive from the owner of the cave if he asked for hospitality; so they decided to remain where they were, and meanwhile regaled themselves upon the milk and cheeses.

Little did the Greeks think who was the host they were awaiting so peacefully. The cave they had entered was the abode of the Cyclops Polyphemus, the most savage and cruel of them all. He was now away at the pasture with his flocks, but towards evening he began to return home, driving them in front of him. The Greeks heard him calling to them, and at the sound of his terrible voice they sprang up and crept into the darkest corner of the cave; they would gladly have left, but it was too late for that now.

After the rams and he-goats had been stalled in the pens outside, and the she-goats and ewes had been driven into the cave, the giant himself entered, revealing to the Greeks, as he stood in the doorway, his monstrous form, which appeared all the more terrible on account of the wild fierce locks of his shaggy beard and the one huge eye in the middle of his forehead. He brought in on his back a great bundle of firewood with which to cook his evening meal, and threw it on the ground with a crash. Then, without the smallest effort, he took up an immense piece of rock, so large that it would have taken more than twenty waggons to carry it, and set it up before the entrance of the cave, that no one should come in and disturb his night's

rest. After this he sat down and milked the cows and the goats, setting aside one half of the milk for drinking and the other half for making into cheeses.

When he had finished his work he kindled a fire, and presently by the light of the flames discovered his unexpected visitors. 'Oh ho!' said he, as a grim smile of pleasure overspread his face. 'So there are guests in my house to-day! Who then are ye? and whence do ye come? for merchandise? or are ye robbers whose trade it is to gain by plundering others?'

At the sound of his dreadful voice the Greeks trembled, but Ulysses answered, 'We come from Troy and desire to return to our home, but have lost our way in the storm. We belong to the army of King Agamemnon, whose fame is in the mouths of all men, because he has destroyed so great a city and so many peoples. Give us therefore a stranger's present, or at the least some small token of good-will, as is the custom between host and guest. Remember the gods, and bethink thee how Zeus punishes those who refuse to welcome strangers.'

At hearing these words, the giant laughed until the rocks resounded with his mirth, and he said, 'Either thou hast but little wit, stranger, or else thou comest indeed from far, who demandest of me that I should honour the gods. We Cyclops trouble ourselves but little about Zeus and the rest, for we are far better than they. Think not then that fear of Zeus will induce me to spare thee and thy companions if I do it not of my own free will. But tell me, where hast thou left thy ship?'

The foolish giant thought that Ulysses would be so simple as not to guess that his reason for wanting to know this was that he might get the whole crew into his power, but Ulysses was too crafty for him, and he answered, 'Our ship has been dashed to pieces by Poseidon, and only we whom thou seest have escaped with our lives.'

The giant said no more, but springing up suddenly, he seized one of the strangers with each hand, and dashed their heads against the rocky floor; then he sat down and began to tear them limb from limb; after which, like a hungry lion, he devoured them, skin and flesh and bones, refreshing himself at the same time with huge draughts of milk, and grinning in the most horrible manner. The Greeks were forced to look on helplessly at this ghastly sight, but holding up their hands to Zeus, they silently called upon him to witness and to punish the impious deed.

When the giant had finished his meal, he stretched himself out among the animals, and the sound of his heavy slumber soon echoed through the cave. To the eyes of the Greeks, however, came no sleep. Ulysses spent the whole night in trying to think of some way of escape, but in vain:—he could indeed thrust his sword into the heart of the monster as he lay asleep, but that would be of no use, for how could any one less powerful than the giant roll away the huge stone from the mouth of the cavern?

When the morning came, the giant attended to his cattle as he had done the evening before, and again he seized two Greeks and devoured them for his breakfast. After that he lifted away the stone and

drove out the sheep and goats. He then replaced the stone from without, and went away with the cattle. The Greeks could hear his voice calling to them for a long time before it finally died away in the distance.

CHAPTER III.

ULYSSES ESCAPES FROM THE CYCLOPS.

ULYSSES now remembered how often the wise goddess Athene had come to his aid by putting into his mind some subtle device, and he offered up a prayer, imploring her to help him in this time of need. Presently the answer was given, and he exclaimed aloud with joy that an idea had come to him. He at once set to work to carry it out, and finding in the cave an olive tree as tall and strong as a ship's mast, which the Cyclops had brought in some time before to use as a club, he cut a piece off it from the thin end, about the height of a man. His men helped him to peel off the bark, and sharpen one end to a point; he then put it into the fire, and when it was red-hot, he took it out and put it away, ready for use. With this pole he intended to put out the eye of his cruel host, and as he would require the help of four of his men, he told them to draw lots to see which of them should have the honour of taking part in the deed; happily the lots fell to the very men that Ulysses would himself have chosen for the purpose.

At night the Cyclops returned with his flocks, and contrary to his usual custom he drove the rams and he-goats into the cave, as well as the ewes and she-goats. Otherwise everything happened as on the previous

evening: the sheep and goats were milked, the fire was kindled, and two more of the Greeks were devoured.

Then Ulysses stepped forward, holding towards the giant a huge wooden bowl which he had filled with wine from his skin. 'Here, Cyclops,' said he, 'drink this wine after thy meal of human flesh. I brought it with me as a present for thee, hoping that thou wouldst have pity on us and help us to return to our home. But thou hast bitterly disappointed our hopes. Foolish man that thou art, will anyone again bring thee such a gift, when it is known how thou hast treated us?'

The giant seized the bowl, and his monstrous face beamed with pleasure as he drank it off and smacked his lips after the draught. 'Friend,' he said, 'give me more, and tell me thy name, and I will give thee something in return that will rejoice thy heart. Among us Cyclops the vine indeed grows, but not such as makes wine like this. This tastes verily like the nectar and ambrosia which sustain the gods. More, give me more.'

Ulysses filled the bowl a second time, and again at the giant's desire a third time. The strong wine had now done its work, and the giant's senses were dulled and confused. 'Dost thou ask my name, Cyclops?' said Ulysses. 'My name is No Man. That is how I am called by my father and mother and friends.'

'Good,' answered Polyphemus. 'This then shall be my present to No Man in return for the wine,—that I will devour him last of all, when all his companions have perished.' And almost as he spoke, his head fell back, and he was fast asleep.

Now was the time for Ulysses to bestir himself,

and he quickly brought out the pole that he had prepared, and held it in the fire till it was red-hot; then he beckoned to his four companions to come and help him, and taking careful aim with the point, he thrust it right into the centre of the giant's eye. The others then seized it by the lower end, and all five worked it round and round with all their might till the eye was quite burnt out.

Polyphemus roared out with the agonising pain until the rocks re-echoed as if it were thundering, and nimbly the Greeks sprang out of his way, as he drew the pole from his eye and dashed it into fragments against the wall of the cave. The giant then cried for help to the Cyclops who lived on the neighbouring hills. 'Hélp, help, ye Cyclops; come to my help,' he shouted through the still night.

When the Cyclops heard his cry they hastened to the cave and called out to him to know what was the matter. 'Is someone trying to rob thee of thy flocks? or to murder thee by craft or by might?'

'Woe is me!' shouted back Polyphemus from within the cave. 'No Man is murdering me by craft; there is no might in the case.'

Then one of them answered, 'If no one is using craft or might against thee, it must be that Zeus has afflicted thee with some sickness. Pray to thy father Poseidon, perchance he may be able to help thee.' And with these words they went away,—while Ulysses laughed in his sleeve to think how cunningly he had deceived the giant.

For some time longer, Polyphemus continued to cry and groan, but after a while he felt along the wall

with his hands till he came to the great stone that blocked up the entrance of the cave; this he threw aside, and seated himself in the opening, with both hands stretched out to prevent anyone from passing without his knowledge. He thought in his simplicity that the Greeks would have the imprudence to hurry to the door in the hope of making their escape, and pleased himself with the prospect of tearing them limb from limb when they should fall into his hands; but Ulysses had already foreseen this danger, and had devised a plan for avoiding it.

That night the strong he-goats had been fortunately housed inside the cave, and for each of his companions Ulysses tied three of these together with rushes: the man was fastened underneath the body of the middle goat, and the two others were placed one on each side as a further protection, so that when they passed out, the giant should not discover what had been done. Ulysses himself mounted a stately ram, the finest in the whole herd, who had long thick fleeces of wool that stood out far beyond his body; he swung himself underneath the body of this creature, and thrusting his hands and feet far down into the wool, he pressed his knees against the sides of the ram, and thus managed to hold on.

In this fashion they waited impatiently for the morning. At last the time came when the flocks were accustomed to leave the cave for their pasture, and the he-goats began to put themselves in motion. As they went by, the giant felt each one of them with both hands, for he thought that his enemies would very likely be on their backs, but little did he suspect the

cunning manner in which one after another was carried past him.

Ulysses had kept back his ram to the last, but when he made his appearance the giant recognised him by the touch, for he was his favourite animal. He stroked him and talked to him in a caressing tone: 'How now, my trusty ram,' said he, 'how comes it that to-day thou art the last of all,—thou who hast always been the first in the sweet meadow, the first at the brook, the first in the stall? Surely it must be that thou grievest because the villain No Man has blinded thy master after befooling him with wine. But he shall not escape me. If thou couldst speak and tell me in what corner he has hidden himself, what joy it would give me to seize him and dash him against the rocks!

Again he tenderly stroked the ram's white back, and then let him go. And thus all the Greeks were rescued from the clutches of the monster.

When they had gone some little distance from the cave, Ulysses released his ram, and freed his companions from their bonds; then they drove the herds by a circuitous route to the ship. Their companions were overjoyed at seeing them again, but they would have broken out into loud lamentations at hearing that six of their number had been devoured by the Cyclops, had not Ulysses motioned to them to be silent lest the sound of their mourning should reach the ears of Polyphemus, and reveal to him where they were. They hurried into the ship as many of the animals as they had room for, unfastened the ropes by which their vessel was attached to the shore, and rowed away at their utmost speed.

When they had gone far enough from the island, Ulysses bade them halt, and shouted back to Polyphemus, who was still sitting in the entrance of the cave, eagerly feeling about with his hands. ‘Cyclops,’ he cried, ‘thou hast not been permitted to destroy the friends of the weak man, one and all; and thy wickedness has returned upon thine own head, abandoned monster, who didst not hesitate to devour thine own guests! It is for crimes like these that Zeus and the rest have punished thee.’

The giant sat for a moment rigid with rage when these words came to his ear from far over the sea, but presently he got up, broke off a huge mass of rock, and hurled it in the direction from which the voice had come. And so prodigious was his strength that the rock flew over the ship and fell into the sea beyond it with a force sufficient to make great waves that drew back the ship towards the shore again.

But seeing the danger, Ulysses seized a long oar which he drove into the bottom of the sea and held there, so as to check the course of the ship; then he called to his companions to take their oars again and row away as fast as possible from the island of the Cyclops.

He was not yet satisfied, however, and when they had gone a little farther, he put up his two hands to his mouth so as to form a trumpet, in order to mock the Cyclops again from a safer distance. In vain his companions represented to him that he had already placed them in the greatest danger, and implored him to be silent; he could not resist his desire for one last word, and he called out, ‘Cyclops, when thou art asked

who it was that blinded thee, thou canst say that it was Ulysses, the son of Laertes, king of Ithaca.'

At these words Polyphemus sobbed aloud, and said, 'Thus then is the ancient oracle fulfilled. Long ago it was foretold to me that I should lose my eye at the hand of Ulysses. I thought he would have been a man far greater and stronger than I, but now a mere pigmy, a miserable weakling has blinded me with the help of wine. Come back again, my friend, and I will give thee a stranger's present, and will pray to Poseidon to convey thee in safety to thy home. For Poseidon is my father, and he can also, if he will, give me back my eye again.'

But Ulysses shouted back, 'I would I were as certain of thine utter destruction as I am that Poseidon will never be able to heal thy hurt.'

When Polyphemus perceived that his flimsy stratagem had failed, he raised his hands to heaven and said, 'Hear me, Poseidon. If I am indeed thy son, grant that Ulysses may never again see his native land. Or if it has been decreed otherwise, grant at least that he may reach it in misery, after many years, in the ship of a stranger, and without his friends, and that trouble and danger may await him in his home.'

Again he arose, and breaking off in his rage a still larger piece of rock than before, he hurled it with his utmost strength towards the ship. As before it went straight towards its aim, but this time it fell short of the ship, which was now farther off, and the waves which it made carried the vessel away towards the island of goats.

When the Greeks arrived at the smaller island, they found their friends in great anxiety on account of their

long absence, but all the more were they rejoiced that at least Ulysses himself and the greater number of his men had returned in safety. Ulysses divided the flocks which they had brought away with them, but the great ram to whom he owed his safety he kept for his own share, and offered him up to Zeus as a thank-offering for having been protected through such great perils.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ISLAND OF AEOLUS AND THE LAESTRYGONIANS.

ON the next day the Greeks sailed away from the island of goats, and after some time they came to another island which was not fastened firmly to the bottom of the sea, but floated about from place to place. This was the abode of King Aeolus, who had been entrusted by Zeus with the management of the winds, and was able to let them loose or imprison them as he pleased. He lived with his wife and twelve sons and daughters in a beautiful palace, where they all feasted together every day.

Aeolus received Ulysses and his companions very kindly and kept them with him a whole month, for he was never tired of hearing the stories they had to tell about the war and the fall of Troy. At last, however, it was time for them to continue their journey, and Aeolus gave them a most valuable present as a parting gift. It was a huge leather bag in which all the winds that would be unfavourable to their journey were tied up, and it was so tightly fastened with a silver cord that not even the tiniest little breeze could escape; only the wind that Ulysses needed to help him on his way was free, and this was to blow steadily until the hero and his friends had reached their own land in safety.

For nine days and nights they sailed on, speeded by the favourable wind, until on the tenth day they could see the smoke rising from the herdsmen's huts scattered about the island. During this whole time Ulysses had kept awake and attended to the steering of the vessel, but now he felt himself overpowered with fatigue, and thinking that he might dismiss all further anxiety, he lay down and went to sleep.

Some of his companions however began to grumble and say to the rest, 'It is all very well for Ulysses, who returns home to be loved and honoured, and who brings with him a goodly booty from Troy, but we arrive with empty hands. See moreover the huge bag lying yonder which Aeolus has given him, full, no doubt, of gold and silver. Let us open it and see what sort of treasure it contains.'

The others, who were equally curious, willingly agreed to unfasten the knot, but what was their astonishment when with a mighty rush the pent-up winds burst wildly forth, and blew furiously all around them. The ships were soon tossing about violently, and Ulysses awoke.

When he saw the mischief his companions had done, he was tempted for a moment to throw himself into the sea and put an end to his life. But his brave heart did not long give way to despair, and he wrapped himself up in his cloak and lay quietly on the deck while the winds drove the ships about hither and thither, till at last they brought them back again to the floating island of Aeolus.

Ulysses determined to try if Aeolus would help him once more, so he made his way back to the palace. He

found the king seated at a banquet with all his sons and daughters, and stood humbly on the threshold, as was the custom for those who came to sue for help. They were all much astonished at seeing him, for they had made sure that by this time he would be safe at home, and they called out, 'Why hast thou come back to us? What evil fate has befallen thee? We did our utmost to speed thee on thy way.'

Sorrowfully Ulysses made answer, 'My foolish companions are alone to blame, and the sleep which overcame me. But I pray you, renew your kindness to me, for indeed ye can if ye will.'

All the rest remained silent, but the father Aeolus rose and beckoned to him with his hand to depart, crying out, 'Hie thee away from this island, cursed mortal. The gods must indeed hate thee, otherwise wouldst thou long ago have reached thy home.' So Ulysses had to return to his ship, and trust to himself alone for help.

It was now necessary to row both by day and night, for the favourable wind had disappeared. On the seventh day they reached the country of the Laestrygonians, where the day follows so closely upon the night, that hardly has night set in when the new day begins to dawn. In this country a man who could do without sleep might earn double wages. First he might work all day as a shepherd; and then, when he had brought home his sheep at night, he might go out again almost immediately as a herdsman with the cattle.

Ulysses saw an excellent haven, into which he guided his ships: it was a creek shut in on both sides

by high rocks, so that the water remained quite calm even in the most violent storm. The other ships sailed some way up into the creek, but Ulysses moored his own vessel close to the entrance, and having done this, he climbed up a mountain to survey the surrounding country. No ploughed fields could he see, nor any other sign of human handiwork, but in the distance there rose some smoke, and he chose out two of his companions and sent them with a herald to find out what they could about the country.

They soon discovered a beaten path, which led them to a spring not far from the city whose smoke they had seen; and just then a maiden came out to draw water in her pitcher. The Greeks asked her the way to the king's palace, and she was able to direct them, for she was the king's daughter. Soon they reached the house, and at the entrance they were met by the queen, but on seeing her they were seized with horror, for she was a monstrous woman, as big as a mountain. She hastened to the door, and with a voice that shook all the neighbouring houses, she called to her husband, who was at the market. He immediately returned, and as soon as he saw the strangers he seized one of them, tore him in pieces, and devoured him. The other two ran away as fast as they could, and as soon as they arrived at the creek, shouted breathlessly to their companions, 'Away, away, this country is inhabited by men-eaters.'

Immediately everyone lent a hand in helping to loose the ships. But the king had meanwhile called his people together, and now they came after the Greeks in crowds,—not men but giants. Little did it avail the Greeks that they had already made loose their ships,

for the Laestrygonians crushed them with enormous stones, which they threw from the shore, and when the unfortunate Greeks fell out into the water, the giants pierced them through with their spears, and then drew them to the shore and devoured them.

When Ulysses saw the destruction of the other ships he did not stop to unfasten his, but drawing his sword, cut through the ropes, and ordered his companions to row with all their might till they were safe in the open sea again. Thus he saved his ship, and it was the only one that escaped. Some broken fragments of the other vessels alone floated out to sea,—the whole of the crews perished.

CHAPTER V.

THE ENCHANTRESS CIRCE.

THE ship of Ulysses now continued its solitary way, and by-and-by came to another land. By this time the sailors were quite worn out with the long rowing, otherwise they would have been afraid to land again, lest some new misfortune should befall them. Weary and dejected, they remained for two days at anchor on the shore, but on the third day, Ulysses took his sword and spear, and set out to explore the country. He climbed up a little hill, and perceived that he was on an island; before him lay a thick wood, but beyond it was some smoke which showed him that the island was inhabited.

He went on until his ship was quite out of sight, and presently came to a meadow through which there ran a little brook. It was about the middle of the day, and just then there came out of the forest a great stag with tall branching antlers, who was on his way to the brook to quench his thirst. Ulysses raised his spear, threw it at him and hit him in the back. The spear went right through his spine, and he fell immediately and died without a groan. In order to carry him back the more easily, Ulysses plucked some

pliable twigs from the nearest trees and twisted them into a rope with which he bound the animal's legs together. Then he slung him on to his back, but so heavy was the huge stag that Ulysses had to lean heavily on his spear for support in carrying his burden back to the shore. There he found his companions sitting wrapped up in their cloaks, just as disheartened and faint-spirited as when he had left them.

He threw down his booty before them and exclaimed, 'Friends, be of good courage; death has not as yet been allotted to us by the gods. Rise up then, and let us eat and drink again.'

The men threw off their cloaks and jumped up, and when they had made an end of examining and admiring the huge animal, they prepared a sumptuous repast. All the remainder of the day was spent in feasting on the flesh, and when night came they again wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down on the shore to sleep.

Next morning Ulysses assembled his companions and said, 'We have come far out of our way, and do not know which course we should take. There is but one thing to be done. We must seek for some kindly disposed people who will be willing to direct us. Yesterday, in the distance, I saw some smoke rising, and now some of us must go and find out who they are that live on the island.'

At these words the Greeks raised loud cries of grief, for they feared lest the island might be the abode of such a race as the Cyclops, or even the Laestrygonians. But little could be gained by weeping; and without heeding their lamentations, Ulysses divided

his companions into two bands, each containing two-and-twenty men. One band was to be under the direction of Eurylochus, who, next to himself, was the best man among them; the other he was to lead himself. Then they drew lots to see which of them should go on before to spy out the land, and the lot fell to Eurylochus, who immediately set out with his companions. They parted from their friends with many tears on both sides, for they had abandoned all hope of ever again meeting with any good fortune.

Eurylochus and his companions went through the wood, and emerged upon a very pleasant country, in the midst of which stood a magnificent palace. It was not however without alarm that they saw wolves and lions of a truly marvellous kind prowling about it: instead of behaving as wolves and lions might be expected to do, they came up to them in a friendly manner, wagging their tails like dogs who run to greet their master on his return home, which seemed to the Greeks a very strange proceeding. Inside the palace a woman's voice was heard singing, and when they had reached the gate of the courtyard, they could distinguish the sound of a loom at work.

They knocked at the door for admittance, and immediately it was opened by a tall, beautiful woman who invited them to enter the palace. All but Eurylochus followed her, but his suspicions had been aroused by the wonderful animals, and he remained outside. For some time he heard the sound of his companions' voices engaged in conversation within, but suddenly all was silent. He waited for a long time hoping they would return, but not one of them came back, and he

was forced to conclude that some evil had befallen them.

It was even so. The beautiful woman who had invited them in so pleasantly, was the enchantress Circe, whose delight it was to change her guests into animals. When the Greeks entered her house, she offered them seats, and set before them a delicious drink, in which however she had mixed a magic juice. When they had drunk their fill, she touched them, one after another, with her wand, and immediately their heads and voices were changed into the heads and voices of swine, and their bodies became those of swine with bristles growing all over them. Then the enchantress drove them into a dark miserable sty, and strewed acorns and other food for pigs before them. The unhappy men had retained their human thoughts, and wept bitterly with grief and shame, but no words could they utter.

Eurylochus hastened back through the wood to Ulysses. For a long time he could but give way to his tears; no words would come to his lips. But at last, in answer to the questions of his friends, he related what had happened. They all threw themselves on the ground and joined their lamentations to his, but Ulysses armed himself with his sword and bow, and called upon Eurylochus to lead him to the palace.

In an agony of fear, Eurylochus threw himself at the feet of Ulysses, and, embracing his knees, implored him not to require this of him: he thought that Ulysses would surely perish without being able to rescue his friends, and that it would be far better for

them to return at once to their ships and hasten away as fast as they could. But Ulysses looked at him with contempt, and answered, 'Very well, then. Remain here, eat and drink. I shall follow the bidding of my heart.' And with these words he set off towards the wood.

CHAPTER VI.

ULYSSES AND CIRCE.

ULYSSES had nearly reached the further end of the wood when there met him a beautiful youth: it was Hermes, the messenger of the gods, who had taken the form of a man. He said to Ulysses, 'Little dost thou know the danger into which thou art running. This island is the home of the enchantress Circe. She has already changed thy companions into swine, and the same fate might well await thee also. Courage and stoutness of heart are of no avail against her spells. Take therefore this little root and carry it in thy bosom. So long as thou retainest it there, her magic drink will be powerless to harm thee.' As he spoke, he stooped down and pulled from the earth a little plant, known only to the gods, with a black root and white juice. This he gave to Ulysses, and then returned to the abode of the gods.

Ulysses continued his way towards the palace, and when he knocked at the door, the enchantress came out as before and invited him into the house. When they had entered the principal room, she pointed to a beautiful chair in which she begged him to sit down and rest, and then she fetched the magic drink.

Ulysses took it as if he knew nothing of her evil intentions, and when he had finished, the enchantress touched him with her wand, and cried out, 'Away with thee to the sty to join thy companions.'

But what was her surprise and terror when she perceived that her magic spell had no effect, and Ulysses sprang upon her with his drawn sword! With a loud cry she threw herself down before him and embraced his knees, crying out, 'Spare, oh spare me, whoever thou mayest be, over whom my magic charm is powerless! But indeed thou canst be no other than Ulysses himself, for Hermes once told me that Ulysses would come hither on his return from Troy. Put back thy sword into its sheath, and from henceforth shalt thou receive from me nothing but love and kindness.'

But Ulysses made answer, 'I cannot trust thee, for thou hast changed my companions into swine. Swear to me by the most sacred of all oaths that thou wilt no more employ any charm against me.'

The oath was taken, and then Circe called her maidens, who prepared everything for a sumptuous meal. Also for the refreshment of Ulysses they made ready a warm bath, and one of the maidens washed his head and feet and shoulders, and anointed his limbs with sweetly scented salve. Then Ulysses and Circe sat down together at the table, on which food and wine had been laid out. The table itself was of pure silver, and indeed everything in the house of Circe was made of either silver or gold. But in vain did she press her guest to eat and drink: he sat in sorrowful silence, refusing to touch anything. Again

she assured him that he was perfectly safe from her spells, but he answered, 'What right-minded man could take any pleasure in food or in drink, knowing his friends to be still suffering under enchantment? If thou art indeed sincere in thy professions of kindness, first free them from their wretched state and let me see them again.'

Circe went at once to the sty and released the swine; and when she had passed her wand two or three times over their backs, their bristles disappeared, and they returned to their human form. They now looked even younger and more comely than before, and Circe led them back into the palace and presented them to Ulysses, who was still sitting as she had left him. When they saw Ulysses, they knew who it was that had saved them, and throwing themselves on their knees before him, they embraced his head, his hands and his feet with tears of joy. Even Circe was touched at seeing their raptures, and she said to Ulysses, 'Go now to thy ship and draw it up to the shore; then hide your goods in the nearest cavern, and return, bringing all thy companions with thee.'

It was with a far lighter heart that Ulysses hastened this time to return through the wood, and soon he reached his ship. He found his men plunged in deep sorrow, for they had given up all hope of ever seeing him or their other companions again. So much the greater, therefore, was their joy when they beheld him standing before them safe and well, and heard that their friends were also saved. Ulysses ordered his men to put the ship into a place of safety and then return with him to the palace of Circe, where they would

find the rest already engaged in feasting and merriment.

No command could have been more welcome to the greater number of them, but Eurylochus was still full of fear, and refused to believe in the oath that had been sworn by Circe. 'Ye fools,' he said to the others, 'has not enough of evil befallen you already, that ye are so eager to thrust yourselves into the power of an artful witch? Are ye then desirous of being changed into wolves and bears, to dance attendance in the purlieus of her palace? Think of the Cyclops. There also it was the fool-hardy Ulysses who led us on to destruction.'

At these words Ulysses was almost beside himself with anger, and, drawing his sword from the sheath, he would have cut off the head of Eurylochus, had not the others held him back and appeased him with gentle words. 'Let us leave him here,' said they, 'if thou wilt; he can take care of the ship. But as for us, we will follow thee to the palace of Circe.'

They turned their backs upon the shore, therefore, and began to follow Ulysses to the palace of Circe, leaving Eurylochus behind them; but they had not gone far through the wood, when one of them, turning round, observed that he was following at a distance. He feared the displeasure of Ulysses even more than the magic of Circe.

It was a joyful meeting when all the shipmates found themselves together once more, for never again had they expected to look one another in the face. The goddess invited them all to stay with her until they had completely recovered from the hardships they had

undergone, and felt ready to pursue their journey with renewed vigour. The invitation was most welcome, and month after month passed away in daily feasting and pleasant companionship.

But at last, after a whole year had gone by, they began to feel the cravings of home-sickness, and Ulysses begged Circe to allow them to take their leave. To this she consented, but she said to him, 'If thou wouldst know what it would be well for thee to avoid on thy journey home, so as to ensure thy return in happiness to the wife who is waiting for thee, thou must first descend to the Land of the Dead, and consult the wise seer Tiresias, who will give thee good counsel.'

The brave heart of Ulysses had never yet trembled at any danger that threatened him from the living, but now he shuddered at the thought of having to make his way through the horrors of the Lower World, and of coming into contact with the soulless shadows of the dead. But when he found that by no other means could he hope to return in safety to his home, he immediately resolved, though with a heavy heart, to follow the advice of Circe.

The next day there was great joy among his companions when he awoke them with the news that they were to set out on the following morning. He took care, however, not to tell them into what terrible scenes he was about to lead them.

Meanwhile Ulysses was not to leave even the island of Circe without losing one of his companions. The evening before they started, the youngest of them all, whose name was Elpenor,—not a specially brave man

was he, nor in any way to be regarded as one of the best,—became heated from drinking too much wine, and went up to the roof of the palace to sleep in the cool night air. In the morning he was awakened by the stir and bustle caused by the departure of his companions, and started up to join them; but being still somewhat confused in consequence of his drunkenness, he altogether forgot where he was, and instead of descending from the roof by the proper stair, he fell over the edge, and, breaking his neck, died instantly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAND OF THE DEAD—ULYSSES MEETS HIS MOTHER, ELPENOR, AND TIRESIAS.

WHEN they were well on their way to the shore, Ulysses told his men that the next thing they had to do, was to set sail for the Land of the Dead. They received this news with cries of grief and much tearing of the hair, but at last they found themselves obliged to yield to necessity, and they pushed the ship out to sea, set up the mast, and unfurled the sail.

Immediately a favourable wind sprang up, sent by Circe to speed them on their way; and by evening they had reached the shore of the great stream Oceanus which flows right round the world. Here they met with the Cimmerians, a people who live in dense gloom and perpetual night, and had never in all their lives seen a ray of sunshine.

The Greeks landed close to a grove of willows and dusky poplars, and went along the shore till they came to the place that Circe had described to them. There they halted, and Ulysses dug out with his sword a shallow pit, a yard long and a yard broad. Into this he poured three libations for the dead,—the first of honey and milk, the second of sweet wine, and the last

of water; over these he also strewed a measure of the finest barley meal. Then he prayed to the dead, and promised that if he should return to Ithaca, he would offer to them a cow and whatever else might be well-pleasing to them, and that to Tiresias in particular he would sacrifice a whole black ram. After this, he slaughtered the animals with which Circe had provided him,—a black ram, and a black sheep. He held their necks close to the pit, as Circe had directed, and looked away whilst he stabbed them with his sword; then the bodies of the animals were carried off by his companions and burnt upon a flaming pile of wood, which they had heaped up and set alight as an offering to the gods of the Lower World. No sooner was the pit filled with blood, than the dead ghosts below the earth smelt it, and came up in crowds, pressing one upon the other, in their eagerness to taste it; but Ulysses kept them off with his drawn sword, for before all others he wanted the wise Tiresias to drink of the blood.

Among the rest came Elpenor, who only the day before had fallen from the roof and been killed. In his case it was no hankering after the blood that brought him, for his corpse still lay unburied in the house of Circe, and he was not yet a real shadow like the rest. He was still able to think and to speak, but this half-life was a burden to him, and he longed for the rest and absence of consciousness enjoyed by the shadows. When Ulysses saw him and heard him complain of his misfortune, the tears came into his eyes, and he cried, ‘Elpenor, how camest thou hither

into the land of Shades? Thou hast arrived more quickly on foot than I in my ship!’

With many sighs Elpenor related what had happened to him, and implored Ulysses by all that was dear to him to bury his corpse as soon as he should return to the island of Circe. ‘Raise, I beseech thee,’ said he, ‘a funeral pile, and burn thereon my body, and all that belongs to me; then let a mound of earth be heaped up above my ashes on the sea-shore, and place upon it the oar which I have used so long.’ And Ulysses promised to do all that he desired.

All this time Ulysses had held his sword over the pit that contained the blood, to keep off the shadows who were still pressing towards it. Amongst them he recognised his own mother, and hard indeed he found it to turn her away; but he remained true to his purpose, and presently the wise Tiresias¹ rose up out of the earth, with a golden staff in his hand. He was the only one in the Land of the Shades who retained his human thoughts;—all the rest were deprived of consciousness. He said to Ulysses, ‘Take away thy sword that I may drink of the blood, and give thee the information thou desirest.’

Ulysses returned his sword to its sheath, and when Tiresias had drunk of the blood, he again spoke. ‘Thou art come,’ said he, ‘to ask me about thy return home. Many are the toils and dangers which thou must still undergo, for Poseidon is angry with thee, because thou hast blinded his son, the Cyclops. But though many troubles are before you, yet may ye all of you reach your homes in safety, if ye beware of meddling

¹ See *Myths of Hellas*, p. 225.

with the flocks of the sun-god in the island of Thrinacia. Should ye, however, attempt to seize those herds, then will thy companions and their ship be lost beyond recovery, and thou thyself wilt return indeed to thy home, but only after many years, alone, and in a strange vessel;—and dire confusion shalt thou find in thy house. As soon as thou hast dealt justice and re-established order there, thou must hasten to appease the anger of Poseidon. To accomplish this, thou wilt again have to leave thy home. Take with thee an oar in thy hand, and continue thy wanderings into unknown countries, farther and farther away, until thou hast reached a land where the inhabitants have never seen the sea, nor any ship, and therefore eat their bread without salt. I will give thee a sign by which thou shalt know when thou hast reached it. When one of them points to thy oar, taking it for the winnowing fan of a countryman, and asks thee for what purpose thou art carrying it about, then wilt thou know that thou hast attained to that land. There plant thy oar in the earth, and sacrifice to Poseidon a ram, a bull, and a boar; and when thou hast again returned to thy house, offer goodly gifts to those who dwell on Mount Olympus. Then wilt thou live many days, and at last die in peace, and thy people will enjoy happiness and prosperity.'

'As the gods will,' answered Ulysses, 'so let it be. But tell me, I pray thee, for I see yonder the shade of my mother, who stands silent and knows me not,—what can I do in order to bring myself to her remembrance?'

'To whichever of the dead thou givest to drink of the blood,' replied Tiresias, 'will power be given to

‘speak with thee.’ And as he said these words, he disappeared again under the earth.

When he had gone, Ulysses gave his mother some of the blood to drink, and as soon as she had tasted it, she recognised her dearly loved son. ‘Why hast thou come into the kingdom of darkness?’ she cried, ‘for strange and horrible it is to the eyes of living men! Art thou still a wanderer, not yet returned from Troy to thy home in Ithaca? and does thy wife still wait in vain for thy coming?’

‘Ah! dear mother,’ was the answer of Ulysses, ‘it is dire necessity that brings me hither to ask counsel from Tiresias. Never again have I set foot in the land of Greece since I left our island to follow Agamemnon to the war against Troy. But how camest thou here? Is it after long illness that thou hast died? or did Artemis smite thee suddenly with one of her arrows? Tell me moreover of my father, and the little son whom I was forced to leave, and also of my dear wife. Say, does she still remain in my house, taking care of my goods, or has she perchance married some other?’

‘Faithfully and patiently she tarries in thy house,’ replied his mother, ‘but her days are filled with sorrow, and she weeps continually for the husband who is so long away. Thy son is grown up to be a goodly youth, but thy father has given himself over to grief on thy account, and will no more come into the city; in a mean hut, far from all other dwellings, he has taken up his abode, and there, rejecting all pleasure and all comfort, he leads a wretched life; the poorest clothes cover him, and he sleeps, like the lowest herdsmen, in winter among the ashes of the hearth, and in summer on a

heap of fallen leaves in the open air. So also it is no lingering sickness that has brought me to this place, neither was it one of the arrows of Artemis that slew me, but rather the longing after thee, my beloved son, for whom I have so long waited in vain !'

At these words Ulysses was deeply moved, and stretched out his arms to embrace his mother, but only the empty air met his touch. More sorrowfully than ever, he now cried out, 'Why dost thou escape from my embrace? Art thou perhaps nothing but an apparition, sent hither by the Queen of the Shades to mock my grief?'

But his mother answered, 'Dear son, this is the lot of mortals when life has departed from them. The sinews which before held flesh and bones together, have been consumed by the heat of the funeral pyre, and the soul flits about hither and thither like a dream. But thou, haste thee to return to the light of the sun, and keep in thy remembrance that which thou hast here seen and heard, that one day thou mayest be able to tell it to thy wife.'

These words were the last that the mother of Ulysses was able to speak. The blood she had drunk had now spent its strength, and she flitted from him, an unconscious shadow as before.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAND OF THE DEAD (*continued*)—AJAX, ACHILLES,
AND AGAMEMNON.

AMONG the shadows, Ulysses saw many a brave hero who had fallen, fighting against Troy; but how great was his sorrow and surprise when he recognised in their midst King Agamemnon, who had conquered the city in triumph, and had set sail for Greece, covered with glory and honour.

As soon as he had been restored to consciousness by a draught of the blood, Ulysses asked him whether his ship had sunk on the way home, or whether he had been slain by enemies in a strange country.

But he answered, 'Neither did I perish at sea, nor was it in any strange land that my enemy slew me. He who murdered me was Aegisthus, my near relation. My own cousin it was, who, in league with my wife, slew my companions and myself also. Hardly had I set foot in my beloved country, when he treacherously invited me to a banquet, and there slew me as men slay an ox eating his food at the manger. Thou too hast faced death in many forms, both alone, and when in battle whole ranks of men are mowed down together. But never can it to thee have appeared so horrible as to us

when we lay covered with mortal wounds on the bloody ground, strewn with drinking vessels, food, and tables overturned. There I died, whilst my unnatural wife looked on and rejoiced. No pity had she,—nor even when life had left me, did she shut my mouth or close my staring eyes. But thou, Ulysses, art secure against so sad a fate ; for thy wife, Penelope, is true and good. A young wife we left her when we went to the war, holding in her arms her little son, who must now be a grown man. How he will rejoice to welcome back his father, and press him to his heart ! But my wife pitilessly wrought my destruction, yea, even before I could so much as look upon the face of my only son !’

After this there came by a number of noble shadow-forms, amongst whom were Achilles and his friend Patroclus, the mighty Ajax, and Antilochus, the son of the wise old Nestor. When Ulysses had caused himself to be recognised by Achilles, he said, ‘Truly mayest thou, Achilles, be praised as the happiest of men, for while thou wast alive we honoured thee as a god, and even here among the dead, all the bravest heroes follow thee wherever thou goest.’

But Achilles answered, ‘That is but poor comfort. I tell thee, that I would rather be in the Upper World, the slave of the poorest man alive, than a king here among the dead. But give me news of those I have left behind. My son Neoptolemus, does he maintain the honour of my name ? And how fares it with my father Peleus, now that I am no longer able to protect him ?’

‘Of Peleus,’ replied Ulysses, ‘have I heard nothing ; but thy son has proved himself worthy of so great a

father. In the camp before Troy he was ever one of the best in council; and in the battle he was no coward, hiding amongst the crowd, but always in the front of the fight, and woe to the enemy who crossed his path! When we were in the Wooden Horse,¹ many a hero grew pale and trembled, but he—with his spear in one hand and his sword-hilt in the grasp of the other—was only impatient to leap forth from the horse, and rush on the enemy. And when the city of Priam was sacked and a great booty was taken, he did not fail to receive his rightful share, and an extra portion besides, as an honourable distinction. Not once, moreover, was he wounded, but whole and unscathed he returned to his home. The heart of Achilles was filled with joy at these good tidings, and he passed on with proud steps.

The followers of Achilles who had accompanied him to the place where Ulysses was standing, greeted the hero as old friends,—only the mighty Ajax stood aloof in sullen silence, with his eyes turned away from him, for he still remembered with vexation how Ulysses had been preferred to himself in the competition for the arms of Achilles.²

Meeting him thus again in the Land of Shades, Ulysses was filled with desire to appease his anger, and addressed him in friendly tones. ‘Dost thou still in death, Ajax, retain thine anger against me,’ he said, ‘on account of those ill-starred weapons? Not mine was the fault. It was the will of the gods to punish us, and therefore did they stir up strife between us. Otherwise could we not have quarrelled, for thou wast

¹ See *The Trojan War*, pp. 86–91. Longmans & Co.

² *Ibid.* pp. 74–76.

ever to us a tower of strength in the battle, and we mourned for thee, even as for Achilles. Put away thy wrath, Ajax, and come nearer to me.' But Ajax answered nothing, and, still nursing his anger, disappeared among the other shadows.

Before he left the Lower World, Ulysses saw also the punishments reserved for those who had been guilty during their lifetime of great wickedness. There lay the giant Tityus, with his huge body stretched out over nine acres of land; upon it were seated two vultures who continually pecked at his liver and ate it,—and every time they did so, the flesh closed over the place, and the liver grew again. There stood Tantalus¹—tortured with unceasing hunger and thirst—in water that reached up to his knees, and close to trees that almost dropped their fruits into his mouth; but whenever he tried to pluck the fruit, the boughs raised themselves up into the air beyond his reach, and whenever he put down his mouth to drink the water, it flowed away from him into the earth. There too was Sisyphus,² toiling up the side of a mountain with a great mass of rock which he was trying to roll to the top. He had been commanded to convey it thither and hurl it over the brow; but every time he had almost reached the summit, and began to hope that his labour would soon be at an end, the stone bounded away from him, and, with a sound like thunder, rolled back to the bottom of the mountain.

Suddenly the crowd of shadows which surrounded Ulysses seemed to become more agitated than before,

¹ See *Myths of Hellas*, p. 76.

² *Ibid.* p. 44.

and he, fearing that Persephone was about to bring before them one of the sights of horror which no mortal could face,—not even the bravest,—told his companions that they would return at once to the ship. Their joy at hearing this announcement was great, but greater still was their satisfaction when they found themselves fairly out of the land of darkness, and could once more look upon the light of the sun.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SIRENS.

WITH a favourable wind the ship made good speed on her return journey, and reached the island of Circe early the next day. Ulysses lost no time in fetching the corpse of Elpenor from the palace, and burying it according to his wishes on a projecting point of land that stretched out some way into the sea. Circe had sent down food and wine to the shore for her guests, and she herself came also and sat with Ulysses in a cave near by, whilst his companions feasted on the beach.

Ulysses related to her all that he had heard from Tiresias, and then she said, 'Now will I tell thee of the perils ye will have to pass through before ye reach the island of Thrinacia. First are the Sirens, who allure all men by their magic song, in order that they may devour them. They sit singing in a pleasant meadow, but all round them lie the bleached bones of those whom they have enticed to their ruin.'

Circe told Ulysses how to protect his companions from hearing the song, and how he might hear it himself without danger, and then she continued, 'After this ye have a choice of two ways. One of

them leads through the Wandering Rocks, and whoever goes there is lost without remedy, for they rush hither and thither with the utmost speed, making great billows as they go, and everything that comes in their way is dashed to pieces, or else destroyed by the flames that break from them. No bird even has ever flown past them uninjured; the very doves that bring to Father Zeus the ambrosia, the food of the gods, never reach Mount Olympus without leaving one of their number behind, and in order to keep it complete, Zeus has to create a fresh dove every time. Neither has any ship ever passed them, excepting one,—that was the *Argo*, which was enabled to escape, only by the help of *Hera*.¹

‘The other way leads between the rocks of *Scylla* and *Charybdis*. One of these rocks rises straight up from the sea, and its top is always covered with clouds. About half-way up is a deep cavern, the abode of the monster *Scylla*. Her voice sounds like that of a young dog, but she has a body of enormous size. Far inside the cave she hides her twelve feet, and out of it she stretches her six necks. At the end of each neck is a horrible head with three rows of murderous teeth, and these heads she bends down into the water to fish for dolphins, sea-dogs, and whatever else she can find in the sea. No ship can go by without her taking toll, for with each of her six heads, she seizes one of the men as they row past her.

‘Not more than an arrow-shot from *Scylla* is the other, lower rock—marked by a wild fig-tree that grows upon it—where, three times a day, *Charybdis* sucks in the sea and spits it out again. Equally

¹ See *Myths of Hellas*, p. 168.

doomed to destruction is the ship that passes Charybdis, whether it goes by at the time of the sucking-in, or at the time of the spitting-out. When she draws in the water, it whirls in wild tumult down her throat, making the whole rock tremble and quake, until at last all the water around has been taken in, and the bottom of the sea is left quite bare and exposed to view. No less terrible is the moment when the water is cast forth again, for then it bubbles up as if it were being boiled furiously in a gigantic cauldron; the whole sea is covered with foam and froth, and rushes away from the rock with irresistible force. Therefore ye must sail right under Scylla, for it is better that six men should perish than that the whole crew should be lost, and the ship also.'

Here Ulysses interrupted the goddess. 'But can I not avoid Charybdis,' said he, 'and at the same time keep off Scylla with my sword and spear?'

'Thou art but a fool,' replied Circe, smiling, 'who talkest of fighting with the Immortals! The monster Scylla cannot die, and no weapon can pierce her skin. By flight and speed alone can ye hope, any of you, to escape her. Should ye delay but a moment, her six heads would be thrust forth a second time, and ye would lose six more of your comrades.'

Early the next morning the ship sped on its way, again assisted by a favourable wind. But when the rocks of the Sirens came into view, the wind fell, and they had to take to the oars. Circe had given to Ulysses a great cake of wax, which he now divided with his sword into a number of pieces, and with it plastered up the ears of all his companions. He had previously

told them that as soon as this was done they must bind him with a strong cord to the mast of the ship, and that even if he entreated them to unloose him, they were to take no notice, but only to bind him with a second and still stronger cord.

Soon they were near enough to the rocks of the Sirens for Ulysses to hear their song,—and charming and sweet and innocent beyond all telling it sounded in his ears. This was what they sang:—‘Renowned Ulysses, noble hero, stop thy ship and listen to our song! Never before thee has any man failed to stop and listen to us, and much have we taught to many a one, of which he was formerly in ignorance. We know all that has befallen both Greeks and Trojans by the will of the gods,—yea, we know everything that has ever happened in the wide world.’

The song of the Sirens was so enchanting that it went to the heart of Ulysses; he began to think that all Circe had told him of their treachery must be a mistake and a delusion; and nothing did he desire more ardently than to jump from the ship into the sea and swim nearer to the nymphs, that he might hear their song over and over again. He was now full of regret at having caused himself to be bound, and with imploring gestures he made signs to his companions to set him at liberty; but two of them fastened the second rope round him, tied still more securely than the first, and the others rowed on as fast as they could. Ulysses was greatly enraged, but when they had gone so far that the song could no longer be heard, he rejoiced that they had disobeyed him. It was not until they were at a safe distance from the Sirens, that they took the wax from their ears and unbound Ulysses.

CHAPTER X.

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

ALMOST immediately after this, they saw in the distance the terrible Wandering Rocks, which stirred up the whole sea by rushing so violently from place to place that the danger could not have been greater in the most severe storm. When they perceived this, the hearts of the rowers sank, and their limbs became paralysed with fright.

They made no effort to escape, but let their oars hang idly in the water, whilst the ship was being driven nearer and nearer to the fatal rocks. Ulysses however knew that their only hope lay in active exertion, and going from one to another of the rowers, he bade them be of good courage, and said, 'The danger is not greater now than it was when we were in the cave of the Cyclops, but even then did I not find a means of rescuing you? Follow now, therefore, my advice. Pluck up heart again, and by your vigorous rowing withdraw the ship from the dangerous current. And thou, helmsman, steer the ship away from the smoke and noise, and direct its course towards yonder rock.'

It was the rock of Scylla, but Ulysses told his companions nothing of the monster who lurked there, and

they were so accustomed to find safety in following the advice of their leader, that they were now obedient to his injunctions, and rowed with all their might towards it. Ulysses remembered well what Circe had told him of the ghastly toll taken by the monster of every ship that passed her, but he still cherished some hope of being able nevertheless to save his friends, and he seized his weapons in readiness to attack her.

They were soon in the narrow space between Scylla and Charybdis,—the two rocks lying only about an arrowshot apart. Charybdis was just then occupied in sucking in the sea; the companions of Ulysses turned pale at the tremendous spectacle, and he himself could not take away his eyes from it. But suddenly he heard a cry for help, and looking round, perceived that they were at that moment passing the rock of Scylla, and that the monster had already seized six of his men. He could see them still struggling with their arms and feet, and could hear their cries,—but it was only for the moment, for almost immediately the monster disappeared with them into her cavern. It was the most ghastly sight that Ulysses had ever seen. But all that he could do now was to try and save the rest; and when Scylla had hurriedly devoured her horrible meal, and again stretched herself out to see what more she could seize, the ship was already far beyond her reach.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CATTLE OF HELIOS.

ULYSSES and his men were now approaching the island of Thrinacia. This was the pasture of the flocks of the sun-god, and while the ship was still far out at sea, they could hear the lowing of the cattle, and the bleating of the sheep. There were seven flocks of kine and seven flocks of sheep; they were under the care of two of the daughters of the sun-god, and like their master were immortal; none of them ever died, neither were there ever any young ones added to their number.

Ulysses remembered the warning of Tiresias that misfortune might overtake his companions and himself whilst they were on the island, and said to his men, 'Let us avoid this island and go on our way without landing here, for I have been warned by Tiresias that we here stand in danger of meeting with grievous misfortune.'

In reply the men looked at him despondingly, for they were weary and exhausted; and Eurylochus said, 'Hardly art thou a creature of flesh and blood, Ulysses! thou seemest rather to be made of iron. Thy spirits never fail, neither are thy limbs weary. But we are faint with long rowing, and sick with the remembrance of

the horrors we have passed through ; wherefore then wilt thou hinder us from landing on this island, where we may prepare for ourselves a good meal, and enjoy a peaceful sleep? Night, the friend of no man is at hand,—the time when storms are wont to arise. Let us therefore sleep here as is fitting, and then in the early morning we will go on our way refreshed.’ All the men sided with Eurylochus, and urged Ulysses not to grudge them this short rest.

‘ Against my will ye constrain me,’ he replied, ‘ but at least swear to me that ye will eat nothing but the food with which our ship was stored by Circe, and that if on the island we meet with any flock of cattle or of sheep, ye will refrain from laying hands on the beasts.’

This they promised readily, and then put in to the shore ; and after they had partaken of a plentiful meal, they stretched themselves on the sand, and went to sleep. But towards morning a violent storm arose, which covered the sea with great billows ; and they were obliged to draw up the ship on to the shore, and hide it in a deep cave to protect it from the unfavourable weather.

Ulysses was much concerned : he feared that if the storm should continue, they might be compelled to make a long stay upon the island, and that during this time his companions might be tempted to break their promise, and attack the flocks of Helios. He therefore reminded them again that these animals were the favourites of the sun-god, who sees and hears everything that takes place on the earth, and that anyone who molested them would have to atone for it with his life. The men were astonished that he should think

it necessary to say so much about this,—had they not abundance of food in their ship? and was it likely that they would be so foolish as to provoke the wrath of Helios?

But the storm continued for a whole month without ceasing, and at last all the provisions were gone. They now had nothing to depend upon for their support beyond the supplies they were able to procure by hunting and fishing, and it was but little that they could obtain in this way;—the storm made it almost impossible to fish, and of wild animals there were but few on the island, so that from day to day the spoils they brought in became less and less, and their hunger became greater and greater.

Ulysses shared in their hunger, but still more did he suffer from anxiety lest the calamity of which Tiresias had warned him should now be close at hand. The only hope of help lay in prayer to the gods, and going to a lonely spot, he washed his hands, according to the Greek custom, and prayed long and earnestly that the gods would point out to him some way of escape. Then he stretched himself upon the grass, and soon fell into a deep sleep, quite exhausted with care and grief.

Meanwhile his companions were sitting together, sad and despondent, for they could see no end to their misery. Suddenly Eurylochus rose up, and said, ‘Friends, death is terrible in any form, but of all deaths the worst is that by hunger. Therefore it is my counsel that we slay and eat some of the cattle of Helios. The god will surely be satisfied if we vow to make him amends, and when we return to Ithaca, we can build a temple

in his honour, and adorn it with great magnificence. Even should he, in his anger at this deed, destroy our ship when we put to sea again, I for one would rather perish by drowning than tarry here to await a slow death for lack of food.'

These words went to the hearts of the despairing men ; they readily assented to the proposal, and springing up with one accord, betook themselves to the nearest pasture, and drove down three fat bulls to the shore.

These they proceeded to sacrifice to the gods, and as they had no barley with which to bestrew the victims, according to the sacred custom, they plucked leaves from the trees and threw them over their heads and necks whilst the prayer was being said. Then they slaughtered the animals, and prepared a meal for gods and men. For the gods the thigh-bones were always reserved, with the fat and skin belonging to them, and some slices of the flesh besides ; this part was laid in the sacrificial fire, and then they fell upon the rest with the eagerness of starving men.

When Ulysses awoke, he hastened back to the camping-place, but even before he reached it, there came to his nostrils the smell of roasted flesh. Nothing more was needed to make him aware of what had taken place, and sighing deeply, he cried, 'O Father Zeus, and ye other gods, it is for the undoing of us all that ye have caused me to fall into this sleep, during which my companions have burdened themselves with so heavy a crime !' Bitterly he reproached his friends for what they had done ; but it was now too late to mend the evil.

The gods immediately manifested their anger by signs

that could not be mistaken:-- the skins of the cattle which had been flayed, rose up and walked away as if they were living animals, and the flesh which was being roasted on spits before the fire, bellowed and roared. The gods also decided that punishment should quickly overtake the guilty men. One of the daughters of the sun-god, who had charge of the flocks, had ascended to Mount Olympus as soon as the robbery was committed, and told her father of the crime. The anger of Helios was immediately roused, and he said to the other gods, 'The companions of Ulysses have killed my cattle, which it has been my delight to look upon as often as I have driven across the heavens. They one and all deserve death. Promise me that my right shall be upheld, or I will go down to the Lower World and henceforth enlighten the Land of the Dead.'

To which Zeus made answer, 'Shine on, Helios, as of yore, in the sight of gods and men; soon will the ship of Ulysses be again in the open sea, and then I will send a flash of lightning to destroy it.'

The storm continued for six days longer, and during that time the companions of Ulysses lived upon the cattle of the sun-god. On the seventh day, the weather cleared, and they pushed out the ship to sea, and left the island. But they made little progress, and soon a black angry-looking cloud swept over the sky,--the forerunner of a tremendous storm. The ship was tossed up and down upon the waves, which rose as high as mountains; and the wind tore violently at the ropes and sails. Soon the two ropes which held the mast in its place gave way, and it fell upon the helm with a crash, killing the steersman and sweeping him

overboard. Then, after a peal of terrific thunder, there came a flash of lightning which struck the ship. It went reeling over on to its side, and then with a violent lurch swung back again, tossing all the companions of Ulysses out into the sea ; for a short time they could be seen on the surface of the water like so many sea-birds,—then they were engulfed by the waves, never to rise up again.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ISLAND OF CALYPSO.

ULYSSES alone had been able to keep his hold of the ship, but now the planks gave way at the sides, and only the keel and the mast still held together. Round these he hastily fastened a rope, and seated himself astride this rude raft as a rider across his horse. He had scarcely done so when the wind turned, and before long he found himself again between the two perilous rocks through which he had before passed with so much risk.

The current drove him towards Charybdis, who was just then engaged in sucking in the sea. The raft was hurled rapidly towards her mighty jaws, and it seemed that there was now no hope for Ulysses. But just above the opening grew the wild fig-tree of which Circe had told him; its branches hung down almost into the water, and Ulysses seized hold of them, and remained hanging by his arms to the fig-tree when his raft was carried down the throat of Charybdis. A long time it seemed to him before the flood was poured forth again, for the fatigue of his position was very great; but at last everything was shot out, and Ulysses dropped from the fig-tree just as the raft was passing

under him, and succeeded in getting hold of the rope and hauling himself on to it. For nine days and nights after this he was tossed about on the sea, but on the tenth day the current carried him to some land.

It was the island of Ogygia, the home of the beautiful nymph Calypso. She received Ulysses with the utmost kindness, and did everything in her power to comfort him and make him forget all the toils and privations he had undergone. But notwithstanding all this, Ulysses was destined to pass a miserable time in her island. Hitherto he had had to encounter monsters, men-eaters, and all kinds of horrors and perils of the sea, and had barely escaped with his life; now he was secure from violence, but was farther off than ever from obtaining the desire of his heart—namely, the power of returning to his home. The love of Calypso was as great a hindrance to his happiness as the treachery and enmity he had previously met with.

Calypso lived quite alone on her island, unvisited by either gods or men, and now that such a noble-looking hero had come to her shores, she was well-pleased to have his society, and would not let him leave her. She wanted him to be her husband, and said that she would obtain for him from Zeus the gift of immortality and perpetual youth, so that they might live together throughout all eternity. But the prospect had no attraction for Ulysses; the nymph was indeed far more beautiful than Penelope, but nevertheless he felt that he would willingly die like other men, if only he might first return to his dear wife and much-loved son.

Notwithstanding all his cleverness, Ulysses was

unable to devise any means of removing the obstacle with which the love of Calypso now blocked his path. Flight was impossible, for all round the island stretched the desolate sea, and there was no boat of any sort with which to make his escape. So one year after another passed slowly away. All day long he used to sit on the rocks by the sea, gazing in the direction in which lay his own island of Ithaca, and happy beyond words would he have been, if he could have seen in the distance the smoke rising from his home. But he was still far away from it, and bitter were the tears that fell from his eyes because all prospect of his return thither was now cut off from him.

CHAPTER XIII.

PENELOPE AND HER SUITORS.

MEANWHILE, in the house of Ulysses at Ithaca, the time was passing sorrowfully enough. Twenty years had gone by since the departure of Ulysses from the island; and his son Telemachus, who at that time was a child in arms, had grown up to be a noble youth. After the termination of the war, Queen Penelope constantly heard of this or that hero who had arrived home in safety, and with patient longing she waited for the return of her husband. But year after year passed away, and he still remained absent; she did not know where he was, nor even whether he was yet alive, and her hopes sank lower and lower. Continually she saw him before her eyes as he was in the time when he had made her life one perpetual joy, and the memory of those days filled her with sorrow, and often brought the tears to her eyes.

She had moreover another source of trouble. Everyone thought that Ulysses must certainly have perished, and all the noblest youths in Ithaca and the neighbourhood cherished the hope that the queen might take one of them as her second husband. They came therefore to sue for her, but not, as was

THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES.

—then the custom, by going to her father and offering him costly gifts in return for the hand of his daughter ; —instead of this, they came to her palace in crowds, more than a hundred of them at once, and there they feasted every day, consuming the goods of Ulysses, and endeavouring to compel her to make choice of one of them.

Penelope was sorely perplexed, but at last she hit upon a device by which to keep them off for a time. She set up a great loom in her room, and said to them, ‘Ye suitors, press me not to choose between you until I have woven a shroud for the aged father of my beloved Ulysses, for ill should I be spoken of amongst women if I allowed the old man to be laid on his funeral pyre without a shroud woven by my hands.’

The suitors agreed to this, and every day Penelope worked industriously at the great sheet ; but in the night she always got up, lighted a torch, and undid all the work of the previous day. For three years she contrived in this way to keep the suitors at a distance, but at last she was betrayed by one of her waiting-women ;—the suitors came one night and surprised her in the act of undoing her work, and after this she was obliged to go straight on with it until it was quite finished.

Then the stormy wooing began again, and Penelope did not know what to do. Long ago, when Ulysses was bidding her farewell, he had taken her kindly by the hand and said to her, ‘Not all of us will return from this war, for the Trojans, they say, are well skilled in the art of battle. I know not therefore whether the gods will keep me alive, or whether I may

not rather fall before Troy. Do thou take care of this our house, and be kind as thou hast ever been—or, if it is possible, kinder still—to my old father and mother; and when our son is grown up, then if thou wilt, do thou marry, and bring home thy new husband to this house.'

Thus had Ulysses spoken. Telemachus was now grown up, and able himself to manage the house and estate of his father; and if she remained in the house, it was certain that the suitors would dissipate more and more the inheritance which ought to be his. It seemed that the only way of ridding the house of this crowd of unwelcome visitors was for her to do violence to her feelings, and take one of them for her husband.

CHAPTER XIV.

TELEMACHUS AND HIS GUEST.

TELEMACHUS resembled his father, not only in outward appearance, but also in his friendly disposition and kindness of heart ; it would have been a happiness to any brave man to have him for his son. Only in one respect was it apparent that he had not grown up under the eye of his father :—for any dangerous expedition he had courage in abundance, and in battle he was as good as any man, but in every-day life he was bashful, and felt more like a boy than a man. If he was treated badly, he felt it deeply, but he did not know how to take such a decided tone as to teach the offender that he had better be careful not to injure him or his for the future. From the example and training of his father, he would have learnt this without difficulty, but of Ulysses he knew nothing but what his mother had been able to tell him. Therefore the goddess Athene, who was the protector of Ulysses, and extended her care to all that belonged to him, resolved to take his place, and teach Telemachus how to get rid of his timidity.

One day the suitors were assembled as usual in the palace of Ulysses. The heralds and servants were

making preparations for the midday meal,—cleansing the tables with wet sponges, and mixing the wine and water in great vessels; and the suitors were lying stretched on the skins of cattle in the court-yard, passing the time in playing games. Telemachus was with them, but he took no part in the games, for he was filled with sad thoughts about his father.

Just then, there appeared a stranger at the door of the court-yard, which led into the street; it was the goddess Athene in the form of a man, who stood there waiting for an invitation to enter. Telemachus hastened to meet her, and took from her the spear she held in her hand. ‘Be welcome, stranger,’ said he, ‘to the best we have to offer thee,’ and he led her into the hall to a seat a little apart from the rest, and bade them set food and wine before her. The suitors followed, and the meal began.

In those days, the customs with regard to eating were different from those which are usual now. Knives and forks were not yet invented, and all food had to be carried in the fingers to the mouth. Before the meal, therefore, the servants used to carry round a jug of water and a basin, and each guest held his hands above the basin whilst water was poured over them; in the same manner, too, they washed their fingers when the meal was over. Also, they did not sit, as we do, at one long table, but there were many little tables at which the guests sat separately, or, at the most, two together.

When the guests were seated and had washed their hands, the servants placed baskets of bread upon the tables; then a platter of meat was carried round, and

a portion placed before each guest,—spoons were as unknown as knives or forks. During the meal, heralds went round, filling up the cups with wine as often as they were emptied.

The suitors laughed and made a great noise all through the meal, and when they had eaten and drunk as much as they wished, they called for the old singer Phemius to come and sing to them. Telemachus sat apart with his guest, and said, pointing to the suitors, ‘They live here merrily enough, at no expense to themselves. But if my father were to come home, their mirth would soon be at an end. Unhappily, however, they are safe from him;—his bones lie bleaching somewhere in the sun, or else he has been engulfed by the sea. But tell me thy name and the place of thy birth, and also why thou art come to Ithaca. Art thou the first of thy family who has entered our house as a guest? or was there already in the time of my father a friendship between your people and ourselves?’

‘My name is Mentès,’ replied Athene, ‘and I bear rule among the Taphians. I sail over the sea to seek for iron in exchange for copper which I bring with me; my ship is now on the shore at a little distance from the city. Enquire of thy grandfather, and he will tell thee that we have long been friends of his house. Now have I come hither because they told me that thy father had already returned. But even though this is not the case, do not yet give up all hope. The gods may have delayed his coming, but that he is dead, that I cannot believe. He must have fallen among enemies who will not allow him to depart, but he is cunning

enough, and will surely find some way of getting free. But tell me, who are these men who feast in thy house, and play the lord here?’

‘Alas!’ said Telemachus, ‘they are a grievous plague, these suitors of my mother, who come here every day and consume my goods. Thou seest how many they are.’

‘They are bold men,’ replied Athene, ‘for when Ulysses returns, he will pay them dearly for their wooing—it will cost them no less than their life. But follow my advice. To-morrow morning, call together the citizens, and demand of them that they make a clearance of the suitors from thy house. Then make ready a ship, and sail to the neighbouring countries to see if thou canst hear any tidings of thy father. First go to Pylos to the wise Nestor, and then to King Menelaüs who has recently returned to Sparta. If thou hearest that Ulysses is believed to be alive and on his homeward journey, then wait in patience a little longer; but if on the contrary they tell thee that he is dead, raise thou to his memory a mound of earth, and consider how, by cunning or by force, thou canst compass the destruction of the shameless suitors. And now farewell, for I must return to my ship and my comrades. Consider well my counsel.’

‘Thou hast indeed spoken to me as a father,’ said Telemachus, trying to detain his guest, ‘and I will not forget thy counsel. But remain a little longer, and return not to thy ship without a stranger’s present.’

‘I cannot now linger,’ replied Athene, ‘but on my return journey I will again visit thee, and will fetch the present which thou offerest me.’ With these words she

departed, and as soon as she had left the house, she disappeared, leaving no trace behind her.

Telemachus was much astonished at what had happened, but still more was he surprised at finding himself suddenly filled with new courage and resolution; Athene had imparted to him a self-confidence he had never known before, and Telemachus could only suppose that the stranger must have been a god.

Meanwhile the suitors were still listening to Phemius, who was singing of the return of the Greeks from Troy, and how with some it had fared well and with others ill. In the upper chamber, where she usually remained, Queen Penelope heard the song, and was deeply moved. She came down stairs to the hall, accompanied by two of her maidens, and standing in the doorway, she said to Phemius with tears in her eyes, 'Phemius, thou who knowest how to celebrate in song so many deeds of gods and men, why dost thou choose to sing of the wretched war which has caused me such bitter sorrow?'

Just then Telemachus came back, and stepping between them, he said, 'Dear mother, let the singer sing that to which his heart inclines him; it is not himself who chooses the song, but Zeus who puts it into his mouth. Moreover, men love to hear that which is the newest thing. Control thyself, therefore, and listen to it patiently; Ulysses is not the only one whose homecoming has been delayed, for many others have shared the same fate.'

Penelope was astonished at hearing her son speak so decidedly, for till now, in his timidity, he had let everything go its own way; and without a word she returned to her chamber.

One of the most presumptuous of the suitors was Eurymachus. He now approached Telemachus, and said, 'Who was then the stranger who so quickly went on his way? Whence came he, and on what errand? Brought he any tidings of thy father? His appearance proclaimed him a man of no mean birth.'

Telemachus replied, 'From my father, alas! I look no longer for any re-assuring message. The stranger was an ancient friend of our house, Mentès, a ruler among the Taphians.' Thus he answered Eurymachus, but in his heart he thought otherwise.

Till evening, the suitors amused themselves with feasting, singing and dancing; then they left the palace and went away for the night. Telemachus also went to his sleeping-chamber, and according to her usual custom, his old nurse, Eurycleia, came with two torches to light him to his room. Every night she came, and also returned after he had laid himself down, to fetch his clothes, and shake the dust from them. This evening she did for him as was her wont, but when she was gone, Telemachus did not as usual fall asleep; the whole night long he lay awake, busily occupied in thinking of what he should do on the following day, and how he should speak to the people.

CHAPTER XV.

TELEMACHUS ASSEMBLES THE CITIZENS.

THE next morning, Telemachus sent heralds through the streets to summon the people to assemble in the market-place. The citizens were astonished, for it was long since there had been any such summons, and they came in great numbers to the place of meeting. Telemachus, with a spear in his hand, and accompanied by two favourite dogs, appeared among the rest, and seated himself on a great stone bench in the form of a semicircle, which was reserved for the most distinguished persons. Here his father had in old times been accustomed to sit, and the other men willingly made room for him.

The first to rise was an old man whose son had gone with Ulysses to the war, and who was still waiting and watching for the return of this much-loved son, not knowing that he had been devoured by the Cyclops, Polyphemus. He said to the citizens, 'By whom, I would ask, has this assembly been summoned? It is now many years since we have thus met together. Is it perchance that some news has been received of our friends who sailed away with Ulysses? or is there one of the citizens who desires to confer about some

matter that concerns us all? I praise him for calling this assembly, and may Zeus prosper him in his purpose!’

Telemachus rejoiced at hearing this good wish, and said, ‘It is I who have called the citizens together. Of our friends, alas! I have heard nothing, but I wish to speak of our own affairs. Citizens, ye know, all of you, what a heavy grief to me is the loss of my noble father,—and besides this, another trouble weighs upon me, of which also ye are not ignorant. Ye know how many suitors there are who importune my mother; instead of going to her father to sue for her, they come to our house. Every day they come, and they kill cattle, sheep and swine for their feasts, and drink their fill of wine,—thus consuming our goods. Now I entreat you, take this matter into your hands, and free me from these suitors, lest haply the gods should punish their evil deeds by bringing some calamity upon the city.’ As he spoke, the tears burst from his eyes, and he dashed his spear to the ground with violence.

The citizens felt that Telemachus was right, and that it was their duty to put an end to the scandal, but nevertheless they remained silent, for they were afraid of the suitors and their noble relatives, and left it to Antinoüs, one of the most forward of the suitors, to reply.

‘It is not we who are in fault,’ he said insolently, ‘but thy mother. For four years she has kept us waiting, and will not choose one of us for her husband. This advice only we give thee,—to send thy mother away out of thy house. So long as she is there, will we come every day and feast at thy expense.’

‘How shall I, against her will, send away my mother,’ answered Telemachus, ‘who has taken care of me all through my childhood? The gods would punish me, and my name would become a by-word. If then, instead of going from one house to another among yourselves to hold your feasts, ye persist in coming every day unasked to consume my goods, continue to do so. But I call upon Zeus to punish you, and I pray that in the house where ye now riot, ye may soon meet with your destruction.’

He had hardly spoken when two eagles were seen flying towards the spot from the neighbouring mountains. At first they flew peacefully side by side, but when they were just above the assembly, they suddenly became savage and attacked one another violently, pecking and tearing with bills and claws; then they disappeared, and flew away from the city towards the right. In those days the flight and actions of birds were carefully observed, as it was believed that by this means the will of the gods could be discovered; and on this occasion, everyone in the assembly was struck with awe, and watched the birds with rapt attention, thinking that their quarrel must have some special signification.

The silence was broken by the aged Halitherses, who said, ‘What we have just seen is a token sent by the gods. Listen to me, ye citizens, and above all, ye suitors, for a great calamity is hanging over your heads. Ulysses will not much longer remain away from his home; already perchance he is near, and planning revenge upon the suitors. For this reason it is not well that ye others should look on quietly while the

suitors outrage the house of Ulysses ; for you also, evil days may be at hand. Long ago, when Ulysses went to the war, I foretold that in the twentieth year he would return, after many sufferings and having lost all his companions, alone, and unknown to all. This is now the twentieth year, and these things will shortly come to pass.'

The suitors were unwilling to believe this prophecy, and Eurymachus spoke roughly to the aged seer. 'If thou must prophesy,' he cried, 'do it at home, amongst thy children, to whom thy foolish words can do no harm. It is not every bird that flies across the heaven which brings a message from the gods. Ulysses has perished long ago, and I would thou hadst shared his fate, then wouldst thou not have been here to stir up Telemachus against us, in the hope of getting a present from him. But I tell thee that if thou shouldst do this a second time, it will be the worse for thee, and not light will be the consequences. We fear no man, and we are resolved to consume the goods of Telemachus until his mother shall choose a husband from among us.'

There was also in the assembly a man greatly esteemed by the citizens, Mentor by name ; he was an old friend of Ulysses, and to him Ulysses at his departure had confided the care of his property. Mentor would not allow himself to be intimidated by the threats of the suitors from reproaching the citizens for their apathy. 'In future,' he said, 'no king will be kind and friendly towards his people, but harsh and severe ; for which of you gives any sign of remembering the fatherly rule of Ulysses? With the suitors

I do not find fault, for if they plunder the house of Ulysses, at least they do so at the risk of their lives. But you I blame, in that ye remain quiet while these things take place, for ye are the many, and the few ye could easily control if ye would.'

At this a third suitor stepped forward, who said, 'What folly is this that thou speakest? Knowest thou not that when it is a question of eating and drinking, one man can defend himself against many? Even if Ulysses were to return and attempt to drive the suitors from his house, he would certainly perish in the struggle.'

By this time it was evident to Telemachus that no assistance was to be looked for from the people, and he therefore requested that they would give him a ship and twenty rowers, to enable him to go to Sparta and Pylos to seek for tidings of Ulysses. This plan did not by any means commend itself to the suitors, for they were afraid that he might obtain reinforcements from these powerful friends of his father, or at all events be encouraged to make some further attempt to get rid of them. They did not however wish to oppose him openly in the matter, so they cut short the discussion by saying in a scornful tone that Halitherses and Mentor could surely provide him with a ship, and proceeded to break up the assembly,—the people being afraid to offer any resistance to their wishes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEPARTURE OF TELEMACHUS.

WITH a heart full of trouble, Telemachus went down to a solitary place on the shore, and when he had washed his hands in the sea, he prayed, saying, 'Hear me, O thou who didst yesterday encourage me to go to Pylos and to Sparta! In vain have been my efforts, for I have been thwarted by the suitors.'

Scarcely had he spoken these words, when Mentor, the friend of his father, came towards him with a friendly countenance:—that is to say, the appearance was that of Mentor, but in reality it was Athene who came to his help. 'Free thyself from care,' she said. 'I will provide thee with a suitable vessel, ready-manned, and will also accompany thee on thy journey. Go to thy home, and bid them give thee food and wine, as much as will be needed.'

Telemachus hastened home, and went at once to the store-chamber. It was under the charge of the old nurse Eurycleia, and in it were heaps of gold and silver, clothes in abundance laid by in wooden chests, jars of sweetly scented oil standing side by side, and all round the wall, great earthen vessels full of wine. 'Mother,' said Telemachus to the old woman, 'fill me

some jars of sweet wine, of the best next to that which thou holdest in reserve for Ulysses. Fill twelve of the jars that have handles, and close them up with tightly fitting stoppers. Pour also twelve measures of barley into leather bags, and place all together. In the evening, when my mother has gone to bed, I will return and fetch them, for I am going to Pylos and to Sparta to seek for tidings of Ulysses.'

Eurycleia was frightened, and exclaimed, sobbing, 'How came this into thy mind? Art thou, the only comfort of thy mother, about to sail alone over the wide sea? Ulysses is certainly dead; in some strange land he has perished, far away from his home; and now the suitors will lay snares for thee also, and kill thee by craft. Nay, trust not thyself upon the treacherous sea!'

Telemachus answered her with reassuring words. 'Be not fearful, mother,' he said, 'for the gods are gracious to me, and have put this into my mind. Swear to me that thou wilt not tell my mother of my journey until I have been gone ten or twelve days, unless she should enquire concerning me, for I would not add to her sorrow.' Eurycleia swore to do as Telemachus wished, and busied herself in preparing everything that he required.

Meanwhile, Athene, in the form of Mentor, went through the city, and wherever she met with a strong-looking youth, she invited him to join the expedition of Telemachus, and to meet the rest at the harbour at sun-down. Then she went to a wealthy citizen, Noëmon by name, and begged him to supply Telemachus with a ship. To this Noëmon willingly agreed,

and soon the ship was pushed out to sea, with rudder, sails and everything else, complete.

When it was dark and the suitors had all gone away, Telemachus brought some of the men to his house to carry away the provisions. This they did with all secrecy, and then Athene and Telemachus, followed by the crew, entered the ship, and sailed away.

Athene sat at the helm, and Telemachus next to her. A favourable wind filled the sails, and the ship sped fast on its way. There was no need for toilsome rowing; the ship-men set the sails in order, and then sat round the great drinking-vessel, which was filled with wine to the brim. Thus they spent the beautiful night in merriment and good fellowship, and many drink-offerings they poured out to the gods, but most of all to the goddess Athene.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FEAST AT PYLOS.

THE sun had not long risen when the ship reached Pylos, and Athene and Telemachus at once landed, leaving their companions on board. It happened to be a feast-day, and the aged king and his people were offering a great sacrifice to Poseidon. Thousands of citizens were assembled on the sea-shore, and lay stretched out on the sand, eating the flesh of the animals that had been sacrificed, while the heralds passed up and down among them, filling up the cups with wine.

As they were going towards the place of sacrifice, Telemachus was filled with confusion at the thought of having to address the king, and he said to Athene, 'How shall I make known my errand? In measured speech I am not practised, and good cause has a youth to feel embarrassed when he is about to address himself to an older man.'

But Athene encouraged him. 'Forget thy timidity,' she said, 'and remember that thou art come hither for no other purpose than to enquire of Nestor about thy father. Much of what thou shouldst say will of itself occur to thee, and the rest will be put into thy mouth by the gods, for I am sure that they wish thee well.'

When the sons of Nestor saw the two strangers approaching, they advanced to meet them, and Pisis-tratus, who was the youngest, led them to the place where his father was sitting. Here they found skins spread out upon the sand, and when they had seated themselves, Pisistratus handed to Athene a cup of wine, saying, 'Stranger, make thy prayer to Poseidon, for it is in his honour that we hold our feast to-day. And when thou hast prayed, and hast poured out a drink-offering, pass the cup to thy companion that he may do likewise, for we all stand in need of the help of the gods.'

Then Athene prayed aloud, and said, 'Hear me, great Poseidon, and fulfil my desire! Grant to Nestor and his sons great renown, and do thou recompense all the men of Pylos for the sacrifices which to-day they offer thee. Grant also that we may prosper in the purpose for which we are come hither.' Thus she prayed, meaning herself to accomplish all that she had asked from Poseidon. Then she handed the cup to Telemachus, who prayed in like manner.

When they had finished eating and drinking, Nestor said, 'Now has the time come to enquire of our guests concerning their name and the place of their birth. Tell us, therefore, who ye are, and what has brought you hither.'

At these words Telemachus summoned his courage, and with an effort replied, 'We come from Ithaca. The son of Ulysses am I. Of my unhappy father we have no tidings, and we know not whether he is alive or dead. Therefore I pray thee, tell me what thou canst concerning him. Even if the tale be sad, I entreat thee, by all the love which thou didst bear to my father

when ye were fighting together before Troy, that thou hide nothing from me.'

'My son,' replied Nestor, 'when the war was over, we divided into two bands,—the one followed Menelaüs, and the other Agamemnon. Thus were we parted, thy father and I, and since then have I heard nothing of him. But thou bringest to my memory the countless toils and dangers which in that land we passed through. Yea, often it went hard with us, and many of our bravest were snatched away by death. The brave Ajax, and Achilles, and his friend Patroclus, and my dear son Antilochus, all lie buried there in foreign soil. Afterwards also, when the war was over, many of our heroes perished. To me indeed the gods granted a speedy return, but others have wandered, some for a longer, others for a shorter time, before reaching their homes. Of many have I heard, here in Pylos, how it has fared with them, though not of all. Of the fate of Agamemnon I am not ignorant. He was slain by the hand of Aegisthus,—but now his son Orestes has avenged him by slaying the murderer. Good indeed it is for a man to leave behind him a brave son.'

'Alas!' replied Telemachus despondingly, 'would that the gods had granted me strength to punish the insolent suitors in our house. But that has not been so, and I must endure their violence with what patience I can.'

'I have heard,' answered Nestor, 'of the unseemly manner in which the suitors besiege thy house. Yet if Athene loves thee as she loved thy father, whom she so often helped openly when we were fighting against Troy, many a suitor will yet have cause to regret that

he has joined the band of evil-doers. And perhaps—who can tell?—thy father himself may yet return to his home.'

With a heart full of despair, Telemachus answered, 'O king, how should such good fortune come to me? That is more than I dare to hope for. It hardly could be possible, even should the gods themselves will it.'

But Athene blamed him, saying, 'What words are these, Telemachus? A god, if he will, can easily deliver, even in the greatest extremity. Far rather would I, for my part, spend long years in banishment like thy father, and have at last a prosperous home-coming, than, like Agamemnon, return speedily to be slain at a banquet.'

Telemachus then proceeded to make further enquiries of Nestor. 'But where,' he asked, 'was Menelaüs when the murder of his brother took place?'

'In a distant land was Menelaüs,' replied Nestor. 'Had he on his return home found the treacherous Aegisthus still alive, thou mayest well believe that no mound of earth would have covered his dead body; his corpse would have been thrown to the dogs to devour. But Menelaüs was driven by storms far away from his home,—as far as Egypt and other strange lands, from which it would take a bird longer than a year to fly to the land of Greece,—and thus Aegisthus was left for many years to enjoy the fruits of his crime.'

'When Agamemnon went away to Troy, he entrusted to a faithful minstrel the care of his house and his wife, fearing lest she might be led away by the flattery of

Aegisthus. But when through weakness she yielded, and became the wife of that traitor, the faithful singer was sent away to a solitary island, where he died, and his corpse was devoured by birds. And so great was the influence which Aegisthus had gained over the queen, that she consented willingly to the murder of her husband when he returned from the war. After the crime was committed, Aegisthus ruled for seven years over the dominions of Agamemnon. But the young Orestes had been conveyed by friends of his father to Athens, where he was safe from the murderous hands of Aegisthus, and in the eighth year he returned and slew him,—his mother being already dead. That very same day, Menelaüs at last reached his home, and grieved that he had arrived too late to accomplish the revenge with his own hands.

‘But to thee, it is my counsel that thou do not long remain away, leaving thy mother and thy household in the hands of the suitors. Yet must thou not fail to go to Menelaüs. He has lately returned from his far journey, and may be able to give thee tidings of thy father. Sail therefore to Sparta without any great delay, or if thou wilt rather go by land, I will gladly supply thee with horses and a chariot, and one of my sons shall go with thee.’

When the sun was about to set, Athene reminded Nestor that it was time to bring the sacrificial feast to a conclusion, for it was considered profane to continue till darkness had overspread the earth. The last ceremonies were therefore performed:—water was poured by heralds over the hands of the guests, wine was again mixed, and the cups replenished; and lastly,

while a prayer was offered up to Poseidon and the other gods, the tongues of the animals that had been sacrificed were laid in the flames and sprinkled with drops of wine by the king and his sons. Then the feast was at an end, and the people began to disperse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SACRIFICE TO ATHENE.

TELEMACHUS and Athene were now about to return to their ship, but Nestor said, 'Zeus and the other gods forbid that I should let you go to your ship as if I were a poor man and had not coverings enough to provide a comfortable bed for my guests! While I live and have the power of entertaining strangers in my house, I cannot permit the beloved son of my brave Ulysses to sleep on board his ship.'

'Well hast thou spoken, thou noble old man,' replied Athene. 'Telemachus shall do thy bidding, and follow thee to thy house as thy guest. But I will go to the ship and see that everything is in order, for the crew are all young fellows; I am the one elderly man among them. There will I sleep, and early in the morning I will go on my way to the Caucones, where I have a debt that I must reclaim.'

With these words Athene turned to depart, but suddenly they saw, instead of her, a sea-eagle which flew up rapidly towards the heaven. All were filled with amazement, and Nestor grasped the hand of Telemachus, saying, 'Beloved friend, thou hast a mighty future before thee, who even in thy youth art honoured

by the presence of the gods. This was no other than Athene the daughter of Zeus, who ever protected thy father in the battle. O be gracious to me also, great goddess, to me and to my sons, and to my honoured wife! To-morrow will I sacrifice to thee a cow that has never been yoked in the plough, and will deck her horns with gold.'

Then they all made their way to the city and retired to rest,—Telemachus sleeping with Pisistratus, the youngest of the king's sons, in the open porch in front of the palace.

The next morning Nestor rose at dawn of day, and seated himself on a shining stone bench in front of the house; presently his sons gathered round him, and lastly came Telemachus and Pisistratus. When they were all assembled, Nestor began to prepare for the sacrifice. One of the sons was sent to the herdsman who was to supply the cow, and another to the ship of Telemachus to invite his companions to the feast,—all of them but two who had to remain in charge of the vessel. A third son went to summon the smith to come and cover the horns of the cow with gold, and a fourth directed the women-servants of the house to bring wood and water into the court-yard for the sacrifice.

Before long, the cow was brought in by the herdsman; then came the companions of Ulysses, and lastly the smith arrived with his hammer, tongs and anvil. Nestor gave him as much gold as was needed, and he fastened it round the horns. The cow was led into the middle of the court-yard, and beside her stood one of the king's sons with a basin of water for washing,

and a dish of barley in his hands; another son held a sharp axe, which was to be used for felling the animal to the ground.

Then the venerable Nestor stepped forward. First washing his hands, he strewed some barley-corns upon the cow's head between her horns; and then, while a prayer was repeated, he cut off some of the hairs from her forehead, and threw them into the sacrificial flame. At the same moment the cow sank to her knees under a mighty blow from the axe, and when she had bled to death, they cut up the flesh in pieces. The thigh-bones were first separated, surrounded with a double portion of fat, and laid in the flame for the goddess with some slices of the flesh, and Nestor also poured in wine over them from time to time.

After this, the heart, the liver and the lungs of the animal were roasted before the fire on five-pronged forks by some youths who were standing by, and passed round to be tasted by the guests. The regular feast did not begin as yet, but when the greater part of the flesh had been roasted in a similar manner, all seated themselves at the tables; a portion of the flesh was placed before each guest, and the cups were filled with wine by the heralds who went round performing this duty.

When the feast was over, Nestor desired them to make ready the chariot for Telemachus, and said that Pisistratus should go with him to Sparta.

The house-dame brought out bread, meat and wine, and placed them in the chariot as provisions for the way, and then the two youths mounted the chariot. Pisistratus took the reins, and the horses started off at

a quick pace. Before dark they had reached the house of a friend of Nestor's, where they passed the night, continuing their journey the next day, until they found themselves at Sparta and approaching the palace of King Menelaüs.

CHAPTER XIX.

TELEMACHUS IS RECEIVED BY MENELAÛS AND HELEN.

AT Sparta also it happened that Telemachus arrived just when a feast was taking place. The king was celebrating the marriage of his two children; the son had chosen a Spartan maiden for his bride, and the daughter was wedded to Neoptolemus the son of Achilles.

When the two strangers drew up their chariot in front of the open door of the palace, the relatives and friends were already assembled at the wedding feast, and one of the king's companions said to him, 'Shall I invite the two strangers whom I see arriving, into thy house? or shall I direct them to seek for shelter elsewhere in the city?'

'How canst thou ask such a foolish question?' replied Menelaüs, looking at him with astonishment and indignation. 'Where is the man who more often than myself has been entertained with kindness and hospitality by strangers in strange lands, or to whom it would be a greater disgrace to turn away the guests that come to his door? Bid them unharness the horses, and ask the strangers to come in.'

The companion conducted Telemachus and Pisis-

tratus into the hall, and much they marvelled as they looked round upon the shining walls. They were first refreshed with a warm bath, and then invited to seat themselves at the table, and partake of the banquet. Menelaüs gave them a hearty welcome, and pressed them to eat; he even with his own hands passed over to them a part of the ox chine which had been placed before himself as the best portion.

Telemachus bent towards Pisistratus, and said to him in a low voice, 'See, Pisistratus, how the walls glitter with gold and silver and ivory; it is as if one were looking at the sun or the moon. The hall of Zeus himself cannot be more beautiful.'

Menelaüs, who had overheard him, turned towards him with a smile. 'Dear youths,' he said, 'what mortal can be compared to Zeus? But whether any other man lives in the midst of such splendour as myself I know not, for I have travelled about much in the world, and many rich presents have I brought home with me. Yet have I but little pleasure in them, for while I was wandering in strange lands my brother was slain by treachery, and many of my dear friends have also died. How willingly would I content myself with a third of my treasures, if those brave men were but alive! Often I think of them with tears in my eyes, and for none do I grieve more than for my beloved Ulysses; when I think of him, it takes from me all enjoyment of food or of sleep. He alas! has never returned to his home, and who knows whether he is yet alive? How sadly must his aged father mourn for him, and his wife also, and Telemachus his dear son!'

When Telemachus heard the king speak thus of his

father, the tears rose to his eyes, and he held his mantle before his face that he might weep in secret. Menelaüs observed him, and was going to ask him his name, but just then his wife Helen entered the hall. She was the most beautiful woman in the world, and for her sake many heroes had perished on both sides in the great war of Troy. She was accompanied by a number of waiting-women, one of whom carried a beautifully wrought chair, and another a white covering for the chair; a third held a silver basket with wool in it,—a lovely present that had been made to the queen when she was in Egypt—and also a golden spindle for her work.

When Helen had seated herself, she said to Menelaüs, ‘Do we know as yet the names of our guests? One of them I think I can recognise. It must be Telemachus, the son of Ulysses, for never have I seen so striking a likeness as the resemblance he bears to that noble hero.’

‘Now I also perceive it,’ cried Menelaüs. ‘Just so were the feet and hands of Ulysses, and the glances of his eye, and also his head and hair. And when I spoke just now of Ulysses, the youth was moved to tears.’

Then Pisistratus said, ‘Thou art right; it is indeed Telemachus. In his modesty, he did not venture to address thee, the man like unto the gods, seeing that this is the first time he has entered thy house. But it is on purpose to seek thee that he has come hither, and my father Nestor sent me to accompany him on his journey.’

At hearing this, Menelaüs was greatly moved, and

he said, ‘There abides then under my roof the son of the man whom, of all the heroes that joined the war, I have loved the most. How often did I rejoice at the thought that when we reached home in safety, I would induce Ulysses to come and settle in my neighbourhood with all his household! Here would I have placed a village at his disposal, that I might often enjoy the society of my trusted friend—and then nothing could have marred our love and our happiness but the black cloud of death. But the gods, alas! have been unwilling that our cup of joy should be filled so full, and have cut off his return.’

Then were they all very sorrowful; Helen wept, and Telemachus and Menelaüs, and Pisistratus thought of his brother Antilochus who had fallen in the war, and wept also. But presently Helen fetched a charm, called Forgetfulness of Grief, which had once been given her by an Egyptian woman, and threw it into the goblet of wine. Whoever drank of that draught might lose his father and mother, yea, he might see his son or his brother murdered before his very eyes, yet for a whole day would he feel no sorrow.

When everyone had become cheerful again, Helen related an instance of the courage and coolness of Ulysses during the siege. ‘One day,’ she said, ‘Ulysses scourged his back until it was covered with blood; then he put on a beggar’s dress and stole into the city. No one guessed who the beggar was, for well he knew how to dissemble. I alone recognised him, but he cunningly evaded my questions, and only when I had brought him into my house, where I caused him to be bathed and anointed, and had sworn by all the gods that

I would not betray him until he was safely back in the camp of the Greeks, would he tell the purpose for which he had come. On his way back, as he was passing out of the gate of the city, he held a sword concealed under his clothes, with which he cut down a number of the Trojans. The women of the city mourned, but I rejoiced in my heart, for my mind had already righted itself; I was longing for my home, and bewailed the fatal magic which had caused me to leave my beloved country, and my daughter and my noble husband.'

Menelaüs presently called to mind another case in which Ulysses had excelled all his companions in sagacity and presence of mind. 'I have indeed known many men,' said he, 'but never have I met with one who was the equal of Ulysses. When we heroes were in the Wooden Horse, it was doubtless under the inspiration of one of the gods who protected the Trojans that thou camest, Helen, out of the city with one of the king's sons, to look at it. Three times didst thou go round the Horse, calling to all the heroes, one after the other, imitating the voices of their wives. So well did it succeed, that all but Ulysses believed their wives to be really there, and were about to betray their hiding-place. But he, with weighty words, held them back from this folly, and when one of the heroes was, notwithstanding, about to answer his wife, he seized him by the throat and held him until thou wert safely out of the way.'

It was now bed-time, and the two young men spent the night in the cool corridor, where Helen had caused couches to be prepared for them.

CHAPTER XX.

MENELAÛS GIVES TELEMACHUS TIDINGS OF HIS FATHER.

THE next morning, when Menelaüs came out, he found Telemachus already seated on the stone bench in front of the house; and placing himself beside the young man, he asked him kindly what had brought him to Sparta. Telemachus answered that he wished to ask the king whether, in the course of his travels, he had heard anything of the fate of his father; and then he went on to describe the wretched state of things at Ithaca in consequence of the absence of Ulysses.

Menelaüs shook his head angrily, and said, ‘Mad fools they are who dare to intrude into the lair of the strong hero. They will be like so many young fawns who have ventured into the den of a lion. Presently the lion comes back, and devours the helpless creatures. Are they then so certain, the fools, that Ulysses will never return? Woe lies in store for them, and bitter will be the wedding to which they are looking forward. By a wise old sea-god I have been assured that thy father is still alive. I will tell thee how I met with him.

‘I had sailed with my ships from Egypt to the island of Pharos, and had landed there to take in fresh water. From that place I hoped that I should quickly

reach home, but suddenly the wind stood still,—there was not enough breeze to stir a leaf on a tree. Day after day passed by, and still there was not a breath of wind. At last our provisions began to fail, and my companions sat down despondingly on the shore to fish, in order to allay the pangs of hunger. I did not know what to do.

‘One day as I was wandering sadly along the coast, I met with the nymph Eidothea, who entered into conversation with me, and asked why I remained so long upon the desert island. In reply, I told her all about it, and begged her to reveal to me which of the gods it was who was angry, and prevented the wind from blowing. She answered, “I do not know, but my father, the sea-god Proteus, knows everything, and he can tell thee, not only what thou must do in order to get away from hence, but also what has become of thy friends. But he will not tell thee unless he is compelled to do so.”

‘I asked her how I could get this information from him, and she said, “About midday, my father comes out from the sea, and lies down to sleep in a grotto on the shore; his faithful seals come also, and sun themselves in front of the grotto. To-morrow I will find a safe hiding-place close by, for thee and three of thy companions whom thou mayest choose. As soon as the sea-god is asleep, seize him and hold him fast, and do not let thyself be frightened by any of his tricks. He will change himself into all kinds of animals, yea even into fire and water; but when he sees that he cannot escape from thee, he will ask thee what thou

wouldst have of him, and will give thee the information of which thou standest in need."

'The nymph dived into the sea again, and I returned to my companions. The next morning, I took the three strongest with me to the grotto, and the nymph came out of the sea with the skins of four seals, that had just been killed. She dug four shallow trenches in the sand, each one just big enough for a man to lie down in. When we had placed ourselves in them, she spread the skins over us, but we could never have endured the dreadful odour, if she had not given us also a little of the fragrant ambrosia of the gods, wherewith to overpower it.

'Towards midday, the faithful seals of Proteus came up out of the water and laid themselves down beside us, and soon afterwards the sea-god himself appeared above the waves. He counted his followers, ourselves among the rest,—for he did not perceive that we were not real seals,—and then he went into the shady grotto and lay down beside the animals, just as a shepherd rests among his sheep. As soon as we thought he was asleep, we rose up and fell upon him with a shout, and held his hands and feet so fast that he could not move. Then he began his tricks, and changed himself by turns into a furious lion, a horrible dragon, a panther and a wild boar; after that there was nothing but a stream of water, and lastly he became a tall, spreading tree. But all the time we never let go our hold of what we had seized at first, and when he saw that he could not frighten us, he became once more the sea-god, and asked, "What would ye have of me?"

'I answered, "Thou knowest well the trouble that

now oppresses us. Tell us therefore which of the gods it is who detains us here, and how we may turn away his anger."

"Before thy departure from Egypt," he replied, "thou shouldst have offered sacrifices to Zeus and the other gods, and never wilt thou see thy home again, unless thou returnest to Egypt to make up for the neglect."

'It was tiresome enough to have to make the journey over again, for it was a troublesome one, but I comforted myself with the prospect of a speedy return home, and hastened to ask concerning the fate of my old friends with whom I had fought before Troy.

'The sea-god answered, "Better had it been that thou hadst not enquired, for it will make thee sad to hear what has befallen them. Two have perished, and the third, though he is indeed alive, is a prisoner in a distant island. The Lesser Ajax, that dauntless hero, drew upon himself the wrath of Athene, and almost perished in a violent storm. He succeeded however in reaching a solitary rock, and might yet have arrived in safety at his home, had he not, with presumptuous folly, cried aloud in tones of defiance, 'Even against the will of the gods have I saved myself from the storm.' This Poseidon heard, and with his trident he cleft the rock, so that the upper part on which Ajax was seated fell into the sea, and he perished in the waves.

"Better at first it seemed that thy brother would fare. He landed happily on his own shores, and was so rejoiced that he threw himself upon the ground and kissed it with tears in his eyes. But treason was lurking close at hand. For more than a year, a spy

had been on the look-out for the ships of Agamemnon,— a great reward had been promised him for timely notice of their approach—and when Aegisthus heard that thy brother was about to land, he met him with assumed friendliness, and invited him to a banquet ; but while Agamemnon and his comrades eat and drank, suspecting no evil, he fell upon them with a band of armed followers, and not one remained alive.’

‘ When the sea-god told me this, I was filled with overpowering sorrow, and rolled myself over and over in the sand, wishing I had never been born. But the sea-god upbraided me, and said, “ Thy weeping avails nothing. Haste thee rather to return to thy home, then mayest thou perchance find the murderer still alive, and be able to avenge thy brother.”

‘ This prospect assuaged my grief, and I proceeded to ask him which it was of the heroes who was detained upon a distant island. He told me it was thy father, and added, “ I saw him sitting upon the shore, weeping bitterly. The nymph Calypso keeps him there against his will, and there is no ship in which he can make his escape.” After the sea-god had told me these things, he disappeared under the water with his faithful seals.’

Thus spoke Menelaüs, and Telemachus was filled with joy, for he had now good reason to hope that Ulysses was still alive, and that by the help of Athene he might yet reach his home.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PLOT OF THE SUITORS.

FOR some time after the departure of Telemachus from Ithaca he was missed by no one, for he often went for a few days into the country, and stayed amongst the faithful old servants and herdsmen of his father. But one day when the suitors were again amusing themselves with games in front of the house, Noëmon, the man who had supplied Telemachus with the ship, came and said to Antinoüs, ‘Canst thou tell me when Telemachus will return from Pylos? I have lent him my ship, and now I have need of it myself.’

Antinoüs and the other suitors were thunder-struck at hearing these words, for they had not conceived it possible that Telemachus should, against their will, get a ship in which to go to the friends of his father. Antinoüs enquired who had accompanied him, and Noëmon replied, ‘The best young men of the city have gone with him, and the aged Mentor went also as their leader. But it may indeed have been a god who took the form of Mentor, for yesterday I saw him in the city.’

When Noëmon had left them, the suitors crowded together in a corner of the court-yard, and took counsel one

of the other. Antinoüs said, 'Who would have thought that Telemachus could carry out his purpose, and get companions, moreover, to go with him? He begins to be dangerous, and if we do not put him out of the way, it may go hard with us. Give me therefore a ship and some men; I will lie in wait for him in the sea between Ithaca and Samos,¹ and kill him as he returns.'

To this the suitors agreed, and Antinoüs chose twenty of them to go with him. They went down to the shore and pushed a ship out to sea, which they stored with everything that would be useful, and also with arms; then they steered her to a little island, from which they would be able to take the ship of Telemachus by surprise on her return journey.

The suitors made their arrangements with great secrecy, but their designs were discovered by the herald Medon, who was not of their party, and only served them because he was compelled to do so. He stole upstairs to Penelope; but the queen, not knowing for what purpose he had come, received him with words of rebuke. 'Herald,' she said, 'what new message of insolence hast thou to bring me from the suitors? Shall the maidens leave their work to prepare a meal for them? Oh that they might perish, and to-day for the last time riot in this house! Have ye not heard from your fathers how that Ulysses was never harsh or unjust towards them? Ill indeed do ye thank him, turning his house to evil uses as if it were your own.'

'Would to the gods that this were the worst,' replied Medon. 'But the suitors are planning a

¹ Not the well-known Samos in the Aegean Sea, but a smaller island in the Ionian Sea, close to Ithaca.

grievous sin. They hope to slay thy son as he returns home from Pylos.'

When Penelope heard this, she became almost rigid with terror, and for some time she was unable to speak; but at last she said, 'Has my son gone away then? Why has he done this? Shall his name also be banished from among the living?'

'Whether this thing has been put into his mind by a god,' answered Medon, 'I know not, or whether he has thought of it himself; but he has gone to Pylos to seek for tidings of his father.'

He went downstairs again, and in her despair the queen sank down upon the threshold, and sobbed until all the women of the house heard her, and came running to know the cause of her grief.

Penelope told them what Medon had said to her. 'Woe is me,' she wailed. 'A harder fate has Zeus laid on me than on any other woman. First he took from me my noble husband, and now will the winds snatch away my beloved son, and I shall never see him again. Faithless ye are, who knew of his going, and did not warn me! I would have held him back, or perished in the effort. But now, send quickly to Laertes; he may be able to think of some means of saving his grandson.'

Then replied the aged Eurycleia, 'Kill me, lady, if thou wilt; I will hide nothing from thee. I knew all about it. I furnished him also with food and wine for the journey, but Telemachus made me swear to keep it from thee, lest thou shouldst grieve concerning him. Follow now my advice. Send no messenger to Laertes; he cannot help, and why shouldst thou make the sorrow-

ing old man yet more sorrowful? But bathe thyself, and put on thy festal robes, and pray to Athene, for she can protect thy son from all danger. Of a surety the gods will not utterly forsake the house of Ulysses.'

Penelope did as Eurycleia advised. Before long she might have been seen standing, surrounded by all her maidens, in one of the rooms of the upper storey, with a basket full of barley in her hand; and thus she prayed to Athene: 'Hear me, mighty goddess, for many were the sacrifices with which Ulysses was wont to honour thee. Think of them now, and save my dear son. Preserve him from the malice of the suitors.'

That night, Penelope lay sorrowfully upon her couch, filled with thoughts that alternated between fear and hope, and presently she fell asleep. Then Athene created a Dream in the form of her sister who was married and living far away from Ithaca. The Dream entered the room through the key-hole of the door, and stood at the head of her bed. Penelope was surprised to see her, and said in her sleep, 'Sister, how camest thou hither? Always hitherto thou hast been afraid of the long journey. Alas! thou findest me in deep affliction. My son has gone away in a ship, who never before has journeyed by sea, and easily he may perish in strange lands, or on the sea where his enemies lie in wait for him!'

The Dream answered, 'Be of good courage, and fear nothing. Telemachus has by his side a companion whom many might in vain desire, for Athene herself accompanies him. Out of compassion for thee, she has sent me to tell thee this.'

The thoughts of Penelope turned quickly to her

beloved Ulysses, and she said, 'If thou art come at the bidding of the goddess, tell me of my unhappy husband. Is he yet alive and able to see the light of the sun, or dwells he already among the shadows of the Lower World?'

But the Dream answered, 'Of him can I tell thee nothing.' With these words she left the room in the same manner that she had entered it, and disappeared in the outer air, leaving Penelope strengthened and comforted.

CHAPTER XXII.

ULYSSES LEAVES THE ISLAND OF CALYPSO.

IT was now the seventh year since Ulysses had landed on the island of Calypso, and all this time Athene had been powerless to help him. Gladly would she have long ago enabled him to escape, but Poseidon was still angry with him because he had blinded his son, the Cyclops, and whenever in the council of the gods Athene raised her voice in favour of Ulysses, Poseidon made answer that nothing would induce him to forego his revenge; and Zeus was unwilling to vex his brother by taking part against him.

But it happened in the seventh year, that a sacrifice was offered to Poseidon by the Ethiopians who lived at the world's end, and Poseidon went to the feast, and remained there all the time it lasted. This was an opportunity for Athene, and she did not fail to make the most of it for the man who was dear to her.

All the gods except Poseidon were just then assembled on Mount Olympus, that abode of bliss, where never snow could reach, nor rain, nor wind, but where the sky glowed always with unclouded splendour. Athene took advantage of this, and going to Zeus, she said to him, 'My heart is torn with grief for the hapless

Ulysses. The nymph Calypso detains him on her island, and with honeyed words endeavours to make him forget his home in Ithaca. But as for him, he has but one wish—namely, that he may return thither ; and readily would he consent to die if he could but once again see the smoke rising from his beloved island. Wherefore art thou angry with him, Father Zeus? Was he not ever fatherly and mild and gentle towards his people? Did he not honour thee duly with rich sacrifices?’

‘Dear child,’ replied Zeus, ‘how should I be angry with the noble Ulysses? Wiser far is he than all other men, and he has never neglected his duties towards the gods. But Poseidon wills to punish him ; his life indeed he cannot take away, for that is against the decree of Fate, but it is in his power to keep him a prisoner, far away from his home. But let us now with one accord resolve that Ulysses shall be suffered to return to Ithaca ; what can Poseidon do against all of us?’

The other gods agreed, and Zeus called Hermes, the Messenger, and sent him to the island of Calypso, to tell the nymph that she must allow Ulysses to depart without delay in a suitable ship. It was a long distance to the island of Calypso, but the journeys of the gods were quickly accomplished. Hermes bound round his feet the golden sandals with which he could fly with the speed of thought over land and sea, and in his hand he took the staff whose lightest touch could send to sleep those who were awake, and wake those who slept. When, in the course of his flight, he came to the sea, he dipped down so low that the crests of the waves almost touched his breast,—just as sea-gulls do when they are catching fish.

When he reached the island, he entered the grotto of Calypso, which was pleasantly situated in the midst of beautiful trees and shrubs. He found the nymph sitting alone, weaving, and singing as she worked; on the hearth there burned a fire of fragrant cedar-wood and frankincense, the odour of which was wafted to a great distance. Calypso recognised Hermes at once, for all the gods knew one another, however far they might dwell apart, and she asked him for what purpose he had come. When he had delivered the message of Zeus, she was greatly troubled, for she still hoped that at last Ulysses would put the thought of Ithaca out of his mind, and be content to remain with her for ever. But she did not dare to set herself against the will of Zeus, and with a heavy heart she declared herself ready to let Ulysses depart.

Then Hermes flew back to Mount Olympus, and Calypso went down to the coast, where she found Ulysses sitting alone as usual, consumed with homesickness, weeping and looking out towards the sea. She went up to him, and said, ‘Weep no longer, for I am going to release thee. Take wood, and make for thyself a boat. I will provision it with food and wine, and send a favourable wind,—that so, if it be the will of the gods, thou mayest return swiftly to thy home.’

But Ulysses did not trust the nymph; he could not believe that she really intended to help him, and he said, ‘How can I hope to cross the sea in a boat built by my own hands, when not even the best ships escape the fury of the winds and waves? Without thy good will it is useless for me to attempt it; therefore swear to me that thou hast in thy mind no evil design against me.’

Calypso smiled, and stroked him gently with her hand as she answered, 'Never dost thou forget thy accustomed caution. I swear then by heaven and earth, and by the water of the Styx,—that most solemn oath that a god can take—that I have in my mind no purpose to harm thee. I will advise thee as I would advise myself.'

The nymph led Ulysses to a part of the island where there were some tall trees; of these he hewed down the best, and fashioned out of them a little boat. It required no small degree of skill and care to work with the few tools—the hatchet, axe and gimlet—with which the goddess supplied him, and to fasten the planks together so that the waves might not break over the tiny boat, nor easily overturn it. When it was finished, he added a mast and rudder, and out of some materials with which the goddess furnished him he made a sail, and fastened it to the mast.

By the fourth day, the boat was finished, and could be rolled down to the sea upon rollers made of smoothly planed trees; on the fifth day Ulysses set out, well provisioned with food, wine, and water. How happy he was when he pushed off from the island, and saw his sails swelling with the favourable wind! Calypso had told him that he must first go to the Land of the Pheacians, and so steer as always to keep the sign of the Great Bear on his left. There was no time for sleep, and for seventeen nights he kept his eyes fixed on the Great Bear, ready to make use of the rudder the moment there was any fear of the boat diverging from the right course.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ULYSSES REACHES THE LAND OF THE PHEACIANS.

ON the eighteenth day, Ulysses sighted land. It was the country of the Pheacians, and soon he was able to distinguish mountains in the distance. But, unfortunately for him, it happened that just at this time Poseidon was on his journey home from the land of the Ethiopians. Driving in his chariot through the air above the sea, he descried the little boat making for itself a path through the waves, and he shook his head with displeasure as he said, 'What is this that I see? Have the gods then changed their purpose during my absence and set this man free? Already is he near the Land of the Pheacians, which Fate has decreed to be the end of his wanderings; but he is yet in my power, and of that he shall soon be aware.'

With these words he raised his trident, and from all corners and ends of the earth, the wind broke loose; the sky became as black as night, and the waves rose like mountains. 'Woe is me,' cried Ulysses, 'must I yet again taste the bitterness of the salt waves? Ah, would that I had rather fallen before Troy! Then would I have met with a glorious death, and my friends would have buried me with honour, but now I shall perish miserably.'

Hardly had he thus spoken, when a heavy wave broke over the boat and overturned it. The mast gave way, the sails were torn from the light wood-work, and Ulysses himself sank and remained long beneath the waves, for his clothes became heavy with the salt water and impeded his movements. At last, however, he rose to the surface again, and spat out the salt water. Then he looked round for his boat; it was not far from him, and with mighty strokes he swam towards it, and was soon upon the wreck, tossing up and down at the mercy of the waves.

Now there was a nymph who lived in the sea,—Leucothea by name. She had once been a mortal, but was now a sea-goddess. She came up out of the water, and seating herself on one of the beams of the wreck, she said to Ulysses, ‘Poseidon bears thee, it is true, no good will, but thou shalt not perish. Throw off thy heavy clothes, and trust thyself in the water. I will lend thee my veil; bind it beneath thy breast, and it will keep thee from all harm. When thou hast reached the land, throw it back into the water, with thy face turned away.’

Thereupon she dipped again beneath the waves, leaving Ulysses much perplexed. ‘What if it were some treacherous nymph,’ he said to himself, ‘who was trying to persuade me to forsake this my last refuge, that I might the more speedily meet with my death? Better then is it that I remain here so long as the beams hold together; when the waves have utterly destroyed the boat, and there is nothing to lose in forsaking it, then will I try what can be done with the veil.’

It was not long before there came a mighty wave which smote the beams asunder, so that they flew apart like chaff before the wind. Ulysses caught one of them and seated himself astride it; then he threw off his clothes, bound the veil round his body, and cast himself into the sea. It was with no treacherous intent that the nymph had given him the veil, and he found it support him so that he floated without difficulty upon the water; all that was necessary for him to do was to steer with his hands.

Poseidon saw his shipwrecked condition with great satisfaction, and cried, 'Struggle on through the water till thou comest to the Land of the Pheacians. Thou wilt find it hard enough to get there.' Then he urged on his horses and drove away; but as soon as he was gone, Athene came and stilled the winds and the waves.

Ulysses swam for two days and two nights without approaching land, but at last, on the third day, he perceived the mountains which he had seen before. He came nearer and nearer, but now he was threatened by a new danger. The coast rose straight up from the sea in cliffs, and the breakers were so powerful that if he had attempted to land, he would have been flung by the waves against the sharp corners of the rocks, and dashed to pieces. Once indeed he was seized by them, but he succeeded in grasping a rock with his hands, and to this he clung until the wave had spent its force; then the return wave dragged him back with great fury, stripping all the skin from his fingers.

Finding it hopeless to attempt a landing in that place, Ulysses swam further on, hoping to reach a flat

part of the coast where there were no breakers, and at last he arrived at the mouth of a river. Here there was a good landing-place, but he was so exhausted by the long battling with the waves, that he could not contend against the force of the current. Then he prayed to the god of the river. 'Hear me, O thou mighty one!' said he, 'for I come to thee as a suppliant. Extend thy kindness and hospitality towards me, and have pity on me.' And the god heard him, and held his water back.

When Ulysses felt the dry ground beneath his feet, he sank upon his knees, quite overcome with fatigue, and for some time he could move neither hand nor foot. Then he raised himself, and unfastening the veil which Leucothea had given him, he threw it behind him into the river, from whence it was borne down to the sea. After this, he again threw himself down, and kissed the earth many times, so overjoyed was he at having landed in safety.

But it was evening, and he had to consider where he should pass the night. If he remained by the river, he feared lest he should die of cold, for he had no clothes; if on the other hand he laid himself down in the forest, he might be devoured by wild animals. On the whole, this latter danger seemed to be the more remote, and Ulysses went into the forest and sought for a sheltered place in which to make his bed. He found two young olive trees that had grown from a single root, and had covered the space between them with such a wealth of foliage that neither sunshine, rain, nor wind could penetrate it. All around lay the fallen leaves of many years, thickly heaped one upon

another ; and out of these Ulysses made for himself a soft bed, and piled them up over him for a covering when he had lain down among them. Soon he felt warm and comfortable, and sank into a peaceful sleep.

In those old times it was very difficult to kindle a fire, and they who lived apart, and far from any neighbour at whose friendly hearth they might seek a burning brand, found it convenient at night to cover up a red-hot log with a quantity of ashes, so that in the morning there might still be some sparks left in it. Just like such a red-hot log among the ashes was Ulysses as he lay there, covered up on all sides with the soft warm leaves.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NAUSICAA.

ULYSSES was now in the land of the Pheacians, and in order to secure for him a good reception, Athene betook herself in the night to the king's palace, and appeared in a dream to his daughter, the lovely Nausicaa. She took the form of one of the girl's companions, and said to her, 'Nausicaa, hast thou no heed that it is again time to wash the garments, as we are wont to do? Soon will thy wedding-day be here, when thou thyself must be beautifully dressed, and many garments will moreover be needed to deck the guests who come to the feast. Already the noblest Pheacian youths are suing for thee, and thou wilt not long remain a maiden in thy father's house. Let us go early in the morning to the river, and wash the garments.'

When the morning came, Nausicaa awoke and remembered her dream. She dressed quickly and went to her parents, whom she found in the hall: Arete, the queen, was sitting with her maidens by the hearth, spinning; and her father, King Alcinoüs, she met on the threshold, for he was about to join the chief men of the city at the great meeting-place of the citizens. Nausicaa said to him, 'Dear father, wilt

thou have a waggon made ready for me, that I may go to the river to wash the clothes? Thou hast need always of fresh linen when thou goest to the council, and my five brothers also, when they betake themselves to the dance. It must be my care that there is no lack of fitting garments.' She thought indeed of the coming wedding of which the Dream had spoken, but of this she said nothing to her father.

'Gladly, my child,' answered Alcinoüs, 'do I grant thee this request, as every other. The men shall get the waggon ready without delay.' He gave his orders, and then went out into the city. Soon the waggon was at the door, with the mules ready harnessed to it, and Nausicaa brought out the clothes and placed them inside. Her mother gave her some bread and other provisions to take with her, and some red wine in a leather bottle. She added also a little golden flask with oil in it, for when their work was over, the maidens loved to bathe in the river, and anoint themselves with sweet oil. Nausicaa climbed up into the waggon, seized the reins and whip, and drove down towards the river,—the other maidens following on foot.

The part of the river where the washing-ground was situated was just where Ulysses had landed the evening before, and close to the wood where he was now asleep. When they had reached the place, the girls unharnessed the mules and let them graze; then they brought out the clothes from the car, and when they had taken off their sandals and fastened up their long robes, they jumped into the river. Hither and thither they ran about, washing the clothes, and when they

had finished, they spread them out to dry upon beds of little pebbles which had been washed clean by the sea-waves.

After this, they had the rest of the day for enjoyment. First they bathed and anointed themselves, then they eat and drank, and lastly they amused themselves by playing at ball. This was a favourite game in those days, and the girls stood round in a circle, and sang, as they threw the ball from one to the other.

It was now time for Ulysses to awake, for the goddess Athene intended that he should appeal for help to the maidens, that they might take him back with them to the city. She therefore caused the ball, in changing hands, to fall into the water; and at this the girls laughed and screamed, making such a noise that Ulysses awoke. He rose from his bed of leaves, and hearing the sound of maidens' voices, resolved to ask their hospitality; he was quite without clothes, but covered himself as well as he could with a leafy branch. He came out of the wood, and advanced towards the maidens, who were frightened at seeing him, and ran away screaming. Only Nausicaa held her ground, and it was easy to recognise in her the leader of the band, for as compared to the other maidens in height and beauty, she was like Artemis among her nymphs.

The wise Ulysses spoke to the princess from a distance, and so well did he know how to choose his words that he at once inspired her with confidence. He told her how he had been tossed about on the sea for twenty days and had barely escaped with his life, and begged her to have pity on him, and to give him some clothes

and show him the way to the city. 'For this,' he said, 'may the gods grant thee whatsoever thou desirest,— a good husband, and a well-ordered household, and always harmony therein; for nothing is sweeter or more excellent than when husband and wife are of one mind, dwelling together in the same house.'

Nausicaa promised to help him, and told him that she was the daughter of the king, Alcinoüs. Then she called to her maidens, and quieted them, saying, 'This man is one who has met with misfortune. In his distress he comes to us, and seeks our help. We cannot refuse it, for all strangers and suppliants are protected by Zeus. Give him therefore food and drink, and clothes to cover him.'

Ulysses went first to the river and cleansed himself from the sand and soil of the sea; he also anointed himself with oil from the queen's flask, and put on the clothes with which Nausicaa had supplied him. When he came back, the maidens were astonished to see how noble and stately he looked, and Nausicaa said privately to the rest, 'It cannot be that this man is hated by the gods; mean enough he appeared before, but now he is himself even as one of the Immortals.' Then she caused them to set meat and wine before Ulysses, and he eat as one who has long been a stranger to food.

When evening approached, the clothes were taken up, folded neatly, and laid in the waggon; the mules were harnessed, and the princess took her seat as before. She said to Ulysses, 'Follow me now to the city, and so long as the way lies through the fields, keep close behind the waggon with my maidens. But

when we come near the city, do thou linger behind. For among the Pheacians there are men with evil tongues, who if they saw us entering the town together, might easily say one to the other, "Who then is this tall and noble-looking stranger who comes hither with Nausicaa? Does she think that here she has not sufficient choice, and has therefore sought a husband from afar? Or is it perchance a god who has come in answer to her prayers to abide with her for ever?" Thus might they speak, and injure me in their thoughts. Do thou therefore wait in the poplar grove of Athene until we have had time to reach the palace. Then go into the city, and any child will direct thee to the house of my father,—it is easily found. Not in vain wilt thou sue there for help.'

Ulysses did as Nausicaa desired, and remained behind when they came to the grove of Athene; it stood in the midst of a meadow, and a little stream flowed through it. When he found himself alone, he prayed to the goddess, saying, 'Hear me, daughter of Zeus! Be gracious to me, and grant that I may appear among the Pheacians as a welcome guest, and one deserving of pity. When I was in distress on the sea thou didst not help me, but now at least stand by me, I beseech thee.' He did not know of the watchful care with which the goddess unfailingly seized every opportunity of coming to his aid.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PALACE OF ALCINOÛS.

AFTER a time, Ulysses left the grove, and made his way towards the city. First he passed over a narrow strip of land, on both sides of which lay the harbours of the Pheacians crowded with ships, moored close to the shore. It was easy to see that a sea-faring people were they who lived in this land; and the great meeting-place of the citizens, with its many stone seats, which he next passed, was also dedicated to Poseidon. All this Ulysses marked with an observant eye, but no one could see him; for Athene had cast a thick cloud over him, that the people whom he met might not tease him with tiresome questions.

As he approached the entrance of the city, there came out of it a maiden carrying a pitcher of water; it was Athene, who met him there for the purpose of giving him some good counsel. Ulysses asked her which was the king's palace, and she replied that if he would follow her she would point it out to him, for it was close to the house of her father. When they had reached it, she said, 'This is the king's house. Thou wilt find him sitting at a banquet, with the nobles of the land gathered round him. If thou

wouldst ensure a favourable reception, address thyself first to Arete the queen, for he who gains her good will has secured that of the king and of all the Pheacians. When she goes through the streets, she is saluted by all with the utmost respect, and if any have a quarrel, they are willing to make peace if she will consent to settle their difference.'

The maiden went her way, and Ulysses stood gazing at the palace. He was astonished at the splendour which met his eyes, for it shone like the sun and the moon. The walls of the court-yard were of brass, decorated at the top with a frieze of blue steel, and the doors were of pure gold, with silver posts. At the two sides stood two dogs, one of gold, the other of silver, which had been marvellously wrought by the blacksmith god, Hephaestus, and seemed to be living animals, set there to guard the house.

From the court-yard, Ulysses could see into the hall, where all along the walls were seats decked with gorgeous coverings, and here the Pheacian princes were assembled for the feast. Raised upon pedestals were beautiful golden statues of youths, holding in their hands flaming torches, by which the hall was lighted. And no less splendid than the house was the garden, which was full of magnificent trees, covered, in summer and winter alike, with the choicest fruits.

Ulysses was still covered with the cloud which Athene had cast over him, so that no one saw him when he entered the hall. He went past the king, to where the queen, Arete, sat spinning by the hearth, and throwing himself down before her, he embraced her knees. At this moment the cloud dispersed, and

everyone was astonished at seeing a man kneeling before the queen.

‘Queen Arete,’ said Ulysses, ‘to thee I come, and to thy husband, and to your guests, imploring the aid of one and all in my dire distress. May the gods grant you a happy life, and as for me, send me, I beseech you, without delay to my home, for I have long wandered in distant lands far from my friends, and many are the sufferings which I have endured.’ Thus speaking, he seated himself, as was in those days the custom of suppliants, among the ashes of the hearth; but Alcinoüs seized him by the hand, and bade him rise up and take the seat next his own, which had been occupied by his favourite son.

The feast proceeded, and when for the last time the wine had been mixed and poured into the cups, and they were again empty, Alcinoüs said to his guests, ‘Now let us go to rest, for it is late. To-morrow I will invite all the more distinguished of the citizens to join me in offering a sacrifice, and feasting with our guest. He is no doubt a man who has met with misfortune, and not a god who comes in this form to try us,—for never yet have the gods appeared thus disguised, though often they have shown themselves openly at our feasts; even if they met with one of us travelling alone, they would not fail to reveal themselves, for we are near of kin to them.’

Ulysses answered, ‘Think not for a moment that I am a god, but if thou knowest any man who has endured unspeakable suffering, to him thou mayest liken me.’

The guests went home, and Ulysses remained alone with the king and queen. Arete had immediately

recognised the clothes which he wore, and now she asked him how he had come to their country, and who had given him the garments. Ulysses related how he had been seven years in the island of Calypso, and how the ship in which he had at last left it had been destroyed, and he himself, with great effort and after long swimming, had finally gained the coast. Then he told of his meeting with Nausicaa, and how she had refreshed him with food and wine, and had given him the garments.

Then Alcinoüs said, 'My daughter has not done well in that she did not at once bring thee to my house, for to her it was that thou didst first address thyself.'

Ulysses did not wish Nausicaa to be blamed, so he replied, concealing the truth, 'She would have done so, but I thought thou mightest have been vexed if thou hadst seen me approaching with her, for easily are we all moved to anger.'

'I am not wont to be angry about trifling matters,' answered the king with a smile, 'and, moreover, what cause would there have been for anger in this case? A son-in-law such as thou art would please me well, and I would willingly give him a house and all that belongs to it. But to thee I promise that to-morrow evening thou shalt depart for thine own land. Peacefully mayest thou go to rest in the ship, for it will glide easily and swiftly over the water, and when in the morning thou awakest, thou wilt find thyself in thine own country, no matter how far off it may be.'

The queen had a bed prepared for the stranger in the open corridor, and when it was ready, they all retired for the night,—Ulysses rejoicing that there was no need for him again to prepare for himself a couch in the wood.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PHEACIAN GAMES.

THE following morning, the king conducted his guest to the great place of assembly near the harbour. And meanwhile Athene went through the streets in the form of a herald, crying out so loud that no one could fail to hear, 'Hasten, ye citizens, to the meeting-place, for a stranger of no mean appearance has been shipwrecked on our coasts, and has arrived at the king's palace.' The citizens streamed down towards the market-place, and soon the stone seats were occupied, and all the other places taken. At the sight of the stranger they were filled with amazement, for in order to make him acceptable in the eyes of the Pheacians, Athene had shed over him such grace and stateliness, that he showed no trace of the hardships he had undergone.

When the citizens were assembled, Alcinoüs said, 'Hear me, ye Pheacians. Ye see this stranger,—who he is I know not—who has long been tossed about on the sea, and who yesterday came to my house. He petitions us to send him to his home, and this we will do, for never do we refuse our aid to any stranger who comes to us in distress. Let us then put out a ship to

sea, and make it ready; it shall be rowed by two-and-fifty youths, and when they have prepared everything for the voyage, let them come to my house and take part in the banquet. But ye princes, follow me without delay, and we will return to the palace and entertain our guest.'

The oarsmen were soon chosen. They hastened to the sea, and when they had made ready the ship, they hastened to the palace, where they found the princes already assembled in the hall. There too was the singer Demodocus, to whom the gods had given both good and evil gifts: for he was blind, but at the same time he could sing so gloriously, that he made glad the hearts of all who heard him. On this day the number of the guests was so great that the king had given command to slaughter no less than twelve sheep, eight boars, and two oxen of the best. Soon the meal was ready, and the guests were seated at the tables, eating and drinking. The herald who had brought the blind singer into the hall, had led him to a chair among the other guests, and while he joined in the feast, the lyre with which he was wont to accompany his song, hung from a peg on one of the pillars just behind him.

When the guests had finished, Demodocus seized his lyre, and sang a story of the Trojan war: for just at that time the brave deeds of the heroes of Troy were in the mouths of all men. It happened to be a story in which Ulysses had taken a prominent part—namely, a strife between that hero and Achilles; and so clearly was it detailed by the singer, that it seemed to Ulysses as if the whole action were again taking place before his eyes. So powerfully was he affected by the

remembrance of former times that he was constrained to weep, and he covered his face with his mantle. Whenever the singer paused, he let fall his cloak and poured out a drink-offering to the gods, but as soon as the song began again, he wept afresh behind his mantle.

The king, who was near him, observed this, and being unwilling that his guest should be made sorrowful, he rose up and said, 'We have now had enough of feasting and of song. Let us go out and show the stranger what our young men can accomplish in games of strength and skill, so that when he goes to his home, he may take with him the remembrance of what he has here seen.'

They went accordingly to the great place of meeting, where many of the townsfolk were already assembled, and the games began. First the youths contended in the foot race; then they measured their strength in wrestling, leaping, boxing and throwing the discus.¹ Ulysses looked on at the games, and praised the performance of the young men. One of the sons of Alcinoüs went up to him courteously, and asked if he would not also give some proof of his skill, but Ulysses excused himself, because his mind was occupied with very different matters.

Now there stood by, one of the young Pheacians, Euryalus by name, who looked at the stranger somewhat scornfully, and said, 'In truth thou dost not seem to me like one who would be skilled in such games. Thou hast rather the appearance of a trader, who goes

¹ The discus was a round stone plate, or *disc*, which was to be thrown to as great a distance as possible.

with his wares from land to land, and thinks of nothing but how to make the most gain.'

Ulysses looked at him darkly as he answered, 'Verily the gods give not all good gifts to the same man. One may be of mean appearance, but he knows so well how to make choice of his words, that all men rejoice when they hear his wise and modest speech. Another may have beauty of form and feature, but his speech is rude and without understanding. To thee the gods have given a comely appearance, but by thy words thou hast mortified and wounded me. I am not without experience in the contests in which heroes delight, and while I was in my full vigour, there were not many who could surpass me. Now indeed my strength is wasted with long battling against the waves, and long fasting and privation, yet will I nevertheless show you that I am no novice at such sports, for thy bitter words have wounded me to the quick.'

He seized a discus, larger and heavier than those which the Pheacians had used, and without so much as taking off his mantle, he first swung it round several times with great force, and then let it fly. The Pheacians crouched to the ground as it rushed past them, far beyond the best throw that had yet been made; and a man stepped forward from out of the crowd to mark the place where it fell. 'Thy token,' he cried, 'might easily be discovered by a blind man with his stick, so far has it left all the rest behind. Among the Pheacians will no man surpass thee, or even come near thy throw.' The man was Athene, who wished to call the attention of all to the feat that had been performed.

As for Ulysses, he rejoiced at his success, and said in a friendly tone to the Pheacians, 'Now do ye in like manner. And if there is one among you who will stand up against me, either in boxing, or in leaping, or in wrestling, let him come forward. As an archer, I was counted second only to Philoctetes¹ amongst those who fought against Troy, and I can throw a spear farther than any other man can shoot an arrow. If in anything I should here find my master, it would be in the foot-race, for through being so long in the salt water, my limbs are not so supple as formerly.'

All were silent until Alcinoüs spoke. 'Stranger,' he said, 'I cannot blame thee in that thou hast been angered at the scornful words of the young man, and hast desired to show that he wronged thee. But this I must tell thee, and thou canst tell it again when thou hast come to thy home,—that we Pheacians are not strong in wrestling or in boxing, but we are excellent foot-racers, and in rowing no one can make headway against us. Above all things we love a good feast, a good song, dancing, beautiful clothes, and warm baths. Let now the young dancers step forward and do us honour, that the stranger in our midst may confess that they are the best dancers he has ever seen. And fetch also from the great hall the lyre of Demodocus.'

The king's commands were quickly obeyed. Some men cleared a level space, bidding the crowd stand back, and led Demodocus into the midst. He took his lyre and began to play, and the dancers circled round him; so nimble were their movements, that Ulysses could scarcely follow with his eyes the twinklings of their

¹ See *The Trojan War*, pp. 78-81.

feet. When the round dance was ended, Alcinoüs called two youths, and bade them perform a dance into which ball-throwing was introduced, at which the Pheacians especially excelled. It was pleasant to watch them turning and twisting so lightly and gracefully, one throwing up the ball as high as he could, and the other springing to catch it as it descended, whilst other youths stood round, beating time with their hands.

After the second dance, Ulysses stepped forward and said to the king, 'Not without reason didst thou praise the Pheacian dancers. They are, as thou hast said, unsurpassed, and I marvel at their skill.'

The king was much pleased at this praise, and he said to the princes, 'What do ye say? The stranger appears to me a man of good understanding, to whom we must do honour by offering him a suitable present. Ye princes are twelve in number, and I am the thirteenth. Let each of us give him a mantle, and a doublet, and a talent of gold, and let us do this at once, that the stranger may have the pleasure of receiving our gifts before the evening meal. And let Euryalus make peace with him by speaking friendly words and offering a present, for in truth the words which he spoke were not seemly.'

Euryalus was already ashamed of having wounded the brave hero, and now he came forward and said, 'I wish thee well, worthy stranger, and may the winds carry away my thoughtless words. May the gods soon restore thee to thy wife, and permit thee to see thy home again.' As he spoke, he presented Ulysses with his sword, which had a hilt of silver, and a sheath of

ivory studded with silver. Ulysses took it, answering courteously, 'To thee also I wish well, O friend, and mayest thou never regret that thou hast given me this sword;' and as he spoke he slung the beautiful weapon over his shoulders.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ULYSSES RELATES HIS ADVENTURES TO THE PHEACIANS.

THE sun was now about to set, and the king returned to the palace with his guests. At the door leading into the hall, Ulysses met the lovely Nausicaa who had succoured him the previous day. She greeted him, saying, 'Mayest thou prosper, stranger, and when thou hast returned to thy home, think sometimes of me, and remember that I was the first to help thee.'

'If thy wish be fulfilled, and I have a prosperous return,' answered Ulysses, 'I will remember thee every day, as a goddess who has saved my life.'

The gifts of the twelve princes had meanwhile been laid out upon the seats, and presented indeed a magnificent sight. Alcinoüs moreover not only gave as the others had done, but he also took a beautiful cup from the table and laid it beside the rest, saying that when Ulysses should have returned, he must think of him when using the cup to pour out his drink-offerings to the gods. The queen bade them bring a chest in which to stow away the presents, and when they were all laid inside it, Ulysses fastened down the lid carefully, and passed round the chest a strong cord, which he tied, as Circe had taught him, with so cunning

a knot, that the cleverest man would not have been able to undo it.

Then all the guests seated themselves for the evening meal. Ulysses was placed near the king, and before him was set a huge portion of boar-chine, surrounded with rich fat. He divided the portion into two halves, and called out to the herald to take one part to the blind singer, 'for,' said he, 'the singer should be honoured by all men, because he is inspired by the gods themselves.' Demodocus was pleased at this mark of respect, and when the meal was over, Ulysses cried out to him, 'Well indeed hast thou sung, Demodocus, of the sufferings and the doings of the Greeks before Troy, and so truly that thou mightest thyself have been present. Sing now, I pray thee, the story of the great Wooden Horse which Epeius made with the help of Athene, and Ulysses devised for the destruction of Troy.¹ Tell us also how it was brought into the city, and how the heroes, who were sitting inside it, descended at midnight and burst upon the enemy.'

Demodocus took the lyre from the pillar, and began the tale. It was all set forth as clearly as if the blind bard had a picture before his mind's eye in which the whole action was displayed, and Ulysses was again moved to tears. Then Alcinoüs called to Demodocus to cease, and said, 'Let him sing no more, Pheacians, for the song brings not joy to all of us. Our guest weeps incessantly while Demodocus sings, though it is our wish to make him glad; and to this end have we promised to speed him on his way, and have given him presents and prepared a banquet. For is there any

¹ See *The Trojan War*, pp. 86-92.

right-minded man in whose eyes a stranger who comes to him seeking for help is not as dear as a brother?

‘But now tell me, stranger,’ he continued, ‘what is thy name? Where is thy country, and the town of which thou art a citizen? Tell me also what are the sufferings thou hast endured, and wherefore thou art moved to tears at the tale of the war which the Greeks waged before Troy? Has some near relative of thine perchance fallen in the battle, or may be a dearly loved friend?’

‘Sadder yet will it make me,’ answered Ulysses, ‘to tell the story of my wanderings, and of the unspeakable calamities which have overtaken me. Nevertheless, I will relate to thee in order the misfortunes with which the gods have afflicted me, and first I will tell thee my name. I am Ulysses, the king of Ithaca.’

When the guests heard that the stranger who sat among them was he whose deeds of wisdom and courage Demodocus had so often recounted in his song, they were full of joy and wonder, and listened eagerly when Ulysses went on to tell them of his adventures. He related how he had set out from Troy with twelve ships, and what had befallen him among the Ciconians, the Lotus-eaters, and the Cyclops; then he told them about the swimming island of Aeolus, and of the calamity which had overtaken him in the country of the Laestrygonians where he had lost all his ships but one,—and also of all that had happened to him at the island of Circe, and of his journey to the Land of the Dead.

When he had got as far as this, it was already long past midnight, and Ulysses thought that the Pheacians would be wishing to go to rest. Moreover, Alcinoüs

had promised that he would that night send him to his home, and the ship was waiting in the harbour. But Alcinöus and Arete begged him to remain with them one more day in order that, now they had learnt to know their guest, they might give him still more presents to take away with him. The night, too, was long, they said, and there would be time enough for sleep when he had ended his tale.

So Ulysses went on, and told them of his return from the Land of the Dead, of the Sirens, of Scylla and Charybdis, of the cattle of the sun-god, of the destruction of his last remaining ship, and of his arrival at the island of Calypso. The Pheacians were filled with wonder at all the marvellous things which Ulysses had seen and experienced, and it was almost morning before the assembly dispersed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ULYSSES IS CONVEYED TO ITHACA BY THE PHEACIANS.

THE next day, Alcinoüs and the other princes each presented Ulysses with a richly chased tripod of bronze, and a cauldron, also of bronze, such as those usually offered for prizes in the games. They considered that he well deserved the honours awarded to a victor, for with skill and courage he had fought his way through many dangers and difficulties, and had overcome them all.

Once more the king and his guests feasted together till the evening, which was the time appointed for Ulysses to depart. But notwithstanding all the kindness of the Pheacians, the day seemed long to Ulysses, and even in the songs of Demodocus he could take no delight, for he knew not how to control his impatience to set out for his home. Often he looked towards the sun, longing that it would hasten to go down ; and right glad he was when he saw it begin to sink into the sea.

At sunset Alcinoüs mixed the wine for the last time, the cups were filled, and the last drink-offerings poured out to the gods. Ulysses held out his cup towards Queen Arete, and wished her farewell. ' Mayest thou have a happy life, O queen,' he said, ' until old age and

death come upon thee, which are the lot of all men. Mayest thou have joy continually in thy husband, thy children, and thy people.' In like manner he took a hearty leave of Alcinoüs, and then left the house, attended by a herald whom the king sent to conduct him to the ship.

The rowers prepared a couch for Ulysses on the deck, and he lay down, and soon sank into a deep sleep. The sea was as smooth as glass, and impelled by the vigorous oar-thrusts of the Pheacian youths, the ship shot over it as fast as an eagle can fly. There was neither rudder nor helmsman to be found on any of the Pheacian ships, for their vessels had the wondrous gift of understanding the wishes of the sailors, and always chose the right path; even through a cloudy night they continued their course without danger or mishap.

The journey from the land of the Pheacians to Ithaca was a very long one, but the star of morning had scarcely appeared in the sky when the ship reached her goal. She ran into a creek which had been called after the sea-god Phorcys, and behind which lay a flat coast very convenient for landing. On the shore there stood an ancient olive-tree, and hard by it was a beautiful grotto sacred to some water-nymphs. Inside the grotto, the rocks had twisted themselves into many strange forms; some were like goblets and cauldrons, and others had taken the shape of great looms, with which it was said the nymphs used to weave beautiful garments. There were two entrances to the grotto—one to the north by which mortals were allowed to penetrate within it, the other to the south, which was reserved for the nymphs alone.

The Pheacians rowed so vigorously towards the shore that they ran their ship half its length on to the sand. Ulysses was still asleep, and they did not awaken him, but raised him carefully in the coverings of which they had made his bed, and laid him down on the soft sand near the olive-tree, with the presents of their countrymen all around him. Then they rowed back towards their own land.

But Poseidon was angry that the man he hated should have thus been landed peacefully, during his sleep, upon his own island. Far rather would he have had Ulysses suffer grievously, even on his last voyage, from storms and shipwreck; and he resolved to visit the Pheacians with no light punishment.

The sailors had almost reached their own country again, and many of the citizens were assembled on the shore, watching the approach of the vessel. Suddenly, however, she ceased to move onwards and appeared to be rooted to the ground; and soon they perceived that the ship, with her whole crew, had been turned to stone.

They hastened to acquaint the king with this sad news, who, when he heard it, exclaimed, 'Woe to us! I now remember what I once heard long ago from my father. He told me that Poseidon was angry with us because we convey in safety to their homes all strangers who seek our help, and he said that some day Poseidon would destroy a Pheacian ship returning from such a journey, and would moreover cause a great mountain to rise up and overshadow our city. For the future, then, let us abstain from giving this help to strangers, and let us at once sacrifice twelve choice

bulls to the god. Perhaps he may then have pity on us, and refrain from creating the great mountain to destroy our city.'

The people lost no time in acting upon the advice of their king. The bulls were slaughtered without delay, and soon the whole body of the citizens was assembled round the altar of Poseidon, imploring him to have mercy upon them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ATHENE WARNS ULYSSES AGAINST THE SUITORS.

SOME time after the Pheacians had departed, Ulysses awoke. He was now in the land he had so ardently longed for, but he did not know it. For Athene had shed a mist over all the surrounding country, wishing to acquaint him, before he left the shore, of the dangers and difficulties he would still have to encounter. She therefore caused the familiar paths and rocks and trees to appear strange to Ulysses, so that when he awoke, he supposed himself to be in a strange land.

Finding himself alone, he sprang up with a cry of despair. 'Woe is me!' he cried. 'The Pheacians are not the honest folk I took them for. They promised to convey me to my home, and now they have landed me on some strange coast.' At that moment he saw a young shepherd coming to meet him, who from his appearance seemed to be the son of noble parents, and going up to him, he asked him what land it was.

The youth answered, 'Thou must indeed have come from far, if thou knowest not this island. It is in truth a stony country and unsuited for horses, but it rears excellent flocks of cattle and goats, and wheat grows here in abundance; moreover, the vine flourishes, and

there are woods, and never-failing springs. Even so far away as Troy, men know the name of Ithaca.'

When Ulysses heard that he was in his own beloved land, he was filled with joy, but he was too cautious to tell the shepherd that he was the king of the country. He therefore concealed his delight, and invented a story to account for his presence there.

'Of Ithaca,' he said, 'I have often heard, in my home in the land of Crete. From thence I led a band of men to fight in the Trojan war, but when I came home with my booty, one of the king's sons wanted to rob me of my spoils because I had refused to serve under his father. This made me angry, and I lay in wait for him with one of my men, and slew him as he was coming home from the field in the evening. On this account I was unable to remain in Crete, so I left part of my goods behind, and, with the remainder, I went aboard a Phenician vessel which was lying in the harbour, and offered the sailors a reward if they would take me to Pylos or to Elis. This they promised to do, but we were driven out of our course by contrary winds, and yesterday we landed here and lay down on the shore to rest. The Phenicians were now anxious to return home, and regretted their promise to me; and early this morning, while I was still asleep, they laid my goods beside me on the shore, and returning without me to their ship, sailed away secretly.'

Before Ulysses had finished speaking, the young shepherd changed suddenly into a tall and beautiful woman; it was Athene herself who had thus appeared to him. With a smile she said, 'Hardly would a god succeed in outwitting thee, for thou art ever on the

watch, and knowest well how to delude thine enemies, and those in whom thou hast no confidence. On this account art thou dear to Athene, who has often manifested her good will towards thee, and is ready now to help thee in counsel and in action.'

As she spoke, the goddess dispelled the mist which she had spread over the surrounding country, and Ulysses recognised the haven of Phorcys with its ancient olive-tree, and also the grotto of the nymphs, and the wooded mountain near by. He was almost beside himself with joy, and he fell upon the ground and kissed it rapturously. Then he turned towards the grotto, and, raising his hands, he made his prayer to the nymphs. 'Ye nymphs,' he said, 'daughters of Zeus, whom I had lost all hope of ever seeing again, I greet you now with the greater delight. So long as Athene grants me life, I will ever honour you with duteous gifts.'

With the help of the goddess, Ulysses carried the rich presents given him by the Pheacians into the recesses of the grotto, and when everything had been stowed away, Athene placed a great stone before the entrance, so large that Ulysses could not have moved it, though he had put forth his utmost strength. Then the goddess sat with him under the olive-tree, and told him that he had still many dangers to encounter, and that if he would defeat the plots of the suitors and punish them as they deserved, he must keep his arrival a secret from everyone, even from his nearest relatives and most faithful servants.

For more than three years, she told him, a company of shameless men had been feasting daily in his hall,

wooing his wife and thereby causing her great distress, and moreover wasting his goods in their unseemly carousals. At this very moment, they were lying in wait for his son Telemachus, that they might slay him treacherously on his return from Pylos and Sparta, whither he had gone to seek for tidings of his father.

Ulysses shuddered when he heard of his son's danger, but the goddess assured him that she would protect the youth, and keep him from all harm. She further told Ulysses that he must not yet go into the city, but must first betake himself to his trusty swineherd Eumaeus, who tended his swine near the spring Arethusa, and that meanwhile she would hasten to Sparta to recall Telemachus.

It was important that Ulysses should not be recognised by anyone, and Athene therefore held up her hand, and changed him in a moment so completely that if a mirror had been placed before him, he would not have known himself. Instead of the strong hero, stood a feeble old man; his beautiful fair hair was all gone, his clear blue eyes were sunken, his skin was creased and wrinkled, and instead of the costly garments which the Pheacians had given him, he was now dressed in beggar's clothing, dirty and ragged; from his neck there hung a beggar's wallet, and in his hand he held a beggar's staff.

When Athene had thus transformed him, she disappeared, and Ulysses went on his way to find the trusty swineherd Eumaeus.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SWINEHERD EUMAEUS.

ULYSSES climbed a rugged path which led up through the woods that clothed the mountain, to the enclosure of the swineherd. The trusty Eumaeus had studied his master's interest in all ways; the herds had increased in number, new sties had been built, and round the whole, a wall had been erected as a protection against thieves. All this had been done moreover without any assistance from the queen, entirely out of the gain that had accrued to the herdsman from his thrifty management of the swine. Within the walls were twelve great sties for the mothers and sucking-pigs, each arranged for fifty swine; the boars were sheltered at night in a cavern outside, where they were protected by four savage dogs. They were now only three hundred and sixty in number, for every day the fattest of them had to be sent into the city, to be slaughtered for the repast of the suitors.

When Ulysses emerged from the wood, Eumaeus was sitting in front of his hut, cutting out a pair of soles from a strip of ox-hide, and the dogs were lying near him. When they saw the strange beggar approaching, they sprang up and ran at him, howling

savagely. Ulysses knew well how to play the part of the timorous beggar, and letting his stick fall, he sank on one knee, as if in fright.

Eumaeus threw down the soles, and hastening to the door of the court-yard, he called off the dogs, and threw stones at them to keep them quiet. Then he said to Ulysses, 'The dogs might easily have torn thee to pieces, and how should I have borne such disgrace as that would have brought upon me! The gods, alas! have laid sorrow enough already upon me without adding more trouble, for I wait in vain for the return of my beloved master, and tend his swine for the good of others, whilst he perchance, if he is yet alive, may be begging his bread from door to door. But follow me into my hut, and I will set food and drink before thee.'

They went into the house, and Eumaeus pushed a chair towards his guest, and spread a goat-skin over it. Ulysses was rejoiced at his welcome, and said, 'May the gods reward thee for thy hospitality, and grant thee that which thou most desirest.'

Eumaeus answered, 'Stranger, I may not turn away the meanest creature from my door, for all strangers and beggars are under the protection of Zeus. Sit thee down, and content thyself with what a poor fellow can offer thee. If the gods had but granted my master a safe return, he would not have failed to give me, as a reward for my service, a little house with a piece of land attached to it—then I should have had something better wherewith to entertain my guests. But he is far away. Would that Helen and her whole race were swept off the face of the earth, for hers

is the fault that my master went away to Troy with Agamemnon !’

He went out and fetched from among the swine two sucking-pigs, which he slaughtered, and when they were roasted, he invited his guest to partake of them. ‘Better,’ he said, ‘I cannot offer thee, for the fat boars are consumed by the suitors. Knaves that they are ! They must be well-informed that my lord has perished, otherwise they would never dare to waste his goods. A richer man than my master is hardly to be found anywhere. On the nearest mainland he has twelve herds of cattle, twelve of sheep, and twelve of goats, and here in Ithaca there are eleven herds of goats, besides the swine which are under my charge. All this will be consumed in time, and moreover the suitors are drinking up all the best wine in my master’s cellar.’

Ulysses eat and drank with great zest that the herdsman might not perceive how angry it made him to hear of the insolent proceedings of the suitors. Controlling his voice he presently asked, ‘Who then is thy lord ? I have come from far, and may be able to give thee news of him.’

‘That I could myself have told thee,’ answered Eumaeus, ‘for many have come and deluded us with vain hopes in order to secure a good reception. The queen sends for every stranger who lands in the island, and if they give her some news of her husband, she rewards them with rich presents ; but it is all a pack of lies. Thou also, thinkest now to earn for thyself a mantle and doublet, but do not expect to impose upon me ! Long ago the dogs and vultures have made a meal of his corpse, or else it has been devoured by the fishes of the

sea. All his friends mourn for him, but no one mourns as I do, for such a master as he was shall I never again meet with. More than for my father or my mother do I long for the return of my beloved master Ulysses.'

'Ulysses,' repeated his guest, 'is that the name of thy master? Hear then what I can tell thee, and by a solemn oath will I confirm it,—I swear by Zeus, and by this hospitable board, and by the hearth of Ulysses, that my words will be fulfilled. Within a year Ulysses will return, and for these good tidings will I take no reward until he has himself arrived.'

But Eumaeus remained unconvinced, and he shook his head, saying, 'Thou wilt have long to wait, if thou tarriest till Ulysses comes. Speak to me no more of this, for it always makes me sad to think of him. Just now we have an additional anxiety, with regard to our young lord Telemachus. By the help of the gods he has grown up like a young sapling, and I hoped that one day he would be even such a man as his father. But some one, whether god or man I know not, has fooled him into going to Pylos to seek for news of his father, and now the suitors are lying in wait to kill him as he returns; whether they will succeed, the gods only know. But come now, let us speak of something else. Tell me who thou art, and why thou hast come hither.'

The crafty Ulysses immediately bethought him of a fresh tale to account for his appearance in the island, and at once began to relate it to the swineherd.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ULYSSES RELATES A FEIGNED STORY TO THE
SWINEHERD.

‘I HAVE come,’ said Ulysses, ‘from Crete. I am the son of a rich man, but I had no fancy for leading an easy life at home, and finally succeeding to the inheritance of my father. My taste was rather for fighting and adventure, and sailing over the sea. I went to Troy with the other heroes, and after ten long years of warfare, returned in safety to Crete. For a month I was happy with my wife and children, but I could not rest at home, and I sailed for Egypt with nine ships.

‘We had a favourable wind, and landed there on the fifteenth day. But it was in vain that I warned my companions not to venture far into the country; they could not control their lust for booty, and they destroyed several villages, killing the men, and carrying off the women and children into captivity. Now when this was rumoured about in the city, the Egyptians assembled, and marched against our ships, filling the whole of the surrounding plain with the glitter of their weapons.

‘We defended ourselves as well as we could, but

Zeus was against us, and we were obliged to flee. Many of us were slain, and many were taken prisoners. I met the king driving in his chariot over the battle-field, and throwing away my helmet, shield and spear, I threw myself down before him and embraced his knees, imploring him to spare my life. He had pity on me, bade me mount into the chariot by his side, and protected me from the fury of the Egyptians, who would have killed me with their spears. After this I remained for seven years among the Egyptians, and fared well enough, for all with whom I had any intercourse gave me presents.

‘In the eighth year, there came thither a Phœnician ship, of which the master promised me that if I would sail away with him, he would take me to my home. But he was a cheat. Instead of sailing to Crete, he returned to Phœnicia, and there I had to remain for a year. At the end of that time he offered to take me to Libya, saying that he would pay me well for my services, though in truth he intended to sell me for a slave. Things turned out however very differently from his expectations. When we were in the open sea, there arose a storm of wind, rain, thunder and lightning; the beams were loosened one from the other, and the sailors fell into the sea and soon sank beneath the waves.

‘By the help of Zeus, I succeeded in laying hold of the mast, and for nine days I was tossed about on the sea. On the tenth day I was cast by the waves on the coast of the Threspotians. Here the king’s son chanced to discover me, and he had pity on me and took me to

the house of his father, who also received me kindly, and gave me food and clothes.

‘It was here that I heard of Ulysses. The king said that he had landed in that country on his way home, and he showed me the treasure he had brought with him,—treasure indeed that will outlast his children and his children’s children. Ulysses himself had gone to Dodona to listen to the rustling of the sacred Oak, and take counsel of the gods as to whether he should at once make himself known on reaching his home, or should keep his return a secret. The ship was already put out to sea, and everything was prepared for the voyage to Ithaca.

‘I did not myself see Ulysses, for the king sent me off in a ship that was going to Dulichium, thinking that the king of that island would further speed me on my way. But the sailors plotted to sell me into slavery; they took off the clothes which the king had given me, and put on me instead these miserable rags in which thou now seest me. Yesterday evening they landed to have a feast and spend the night on the shore, and they left me bound in the ship. By the help of the gods, I managed however to unfasten the knots; it was already dark, and I crawled to the edge of the rudder, and dropped down from it into the sea; then I swam to the land, and made my way to a thickly wooded copse near by. In the morning the sailors searched everywhere for me, but they did not discover my hiding-place, and were obliged to sail away without me. Thus have I come to thee, and I rejoice to have met with so friendly a reception.’

Eumæus had listened to the story with great

interest, and now he said, ‘The tale of thy misfortunes has touched my heart, but for this I blame thee, that thou wouldst make me hope for the speedy return of my master. I have lost all confidence in such reports as thou bringest, since a man came here from Aetolia whom I assisted in his distress, and who in return imposed upon me with a story of how he had seen Ulysses in Crete, repairing his ships, and how Ulysses had told him that the next summer, or at latest in the autumn, he would be at home again. Thou mayest spare thyself such idle tales, for it is not on this account that I entertain thee, but for fear of Zeus, and out of compassion for thee.’

‘Thou art over distrustful,’ answered Ulysses, ‘in that thou wilt not believe that which I have sworn to thee with an oath. Let us now make a compact. If Ulysses comes within the time I named, thou shalt give me a new garment, but if he fails to arrive, then mayest thou cast me down from some high rock as a warning to others.’

But Eumaeus replied, ‘That would in truth win for me a good reputation! First I take thee into my house and entertain thee, and then I lay hands upon thee and shed thy blood! With what confidence should I then make my prayer to Zeus! Speak not again of this. My men will be here immediately from the field, for it is time to get ready the evening meal.’

At this moment they heard the swine returning home, making a great noise as they came, and when they had been driven into their sties, the herdsmen entered the hut. Eumaeus said to them, ‘Bring hither

the best of the boars. In honour of our guest we will sacrifice him to the gods, and at the same time make a feast for ourselves. This indeed we have a good right to do, for we have all the labour of tending the swine, and they are consumed by others with whom we have no concern.'

The men were not loth to obey, and quickly fetched in the boar. The pious Eumaeus performed the sacrifice in the accustomed manner, and prayed to the gods to hasten the return of his master. When the flesh was roasted, he divided it into seven portions; one, for the nymphs and the messenger-god Hermes he laid in the flames that the odour might ascend to the gods,—the other six were for himself, his guest, and his four men, the best being given to Ulysses. Eumaeus also mixed wine and water, and poured it out into wooden cups.

When everyone had finished, they prepared for sleep. It was a stormy night, with pouring rain and a keen wind blowing. Ulysses was afraid of freezing in his scanty beggar's clothing, and wished for a mantle to cover him; quickly therefore he invented another tale, as a means of getting what he wanted.

'Ye know,' he began, 'that wine is wont to make men inclined for speech, therefore be not surprised at my telling you a story about Ulysses that has just come into my mind. It was when we were before Troy, that one night Ulysses and Menelaüs conducted a band of men to reconnoitre close beneath the city walls, and took me with them as third in command. There was some marshy ground overgrown with weeds, where we lay crouching beneath our shields. It was a bitter cold

night, with falling snow, and the shields were soon covered with ice. The others had been prudent and had taken warm cloaks with them, but I had scarcely anything on but my doublet, and thought I should have perished from the cold.

‘I touched Ulysses, who was lying next to me, and said, “The frost will kill me. Fool that I am, I have come without my mantle.” Ulysses whispered back, “Stay still, do not say anything to the others.” Then he raised his voice and said aloud, “Friends, the gods have warned me by a dream that we are not wise in having ventured to this distance from the ships with so small a number of men. Let someone run swiftly back to Agamemnon and bid him send us some help.” Immediately one of the men rose up to take the message, and as his cloak would have been a hindrance to him in running, he left it behind, and I took it, and soon became warm. Oh! would that I were now as young and as well-beloved as in those days, then should I not now be in danger of freezing with the cold!’

Eumaeus was delighted with this anecdote of Ulysses, and was the more willing to fall in with the wishes of his guest. He said, ‘Stranger, thou shalt have a mantle, but in the morning thou must return it to me, for we are poor folk, and have no superfluity of garments.’ He prepared a couch for Ulysses beside the hearth, and covered him with a cloak; but as for himself, he was accustomed to battle through the cold of hard winters, and fearing that the bad weather might be taken advantage of by thieves, he determined to spend the night in the cave outside, beside the boars,

who were protected only by the dogs. He therefore hung his sword round his shoulders, wrapped himself in a warm mantle, and, with a spear in his hand, went out and lay down beside them.

Ulysses rejoiced in his heart to see the devotion of the swineherd to the interests of his absent lord.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MENELAÛS SPEEDS HIS DEPARTING GUEST.

ALL this time, Telemachus was still at Sparta with Pisistratus. One night, as he lay awake thinking of his father, he suddenly perceived a beautiful shining form standing beside his couch. It was Athene, and she said to him, 'It is high time for thee to return to Ithaca, and see to thine affairs. The suitors are lying in wait to kill thee on the sea between Samos and Ithaca, but sail thou cautiously, taking another course, and so shalt thou escape them. When thou hast reached the coast of Ithaca, send thy ship forward to the city, but go thyself to the swineherd Eumaeus, and desire him to acquaint thy mother of thy safe return.'

As she spoke these words, the goddess vanished, and Telemachus resolved to carry out her instructions without delay, though he little guessed the reason for which she had bidden him go to the swineherd, namely that he might there meet his father, and consult with him as to the best means of attacking the suitors. As soon as the morning dawned, he rose from his couch and went out to Menelaüs, whom he found already seated upon the stone bench. He told him that his

heart was set upon an immediate return to his home and begged his host to hasten his departure. Menelaüs would have been glad to detain the son of his dearest friend for a much longer time, but he would not keep him against his will, and prepared to speed him on his way.

In those days, the affection which a host bore to his guest could be tested by the splendour of the gifts which he presented to him at parting. For Telemachus, Menelaüs brought out from his treasure-chamber the most beautiful of all his possessions, a great silver mixing-bowl with golden rims which had once been given to him by a king of Phenicia, and Helen chose from among her garments the finest and most richly worked of all; it had been woven by the queen herself, and she gave it to Telemachus to be the wedding-dress of his future bride.

Presently the chariot was standing at the door, and when the two young men had taken their places, Menelaüs held out to them a brimming cup of wine from which to drink a parting draught. 'Farewell ye youths,' he said, 'and bear my greetings to the aged Nestor, who was ever kind to me as a father.'

Telemachus answered, 'We will not fail to deliver thy message. Ah! would that I could hope to find my father Ulysses at home! With what joy would I tell him how kindly and heartily thou hast welcomed his son.'

Just then an eagle flew by from the right, with a great goose in his claws, which he had stolen from the farm-yard. Menelaüs felt sure it must be a token from the gods, and Helen, who was standing beside him,

said, 'I will give you the interpretation of the message, as the gods have put it into my heart. As the eagle has swooped down from the mountains, bringing sudden destruction to the goose, so will Ulysses return to his home, and punish the suitors in like manner. At this very moment he may have already arrived.'

'May Zeus grant it!' replied Telemachus joyfully. 'Then will I ever think of thee, O queen, as of a goddess.'

Telemachus and Pisistratus returned by the same way that they had come. Towards the end of the second day, when they were nearing Pylos, Telemachus begged his companion to let him proceed at once to his ship, for his impatience to be again in Ithaca was increasing with every step of the journey. Pisistratus knew that this would be a disappointment to his father, who was hoping to entertain the son of Ulysses as before, on his way to Sparta; but he yielded to the urgent entreaties of his friend, and drove him direct to the shore. The two young men parted with mutual assurances of the warmest affection. Pisistratus returned to Pylos, and Telemachus, after sacrificing a burnt-offering to Athene, took ship for Ithaca.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EUMAEUS RELATES HIS PAST HISTORY.

MEANWHILE, in the hut of the swineherd, Ulysses and Eumaeus, sitting together at their meal one evening, fell as usual into talk, and in order to test the hospitality of his host, Ulysses said to him, 'Early to-morrow morning will I go into the city, that I may no longer continue to be a burden to thee. To the queen I will tell what I know concerning Ulysses, and then offer my services to the suitors, for well enough, thank the gods, do I understand how to make myself useful to great lords. I can split wood, roast flesh, carve meat, and pour out wine.'

'Is it then to the suitors that thou thinkest of going?' answered Eumaeus. 'Badly wilt thou fare amongst them,—thou little knowest how insolent they are. Moreover, they are accustomed to be served by those who are very different from thyself, who are young, well dressed and well favoured. Remain here with me; thou art burdensome to no one, and when my young master returns, he will give thee a mantle and doublet, and will send thee to thy friends.'

Ulysses agreed to this, and added, 'If then I am to await the return of thy young master, tell me some-

thing more of his father's family. The parents of Ulysses, are they yet alive ?'

'The aged Laertes lives indeed,' replied Eumaeus, 'but there is nothing that he more ardently desires than death, for he is bowed down with sorrow on account of his long-lost son, and of his wife who died of grief many years ago. She was in truth a woman to bemoan! When in my early childhood I was brought as a slave to this country, she treated me with the utmost kindness, as if she had been rather a mother than a mistress, making no difference between myself and her own daughter who was just of the same age. When I was grown up, she sent me out into the country, and here I have ever since served her, and continued to enjoy her regard.'

Ulysses then asked, as if he had never heard the story before, how Eumaeus had become a slave, and the swineherd replied, 'Little did I think when I was a child that I should one day have to serve as a slave in a strange land. I was born in the island of Syria, far, very far from this country,—a land where hunger and disease are alike unknown, and where the inhabitants, when they become old, die a peaceful, sudden death.'

'My father was the king of the island, and among his slaves was a Phœnician woman who was my nurse. When I was a little boy, there came to the island a Phœnician ship, bringing merchandise for sale, and amongst the crew my nurse discovered a former friend, who told her that her parents were still alive, and filled her with a great desire to return to her own country. The ship-men promised to take her back with them,

but told her that she must say nothing about it, nor appear to recognise them if she should meet them in the streets, but that when they had disposed of their wares and were ready to depart, they would send her word. She had agreed to take me with her, instead of passage-money, that they might sell me as a slave, and promised also to bring anything else of value on which she could lay her hands.

‘It was about a year before the sailors had transacted all their business. At the end of that time, they sent one of their number to my mother with a golden necklace, which they offered for sale, and while the waiting-women were standing round, admiring and handling the beautiful ornament, the sailor who had brought it gave my nurse the signal that had been agreed upon.

‘She at once seized me by the hand, and led me away as if she were going to take me out for a walk. Passing through the hall, she snatched up three of the silver goblets that stood upon the table and hid them in her dress; then she hurried me through the streets towards the shore. In the innocence of my heart I was quite content to go with her to the ship and sail away, though as time went on and we got farther and farther from the shore, I began to long for my father and mother, and cried bitterly.

‘My nurse was not destined, however, to gain anything by her treachery, for on the seventh day she was seized with illness and fell down dead suddenly. The sailors threw her corpse into the sea, and brought me to Ithaca, where they sold me to King Laertes. It was a happy thing for me that I found so kind a

master, and if Ulysses would but come back and take his rightful place as king of this island, I should have no desire to return to my home.'

By the time Eumaeus had ended his story it was already far on into the night, and he and Ulysses retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MEETING OF ULYSSES AND TELEMACHUS.

THE ship of Telemachus succeeded in avoiding the ambush of the suitors, and came to shore the next morning, not far from the dwelling of Eumaeus. From this place Telemachus bade his companions sail on without him into the city, saying that he would himself follow them later, and would then have a banquet prepared for them as an acknowledgment of their services in accompanying him on his journey.

The ship pushed off again, and Telemachus went forward to the enclosure of Eumaeus. When he came near, the dogs perceived his approach and rushed out to meet him; and Ulysses, hearing also the sound of footsteps, said to Eumaeus, who was just then preparing the morning meal, 'There is some one at hand who seems to be well known to thee, for the dogs do not bark, but run to fawn upon him.'

As he spoke, Telemachus stood in the doorway, and with a cry of joy Eumaeus let the vessel in which he was mixing the wine fall to the ground, and hastened towards his young master, kissing his feet and hands with tears of joy. 'At last,' he exclaimed, 'thou hast returned, thou the delight of my eyes! I

feared lest I should never more behold thee. Come within, that I may enjoy thy visit to the full. Too seldom dost thou come out to us herdsmen in the country—as if it were so agreeable to thee to dwell among the suitors!’

Thus speaking, he took the spear from the hand of his beloved guest, and Telemachus hastened to enquire concerning his mother. ‘She is, alas! even more sorrowful than before,’ replied Eumaeus. ‘All her days and nights are passed in tears.’

Telemachus now entered the hut, and Ulysses rose from his seat to make room for him, but the young man said, ‘Disturb not thyself, stranger; in the courtyard I shall easily find another seat.’ Eumaeus was already arranging some skins over a heap of twigs to make a comfortable seat for his guest, and he proceeded to busy himself in setting meat, wine and bread before him. When Telemachus enquired who the stranger was, he answered, ‘He comes from Crete. He has travelled far and suffered much. I give him over into thy hands, that thou mayest provide for him.’

Bitterly Telemachus replied, ‘How dost thou suppose that I can invite him to my house? I am still young, and not strong enough to protect him from the insults to which he would be exposed. If it seems good to thee, keep him here, rather. I will send him a mantle and doublet, and provisions for his maintenance, that he may not consume thy goods. So long as the suitors continue in our house, there is no security against insult and outrage for a friendless stranger, such as this man.’

Ulysses now spoke. ‘Friend,’ he said, ‘it grieves me to hear that thou hast in thine house unbidden guests

who disturb thy peace. Canst thou in no wise dispossess them? Were I the son of Ulysses, still more were I Ulysses himself, I wager my head that I would not delay to pit myself against them. Even should they through their greater superiority in numbers overcome me, I would rather perish than witness day by day the renewal of their evil deeds.'

'If thou knewest how many they are,' answered Telemachus, 'thou wouldst be convinced that the gods alone can put an end to them. Alas! would that they might accomplish it, and that speedily!' He then turned to Eumaeus and said, 'Go into the city without delay, and carry word to my mother that I am here, but tell her this alone and in secret, for I have many foes who seek to take my life.'

Eumaeus tied his sandals on to his feet, and set off for the city, leaving Ulysses and Telemachus alone in the hut. The door stood open, and Ulysses presently perceived in the court-yard the figure of a tall woman beckoning to him, whom he recognised as the goddess Athene. The dogs were also aware of her presence and crouched away, whining, but Telemachus saw nothing.

Ulysses went out in obedience to her gesture, and Athene said to him, 'It is now time for thee to make thyself known to thy son, and consult with him as to how thou mayest overcome the suitors. I will stand by you both in the fight.' She touched him with her golden staff, and in a moment he was again a king in appearance,—tall and stately, with clear commanding eyes, and dressed in the princely garments in which he had landed on the island.

Thus he returned into the hut to Telemachus, who was filled with surprise and awe at the change that had come over him, and turned away his eyes, saying, 'What is this? Stranger, thou must surely be some god. Be gracious to me and forbear to harm me, and I will honour thee with offerings and duteous gifts.'

But Ulysses replied, 'No god am I, but thy father, for whom thou hast sorrowed so long;' and as he spoke he embraced his son, while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

Telemachus could not however believe him. 'How,' said he, 'should any other than a god change himself in so marvellous a manner? But now, thou wast a miserable old man, and in a moment thou art become like unto the gods.'

With yet more tenderness in his tones, Ulysses made answer, 'In vain wilt thou look for any other Ulysses, for I am he,—who in the twentieth year, after long wanderings, and many toils and sufferings, have returned to my home. What thou hast seen is the work of Athene, who can as easily turn a king into a beggar, as restore the beggar to the appearance of a king.'

After this, Telemachus no longer doubted his happiness, and the father and son remained long clasped in each other's arms, weeping for sorrow over the past, and for joy at finding one another again.

Ulysses told his son how he had been brought to Ithaca by the Pheacians, and then desired Telemachus to reckon up the number of the suitors, that they might consider whether they two would be able alone to overcome them, or whether it would be necessary to call in the aid of others.

Telemachus replied, 'Much indeed have I heard of thy power, and of thy strength and courage, but yet their numbers are so great that we alone should never be able to make head against them. From Dulichium there are fifty-two suitors and with them six serving men; from Samos twenty-four; from Zacynthus twenty; and of those that belong to Ithaca, there are twelve. Therefore it is needful to consider whether thou canst procure us any other help.'

With a smile Ulysses made answer, 'How thinkest thou? Does it seem to thee that the help of Athene and of Father Zeus will suffice, or shall I seek for other aid?'

Telemachus now perceived that he might dismiss from his mind all anxiety with regard to the conflict, and Ulysses explained to him how he was to act. 'Early to-morrow morning,' said he, 'thou must return to the city, and live among the suitors as hitherto. Later in the day, Eumaeus shall conduct me thither also. Should the suitors insult me and ill-treat me, should they even drag me along the ground by the feet, do not thou interfere; thou mayest indeed endeavour to dissuade them, but they will not hear thee, for they must fulfil their doom. Neither do thou reveal to anyone that I am here, not to Laertes nor Penelope herself; neither must Eumaeus know it as yet.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SUITORS MAKE A NEW CONSPIRACY.

BEFORE this time, the ship of Telemachus had reached the city, and immediately a herald was sent to the queen, to announce the safe return of her son. He reached the palace just at the same moment as Eumaeus, who was thus prevented from giving his message in private, for the herald made his announcement before all the maidens, and as some of them were of the party of the suitors, it was not long before they also were acquainted with the news.

They were much astonished at hearing it, and went out to talk over the matter in secret. First they decided to let Antinoüs know that Telemachus, for whom he was lying in wait on the sea, was already in Ithaca; but just at that moment they saw his ship coming into the harbour, and they all went down to the shore to meet him, and consult with him as to what should be their next course.

Antinoüs had neglected no means of making sure of his prey. All day long, spies had been stationed on the mountains, keeping a look-out for the ship of Telemachus, and in the night time Antinoüs had sailed about, scouring the sea in all directions with the utmost perseverance, and yet his designs had failed. It was

his opinion that it would be well to seek out Telemachus, and slay him. 'Have ye not observed,' he cried, 'that he has lately become quite audacious, and that the people are much less friendly to us than of yore? Now will he complain of us to the townsfolk, and they will rise up against us and drive us out from among them. There is nothing for it but that we should forestall him; and either in the country where he now tarries, or else on his way into the city, we must surprise and kill him.'

But Amphinomus, who was the most cautious of the suitors, spoke against this. 'My friends,' he said, 'if ye are of my mind, ye will forbear to lay hands on Telemachus, for a violent and an evil deed it is to slay the scion of an ancient stock of kings. First let us enquire of the gods. If they approve the deed, I am ready with my own hands to accomplish it, but should they refuse their sanction, we must not attempt it.' The other suitors declared themselves to be of the same opinion, and all returned together to the palace.

From the faithful herald Medon, Penelope soon heard of the new conspiracy against the life of her son, and she resolved to go down and expostulate with the suitors. They were sitting in the hall, eating and drinking, when she came and stood in the doorway, and addressing herself to Antinoüs, said to him, 'Thou madman! how canst thou think of taking the life of the son of Ulysses? Hast thou never heard, or altogether forgotten, that Ulysses once saved thy father from death? The people had risen up against him and would have taken his life; then he fled to our house and craved the protection of Ulysses, and he—my

husband--went out and stayed the fury of the mob, and saved him. In return for this, it seems well to thee to consume his goods, and now thou wilt slay his son!’

Antinoüs was silent, but Eurymachus, the other leader of the suitors, answered for him. ‘Noble queen,’ he cried, ‘fear nothing! So long as I live, shall no one here lay hands upon thy son. If anyone ventures to attempt it, my spear will soon be stained with his blood. For I remember well, how, when I was a child, I used often to sit upon the knees of Ulysses, while he gave me food, and held his cup for me to drink, and therefore is Telemachus of all men the dearest to me.’ So spoke the treacherous Eurymachus, but in his heart he thought only how he might destroy Telemachus. His words could give no comfort to Penelope, for she knew how little they were worth, and sadly she returned to her own room.

Towards evening, Eumæus returned to his homestead. As he approached, the noble form of Ulysses shrank again into the mean appearance of the beggar, for Athene had drawn nigh invisibly and touched him with her wand,—and thus Eumæus found the two that he had left, the prince and the poor beggar.

He related how he had reached the palace at the same moment as the herald, and how on his way home he had seen a ship making for the harbour, bright with gleaming shields and weapons, which was no doubt the ship of Antinoüs. As he said this, Telemachus looked at his father and smiled, unperceived by Eumæus. He meant to convey to him that there were worse things in store for the suitors than this failure of their plans.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ULYSSES COMES TO THE PALACE AND IS RECOGNISED BY
THE HOUND ARGUS.

TELEMACHUS rose early the next morning, and began to prepare for his departure to the city. He said to Eumaeus, 'I must go without delay to my mother, for she will not cease to grieve until she has seen me with her own eyes. Bring the stranger also into the city, that he may beg in the streets and in the palace, for in my miserable situation I am unable to help others.' And with these words he went away.

When Telemachus entered the palace, the first to see him was the aged Eurycleia, who hastened towards him with tears of joy. The other faithful maid-servants gathered round him also, and kissed him on the head and shoulders. Their exclamations of pleasure brought the queen from her chamber, and clasping her son in her arms, she kissed him over and over again. 'So thou hast in truth returned!' she cried. 'In very deed thou art here, my heart's delight! Hardly did I dare to hope that I should ever see thee again.'

She asked him what news he had heard during his travels regarding the fate of his father, and when Telemachus told her how the sea-god Proteus had

assured Menelaüs that Ulysses was still alive, though detained by a nymph on her island, a hope that all might yet be well once more stirred the breast of Penelope.

Telemachus next went to the market-place to speak to his travelling companions, and the suitors all came round him and greeted him as if they had been his best friends, but he disengaged himself from them, and talked only with the old friends of his father.

Ulysses waited till midday in the hut of Eumæus ; he feared, he said, to die of cold if he set out early in the morning in his scanty clothing, but when the sun was high in the heaven, he tied his beggar's wallet round his neck, and taking in his hand a stout cudgel which he found in the hut, he set out, accompanied by his host.

On their way, they came to a spring, from which the maidens of the city were accustomed to fetch water. The space all round it had been planted by former kings of Ithaca with black poplar trees, which flourished in the damp soil and cast a cool shade ; and upon the rock above, an altar had been erected, at which the passers-by were in the habit of offering their homage to the nymphs of the spring.

At this place, Ulysses and Eumæus fell in with the goatherd Melanthius, who was taking some of his finest goats to the city for the feast of the suitors. Melanthius was by no means of the same mind as Eumæus, for he held with the suitors, and wished that Ulysses might never come back. When he saw Eumæus and the beggar, he immediately began to revile them. ' Truly,' he cried, ' here is one knave conducting another.

“Like goes with like,” as the saying has it. What does the scoundrel want in the city? are there not enough beggars there already? If the beggar is really willing to do honest work, let him come to my goat-farm and serve as a watchman. He might clean out the stalls, and strew leaves for the young goats to lie upon. Then he would get whey to drink, and would grow fat and strong. But of course he will not work; begging suits him much better. He had better beware, though, of going to the suitors in the palace, unless he is prepared to have stools flying at his head.’

As he spoke, he stepped up to Ulysses, and gave him a violent kick upon the hip. He thought that the beggar would totter to the ground, but Ulysses stood firm. It would have been easy for him to strike the impudent fellow dead with a single blow, but he controlled his anger, in order to keep up his character of a beggar.

Eumaeus raised his hands to the altar above the spring, and cried out, ‘Oh, that the nymphs might grant a speedy return to Ulysses! Then would thine insolence be driven out of thee, Melanthius! and a stop would be put to thy loitering about in the city, neglecting the flocks of thy master.’

With a contemptuous smile, Melanthius replied, ‘Is it the return of Ulysses for which thou art looking,—now in the twentieth year? I would I were as sure that Telemachus had perished, as I am that his father is long since dead.’ And with these words he went his way.

Ulysses and the swineherd also made their way to the city, and found themselves, before long, in front of

the palace. Ulysses concealed his emotion, and made as though he saw the home of his youth for the first time. He praised and admired the noble pile, and added, 'There must be many guests in the house, for even at this distance I can perceive the odour of roasted flesh, and hear the lute which accompanies the song of the minstrel.'

Presently they saw, lying upon a heap of refuse in the court-yard, an aged hound, so weak that he could hardly move. His name was Argus, and long ago, before he went to the war, Ulysses had himself taken much pains to train him, hoping that he would become a valuable sporting-dog. Since then, twenty years had passed, but nevertheless the faithful animal recognised the voice of his master; he pricked his ears, tried to raise his head, and wagged his tail, though slowly and feebly. Gladly would he have crawled towards him, but for this he was now too weak.

When Ulysses saw how faithfully his old hound had remembered him, the tears came into his eyes, and he was obliged to turn away, that Eumaeus might not observe him. Then he said with seeming indifference, 'The dog still retains evidence of former beauty. Was he a sporting-dog, or only fit to be played with in the house?'

'He was our best sporting-dog,' answered Eumaeus. 'He could hunt out the wild animals from the thickest cover, and not easily did they escape him. He deserves a better fate in his old age, but his master is away, and the servant maids, who ought to look after him, give themselves no trouble. He is sick, and covered with vermin. Let us now enter the hall separately.'

I will go first, and thou shalt wait a short time, and then follow me.'

When Ulysses found himself alone in the courtyard, he went up to the dog and stood looking at him with deep emotion. But the joy of seeing his beloved master again was more than, in his weak condition, the faithful creature could bear, and in a few moments he was dead.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ULYSSES AMONG THE SUITORS.

ULYSSES now went into the hall, and crouched on his own threshold in the guise of a beggar. When Telemachus saw him, he took a whole loaf, and as much meat as he could hold in both hands, and desired Eumaeus, who was sitting near him, to take it to the beggar and bid him also beg from the suitors. Ulysses thanked him for the bounteous gift, and said, 'May the gods grant to Telemachus his heart's desire!' Then he laid his beggar's wallet upon the ground, and placing the bread and meat upon it, he eat as if he had long fasted.

When the song of the minstrel was at an end, Ulysses rose, and going from one to another of the suitors, he begged with outstretched hand, as if he were well accustomed to do so. They all gave him something and asked where the strange beggar came from, but when Melanthius said, 'It is Eumaeus who has brought him here,' Antinoüs rebuked Eumaeus. 'Wherefore hast thou brought another beggar,' he said, 'to add to those we have already? Is not thy lord's substance sufficiently consumed as it is?'

But Telemachus answered, 'The gods forbid that

any beggar should be turned away from these doors. Give him as much as it pleaseth thee; neither my mother nor I will grudge it. But this is just like thee, Antinoüs—thou art willing enough to feast thyself, but wouldst not that another should have aught.'

Antinoüs laughed scornfully, and raising the stool which was under his feet, 'If all were to give him as much as I,' he said, swinging the stool, 'we should see no more of him in this house for at least the next three months.'

Ulysses now came close to him, and said, 'Friend, give me something. I too have been rich, and have had many servants and everything that wealth could give me,—and in those days I gave to the poor who begged from me. But Zeus sent heavy misfortune to overtake me, and since then I have been driven about from place to place, suffering many hardships, and now I beg my bread, here in Ithaca.'

His manly words offended Antinoüs, for they seemed to imply that he also might some day be reduced to misery, and in a harsh voice he bade the beggar begone from his table. As he turned away, Ulysses said, 'If from the table of another thou canst not bring thyself to give the least morsel, one may be sure that thou wouldst never in thine own house give so much as a grain of salt to a beggar.'

At this Antinoüs grew angry, and crying out, 'It shall be the worse for thee that thou darest to revile me,' he threw his stool at Ulysses and hit him in the back, on the right shoulder. The blow was a powerful one, but Ulysses stood as firm as a rock, and shaking

his head in silence, he thought of the reckoning that was at hand.

The other suitors were filled with horror at the deed of Antinoüs, and one of them said, 'It was not well done, that thou didst strike the beggar. Who knows whether he may not be some god? For often do the gods appear in the form of beggars to prove men, whether they are hard of heart, or are god-fearing and kind to strangers.'

Telemachus was scarcely able to control himself, but he remembered the instructions of his father, and kept aloof, as though he had nothing to do with him.

Penelope was sitting with her maidens in the adjoining chamber, from which she could see and hear all that passed in the hall. When Antinoüs threw the foot-stool, she said softly, 'Oh that Apollo might thus smite thee with one of his arrows!' and the house-dame who was beside her, added, 'If our wishes could take effect, not one of them would see to-morrow's dawn.'

The queen beckoned to Eumæus to come to her, and desired him to bring in the beggar, for she wished to ask him if he had heard anything of Ulysses, since he had travelled so much. 'Yea, O queen,' answered Eumæus, 'he has indeed much to tell. For the last three days and three nights he has been in my hut, but he has not yet come to an end of the tale of his adventures. And one never grows tired of hearing him; one listens as attentively as if it were a singer, who was telling the most enchanting stories. He has come from Crete, and he says that he has heard of Ulysses, who

tarries in the land of the Threspotians, and is shortly coming home, laden with treasures.

Penelope was filled with joy, and cried, 'Oh, if Ulysses were to return, what bloody vengeance he would take upon the suitors!' At that moment, Telemachus gave a loud sneeze in the hall, and the hopes of the queen rose high, for among the Greeks it was held to be a sure sign that a wish would be fulfilled; if someone sneezed at the moment it was uttered.

Eumaeus went back to Ulysses, and delivered the message with which Penelope had charged him; but he replied, 'I fear the suitors, for when that man ill-treated me, neither Telemachus nor any other came forward to protect me. Let Penelope restrain her impatience until the suitors have gone; then will I tell her everything she wishes to hear.'

Eumaeus repeated these words to the queen, and then returned home to attend to his swine.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BEGGAR IRUS.

ULYSSES again sat down upon the threshold, and presently there came in from the street a man who looked ill-pleased when he saw the place already taken. He was a beggar of Ithaca whom the suitors had nicknamed Irus, because, like the goddess Iris, who conveyed the messages of Zeus, he went on all the errands with which they commissioned him. He had grown big and stout, and could eat enough for three men, but he had no strength nor pluck. The stranger did not look likely to be a formidable enemy, so he cried out, 'Get thee gone from the door, old man, or else will I drag thee away by the legs. Look round, and thou wilt see that the lords in the hall are beckoning to me to let thee have a taste of my fists.'

With bent brows Ulysses answered, 'I am doing thee no harm, and do not grudge thy going into the hall and getting as much as thou canst. On the threshold there is room enough for us both. But beware of provoking me too far, for should the old man grow angry, he might handle thee in such a manner that thou wouldst forget to pay him back.'

Irus thought this was a mere boast, and said boldly,

‘Very well then, gird thee for the fight. I will soon give thee some good bruises, and knock in thy teeth for thee. How dost thou expect to prosper against a younger man?’

Antinoüs had heard what passed, and he now cried out gaily to the others, ‘Here is a joke such as we have never enjoyed before. Irus and the strange beggar are challenging one another to fight. We will stand by, and set them on.’

At these words they all rose, laughing, and grouped themselves round the two beggars; and in order to induce them to fight with the more zest, Antinoüs decreed a prize for the winner which might well stimulate the ardour of a hungry beggar. Two dainty sausages of an enormous size were just then roasting before the fire, and of these the winner was to choose the best; moreover, he alone in future was to be admitted to the feasts of the suitors.

Ulysses placed himself carefully in position, saying, ‘An old man must needs be timid when he has to fight with a younger than himself, especially when he has gone through so much as I have; but hunger compels me to do my best. But swear to me, at least, that ye will not help Irus.’ They agreed to this, and Ulysses laid aside his clothes and girded himself with an apron.

The suitors were astonished to see how powerful were his thighs, his shoulders and his breast, and they cried out, ‘Irus, Irus, look at the limbs of the old man; thou wilt be an unfortunate Irus, even to the last.’ Irus was shaking with fright, and wishing with all his heart that he had never given the challenge; even now, in

spite of the disgrace, he would gladly have drawn back, but the servants stripped off his clothes and prepared him for the fight.

He looked a piteous object as he stood there, trembling in every limb, and Antinoüs chid him. 'Thou braggart,' he said, 'art thou afraid of the old man? Thou hadst best pull thyself together, for I tell thee that if thou art beaten, I will have thee put into a ship and taken to King Echetus the Torturer, who will cut off thy nose and ears.' At which words Irus only trembled the more.

When the two stood up one against the other, each with his right hand raised to strike his adversary, Ulysses considered whether he should give Irus such a blow as to strike him dead, or should only smite him gently, and lay him on the ground. He decided on the latter course, for he feared lest otherwise he might betray who it was that had been disguised in the rags of the beggar.

They both struck one another at the same moment; —Irus hit Ulysses on the shoulder with a feeble blow, but Ulysses smote Irus on the cheek, breaking his jaw-bone; and he fell upon the ground, howling. The suitors nearly died of laughter at the sight. Ulysses dragged the cowardly boaster by the feet through the court-yard, and propped him up against the wall; then he placed a stick in his hand, and said, 'Now thou canst keep off the swine and the dogs, but beware of presuming again to lord it over other beggars and strangers, or it may be still worse for thee the next time.'

Then he went quietly back to his place, put on his clothes, and hung his beggar's scrip round his neck.

The suitors came round him, and drank his health. 'May the gods grant thee the wish that lies nearest to thy heart,' they said, little deeming—fools that they were—that they were thus drinking death and destruction to themselves.

Antinoüs, still laughing, brought him the largest of the two sausages, and Amphinomus gave him two loaves, saying, as he drank his health, 'Mayest thou prosper, father, and may thy present misery be soon exchanged for happiness.'

It had not escaped the keen observation of Ulysses that Amphinomus was by far the best of the suitors, and wishing to warn him of the danger that was at hand, he said, 'Thou appearest to me to have more understanding than the rest, Amphinomus. Hear then what I have to say. We men, in our days of good fortune, are apt to forget what may come to us in the way of adversity. I too was once a prosperous man, but I let myself be led away to do evil, and thus I fell into the miserable condition in which thou seest me. Ye suitors, in like manner, have fallen into the habit of doing evil in this house, and ye think not that Ulysses may yet return; but I tell you that he will, yea he is already close at hand. Therefore may some god prompt thee to leave this house in time, for when he comes again beneath this roof, it will not be without bloodshed.'

Thus Ulysses spoke, and when he had poured out a libation to the gods, he drank, and gave back the cup to Amphinomus, who went away staggered by the warning he had received, and thinking anxiously about the future. Yet he could not make up his mind to forsake the merry feast in the palace, and he soon seated himself again in his old place.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

EVENING IN THE PALACE.

IT was now evening, and the maidens came in to light up the hall, bringing with them three braziers—huge dishes set on stands, in which dry wood was burnt. The fire had to be stirred from time to time, and the wood renewed whenever it was burnt down. This service was usually performed by the maidens, but Ulysses said to them, ‘Go to the queen, and spin beside her this evening; I will attend to the fire, and will not weary, even though the suitors should tarry till the dawn, for I have learnt how to endure.’

But the maidens derided him, and the most forward of them all, whose name was Melantho, turned a bold face to the stranger, and chid him. ‘Thou hast surely lost thy senses,’ she said. ‘Go rather to some smithy, or into the porch of the market-place, and sleep there. Thou thinkest thyself a great one, now that thou hast got the better of the miserable Irus, but take heed lest a better than he shall come and drive thee from the house.’ Melantho had been brought up by the queen, who treated her like her own daughter, but she repaid her with mean ingratitude, and sided with the suitors.

Ulysses looked darkly at her, and said in anger, ‘I will

complain of thee to Telemachus, thou shameless one, and he will make thee suffer for what thou hast said ;' and at these words the maidens were frightened, and left the hall, for they saw that the beggar intended to carry out his threat.

While Ulysses was attending to the fire, Eurymachus noticed the baldness of his head, which was part of the beggar-like appearance that Athene had given him, and he mocked at it, to raise a laugh among the rest. 'The beggar is worth something in the evening,' he said, 'for his head shines like a torch.' All laughed at the rude jest, and Eurymachus continued, 'Thou mightest make thyself useful on my estate and earn good wages, but thou art an idle knave who would rather live by begging, and knowest nothing about work.'

'Thou art mistaken, Eurymachus,' answered Ulysses. 'Formerly I could have laboured from early dawn till dark, at cutting grass or ploughing with strong oxen, and would not have feared to pit myself against thee ; then wouldst thou have seen whether I knew how to work. Or if war broke out, and I was furnished with armour and weapons, thou wouldst have found me ever in the foremost rank. Thou thinkest thyself a great hero because thou livest here among a few men, and they not over mighty. But if Ulysses were to come again, these doors, wide as they are, would be too narrow for thee to escape into the street.'

Eurymachus was beside himself with anger at the daring speech of the beggar, and taking up his stool, he threw it at him with all his might. Ulysses had just time to crouch behind the knees of Amphinomus,

and the stool hit a poor cup-bearer who was coming in at that moment with a goblet full of wine. It struck him on the right hand and he dropped the goblet with a cry of pain, and fell backwards to the ground.

Then a great tumult arose, and one of the suitors said, 'Would that the stranger had broken his neck before he came here. Now there is continual strife and anger, and how can we have any enjoyment of the feast?' Amphinomus advised them to pour out the last draught of wine and then go home, and to this they agreed. Soon the hall was deserted by the suitors, and Ulysses and Telemachus were left alone.

As soon as the suitors were gone, Ulysses said to his son that they must at once take the opportunity of removing from the hall the helmets, shields, and coats of mail that had hung there for many long years. He told him to put them in a chamber in the upper storey, so that on the next day, when the fight with the suitors should take place, they might not find arms standing ready for their use, and thus gain an undue advantage.

He considered however that the absence of the arms might excite the suspicions of the suitors, and he instructed Telemachus what to do in case they should notice that they were gone. 'Thou must deceive them,' he told him, 'and say, "Out of the smoke have I removed them, because they are becoming black from the smoke of the hearth; and moreover, I fear lest, should there at any time arise strife among you, ye might do one another an injury, for steel ever attracts men to its use."'

In order that none of the unfaithful maid-servants might see where the arms were being hidden, and tell

the suitors, Telemachus called in the aged Eurycleia, and bade her fasten the doors that shut off the inner part of the house. Then the father and son loaded themselves with as many arms as they could carry, and passed into a dark passage which led from the hall to the upper storey.

As they went, the whole place became suddenly bright, and Telemachus cried out in astonishment, 'What a wonder is this! I can see the walls, the pillars and the beams quite clearly, as if a flame were burning to give us light. This must be the work of some god.'

Ulysses answered, 'Hold thy peace, my son, and question nothing. In ways like this do the gods bring help to men.'

When all the arms had been carried away, Telemachus went to his sleeping-chamber; but Ulysses waited in the hall to see the queen, who wished to hear what he had to tell concerning her husband.

CHAPTER XL.

PENELOPE CONVERSES WITH THE STRANGER.

ULYSSES had not to wait long, for almost immediately Penelope came into the hall and seated herself on a chair near the fire; a stool was placed also for the stranger beside the hearth, and when he had taken his seat, she asked him who he was and whence he had come.

Ulysses replied, 'I am the brother of Idomeneus the king of Crete. Idomeneus went to Troy to join in the war, but I remained at home, and thus it happened that I had once the honour of entertaining thy husband in my house. As he was on his way to Troy, his ships were driven on to our coast, and he came into the city and was my guest for twelve days, while the storm continued to rage. When he departed, I gave him food and wine to take with him in the ships.'

The tears of Penelope fell fast at the remembrance of the time when her husband had left her to go to the war, and Ulysses longed to comfort her, but he restrained his emotion, and his eyes remained as hard and unmoved as though they were made of horn or iron. When the queen had recovered herself, she said, 'If thou didst in truth entertain my husband in thy

house, tell me of what sort were the clothes he wore, and who he had with him for companions.'

'It is hard to remember after so long a time,' answered Ulysses, 'but I will tell thee as far as I can. Ulysses wore a purple mantle, fastened with a golden clasp which was fashioned in the form of a dog holding in his fore-paws a hunted fawn; and so marvellously was it wrought that they seemed both to be alive,—the hound seizing the fawn with firm grip, and the fawn writhing and struggling to get free. Beneath the mantle, Ulysses wore a doublet so fine and smooth that it glistened like the sun. He had with him a herald of whom he was especially fond, an old man with a fresh colour and abundance of hair,—his name was Eurybates.'

As Penelope recognised the tokens one by one, she bowed her head in assent, and when he had ended, she said, 'Even before I had heard these things I was moved with compassion for thee, stranger, but now will I have thee cared for in my house as an honoured guest, so far as it lies in my power to do so. The clothes that I gave to Ulysses before his departure were the very same that thou hast described, and the clasp I myself fastened to his cloak. Woe is me, that I shall never again see him!'

Ulysses answered, 'Let not hope depart from thy breast, O queen! I tell thee truly that he will shortly be here,—in the land of the Threspotians I heard it. His ships indeed he has lost, his companions have perished, and he himself has escaped only by swimming through the stormy sea to the land of the Pheacians, but there he was kindly received and loaded with rich presents, and the king of the Threspotians

swore to me that the ship was already put out to sea in which he was to return home. He had but gone to Dodona to listen to the rustling of the sacred oak, and take counsel of the gods as to whether he should return openly or in secret. Fear not to believe my words—by the time this month is at an end and the next begins, he will be here.’

Penelope now ordered her maidens to prepare a warm bath in which to wash the feet of the stranger. Ulysses, however, said that he would not be waited on by the young maidens, but that if there were some aged woman, who like himself had lived through a long and toilsome lifetime, he would gladly accept this service of her.

To which Penelope made answer, ‘If thou wilt, the aged Eurycleia shall wash thy feet, who bore my husband in her arms when he was a child. Make ready the bath for him, Eurycleia. Ulysses too may have grown grey before his time, through adversity, even as this stranger!’

All the time that Ulysses was speaking with her mistress, Eurycleia had listened with tears in her eyes, and as she looked at the stranger, it seemed to her that he bore a surprising resemblance to her beloved master. She was therefore rejoiced to wash his feet, and hastened to fetch the bath and the water. But while she was gone, Ulysses remembered that in bathing him she might recognise the scar of a wound which he had received when he was a boy, and thus discover who he was, and he pushed back his stool further into the darkness.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BOAR HUNT ON MOUNT PARNASSUS.

LONG years before this time, when Ulysses was but a new-born infant, it happened that his grandfather Autolycus came on a visit to Ithaca, and Eurycleia, the nurse, laid the child on his lap and begged him to give it a name. After a little consideration, Autolycus said to the parents, 'Name the boy Ulysses, and when he is grown up, send him to me, and I will give him a goodly present.'

Accordingly when Ulysses was grown up, his parents sent him on a visit to his kinsfolk, who lived far away from Ithaca. He was very kindly received by his grandparents and their sons, and they all tried to give him as much pleasure as they could during his stay with them.

The young Ulysses delighted in hunting, and his uncles took him with them to the forests of Mount Parnassus, which formed part of the domain of his grandfather. They took also sporting-dogs which were trained to run down the game, and soon they heard them barking violently from the midst of a densely thick cover. Then the hunters knew that the dogs must have tracked some wild beast to his lair, and placed themselves with their spears presented towards

the cover, in readiness to receive him when he should rush forward towards them.

For a few moments they waited with beating hearts, and then a mighty boar dashed out from the thicket, with eyes like burning coals, and bristles standing erect. Ulysses was no coward, and springing forward, he aimed at the furious animal with his spear, but the boar was quicker than he, and in a moment he had torn open his leg, inflicting a deep wound just above the knee. Ulysses would not however give in, and he hurled his spear at his enemy with such force that the point went in at the side and passed right through his body. Immediately the great beast fell to the ground with a groan, smitten to death.

The companions of Ulysses examined his wound, and found that only the flesh was torn away,—the bone was uninjured. They staunched the blood and laid cooling herbs upon the place, and then carried the boy back to his grandfather on a bier made of willow-twigs hastily woven together.

Ulysses remained with his grandparents until his wound was quite healed, and then returned home with the goodly present that had been promised him. But never, to the end of his life, did he lose the scar of the wound that he had received.

CHAPTER XLII.

ULYSSES IS RECOGNISED BY EURYCLEIA.

THE aged Eurycleia brought in the bath, and began to wash the feet and legs of the stranger, but when she touched the scar, she remained for a moment motionless and mute with astonishment, and then cried out, in an ecstasy of joy, 'Thou art Ulysses! By the scar I know thee!'

She would have imparted the joyful news to the queen, but Ulysses instantly covered her lips with his hand and said, 'Mother, thou didst carry me in thine arms when I was a child, be not now the means of my undoing. Be silent, and let no one know that I am in the house.'

'Thou mayest trust me,' replied Eurycleia below her breath. 'I will be as dumb as a stone, or a piece of iron.'

Penelope might easily have heard the first delighted exclamation of the old nurse, but Athene had distracted her mind, so that she perceived nothing. In her surprise at discovering Ulysses, Eurycleia had dropped the foot which she was holding, and this hit the side of the bath and overturned it, spilling the water all over the ground. She now fetched some more water, to finish her work; and Ulysses could feel her hands trembling for joy as she rubbed his limbs.

As soon as she had finished, Ulysses turned back towards the hearth, and Penelope, rousing herself from her musings over the past, thus addressed him: ‘Stranger,’ she said, ‘I will relate to thee a dream that came to me last night, and thou shalt tell me the interpretation of it. There are twenty geese in my house, and I take pleasure in watching them as they eat their food from the trough. Now I dreamt that there came from the mountains a great eagle, who broke all their necks one after the other, and laid them dead upon the ground, after which he soared up into the air again. And while I lay and wept over my loss, the eagle came back and sat on the roof, and said to me, “Mourn not, for this is no mere dream, but the truth, as thou wilt quickly know. The geese are the suitors, and I am thy husband who comes to destroy them, one and all.” Thus spoke the eagle, and I awoke and looked for the geese:—there they stood at their trough as usual, not one was missing.’

With a smile Ulysses replied, ‘Why dost thou seek for any further interpretation? Ulysses has himself explained thy dream to thee. He will in truth appear and destroy the suitors, giving them over to death. Not one of them will be left to disturb thy peace.’

But Penelope shook her head, and said, ‘All dreams are not alike fulfilled, for there are two gates out of which they proceed, the one of horn and the other of ivory. Those that come through the gate of ivory do but mock men; but the others that proceed from the gate of horn, to them should mortals give heed. My dream, I know, alas! is of those that will never be fulfilled, and therefore will I no longer suffer the

suitors to consume the goods of my son. I have resolved what to do, and to-morrow shall be the ill-fated day on which I will separate myself from the house of Ulysses. I will challenge the suitors to make trial of a feat of strength of which my husband was master. In the chamber above is his bow; no one could stretch the string over it so easily as he, and when he had placed twelve iron axes in a row, he could shoot an arrow straight through the handles of all without missing one. To whomsoever then of the suitors can with the greatest ease string the bow and shoot through the axe-handles, will I give my hand and let him lead me to his house as a bride. But of the house of Ulysses will I nevertheless still think continually, yea, even in my dreams.'

'Do even as thou hast said, O queen!' replied the stranger, 'and delay not, for before the suitors can string the bow and perform the feat of skill, Ulysses himself will have returned to his home.'

They had talked until it was now quite late, and Penelope rose from her seat to go to her sleeping-chamber. She would have had a soft bed prepared for the stranger, as for an honoured guest, but Ulysses declined, saying, 'Since I left Crete and have been the butt of misfortune, I have not cared to sleep in any comfortable bed; I will make for myself a couch upon the ground.'

He went out into the corridor, and spread upon the ground some fleeces with an ox-skin over them; upon these he laid himself down, and the house dame came and threw over him a warm covering.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE HERDSMAN PHILOETIUS.

BUT Ulysses could not sleep, for his mind was filled with agitating thoughts. Fierce anger took possession of his breast as he dwelt upon the outrages of the suitors and the sufferings of his wife; and again he was filled with anxiety as he considered the danger of the coming conflict and its possible consequences.

He was tossing restlessly from side to side, when suddenly the goddess Athene stood before him, and said, 'Why art thou thus wakeful, Ulysses, filled with unquiet thoughts? Is not this thy house for which thou hast so long yearned? and here is thy wife, and a son such as any father might wish for.'

'Truly hast thou spoken,' replied Ulysses, 'but how shall I get the better of this host of suitors? and even should I succeed in this, how can I hope to escape the vengeance of their kinsmen?'

'Many a one in his time of need can look for help only to a mortal like himself,' was the answer of Athene, 'but thou hast a goddess for thy protector. If thou wert surrounded by fifty hosts, yet couldst thou with my assistance get the better of them all.' With these words she disappeared, leaving Ulysses inspired with fresh courage, and he soon became calm and fell asleep.

Early in the morning, however, he was awakened by the loud weeping of Penelope; he could hear it so distinctly, that for a moment, before he was well awake, he thought she was beside his bed. He sprang up and raised his hands to Zeus, praying thus: 'Father Zeus, if ye gods are indeed purposed to put an end to these my sufferings, send me here in the house some word of good omen, and let a sign appear from heaven.'

Scarcely had Ulysses ended his prayer when there came a sound of rolling thunder. This was the sign for which he had prayed, and he rejoiced to know that he had been heard. Neither was there wanting a word of encouragement from human lips. In the adjoining room, the hand-mill had been at work all night, grinding flour for the feast of the suitors on the following day. Twelve women had to perform this labour, and all but one had now finished their work. The weakest of them, however, still remained; she had not as yet been able to get through the task assigned to her.

When she heard the thunder, she paused from her work for a moment, and said, 'O Father Zeus, thy thunder peals, though there is no cloud to be seen in the sky; this must surely be for a sign to some mortal who has prayed to thee in his distress. Oh, grant to me also the fulfilment of my prayer, and may this be the last meal which the suitors shall eat in this house, that I may no longer have to toil on their behalf!' Ulysses heard what she said, and rejoiced the more, knowing that the gods were minded to help him.

On this day, the citizens were to celebrate a feast in honour of Apollo, and the greater number of them

went out to a sacred grove beyond the city, to sacrifice to the god. The suitors preferred however to feast as usual in the house of Ulysses, and all the morning the serving-maids and serving-men were busy preparing for their reception. The maidens swept the floor of the hall, placed white coverings upon the seats, wiped the tables with damp sponges, cleansed the cups and mixing-bowls, and as many as twenty of them were sent to the spring to fetch the water that would be needed for the day. Then the men-servants of the suitors made their appearance, and employed themselves in splitting great quantities of wood ; for the fire at which the meat was to be roasted for so many guests would need to be kept well supplied.

Ulysses went out unto the court-yard, and saw the herdsmen bringing in the animals which they had to provide every day for the feast of the suitors. The first to arrive was Eumaeus, who greeted him heartily, well pleased to see him again. Then the spiteful goat-herd Melanthius appeared, and again gave vent to his dislike of the stranger, saying angrily, 'Art thou still about here, burdening the house with thine unwished-for presence? We two will not take leave one of the other without coming to blows, for thou bearest thyself as if there were no other banquet to which thou mightest betake thyself in order to beg.' But Ulysses turned away from him, and made no reply.

A third to arrive was Philcetus, a herdsman from the mainland, who had come across the sea, bringing some of his cattle and goats to be slaughtered. The stranger whom he saw standing by Eumaeus, aroused his interest, and he asked the swineherd, 'Who is this

unhappy man? Verily he has the appearance of a king. Ye gods! men have indeed enough of sorrow when even kings can be reduced to such misery!’

He stretched out his hand kindly to Ulysses, and said, ‘May fortune again smile upon thee, notwithstanding that thou art now in evil case! As I look on thee, I cannot but think of Ulysses, and my eyes are filled with tears, for I fear lest he too may now be wandering in the garb of a beggar, even if he is not altogether cut off from the light of the sun. If indeed he has already reached the Land of the Dead, then it is so much the worse for me.

‘I was still young when he placed me in charge of his flocks upon the mainland, and now they are so prosperous that there is nothing more to desire. Yet I can take no pleasure in them, for they profit none but the suitors, who, living in the palace and gorging themselves with food and wine, dishonour the son of my master, heedless of the wrath of the gods. Often have I turned it over in my mind whether I would not rather leave the country and go to some other king, for life here is no longer to be endured,—but then I hope again that my beloved master may yet come back, and requite the evil deeds of the suitors.’

Ulysses rejoiced with all his heart at the fidelity of Philoetius, and said, ‘Do not abandon hope. Ulysses will yet return and punish the suitors. Yea, before thou hast left the palace, will he be here.’

‘Should that be the case, O friend,’ returned the other with gleaming eyes, ‘thou shalt see whether there yet remains any strength in my arms!’ Then, raising his hands, he prayed aloud to the gods to hasten the coming of his master, and cause him to return with all speed.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE WARNING OF THE SOOTHSAYER.

BEFORE coming to the feast, the suitors assembled in a lonely place to enquire of the gods whether they would succeed in their design against the life of Telemachus. The omen was unfavourable. An eagle flew by above their heads, not from the right side, but from the left, and this was a sign of coming evil. Then said Amphinomus, 'Ye see that the gods are opposed to the undertaking; we must give it up.' The rest agreed; and presently they returned to the palace, and seated themselves at the banquet.

When the feast began, Telemachus told the servants to place a stool for the stranger upon the threshold, and said aloud, so that the suitors might hear, 'Sit thou there, and eat and drink, even as we do. Be not afraid of any insult or ill-treatment, for I will protect thee. This is no house that is common alike to all; it is the property of Ulysses and of myself. Restrain yourselves, ye suitors, from unseemly conduct, and avoid all strife.'

The suitors bit their lips in silence; gladly would they have punished Telemachus for speaking so courageously, but they were afraid, remembering the unfavourable omen.

When the meat was served round, Ulysses received his share like the rest, and eat it, sitting quietly in his place. But the meal was not to pass without further insult. One of the suitors, a man named Ctesippus, was annoyed that the beggar should be served just like himself, and he thought it well to make an offensive joke. 'My friends,' he said, 'it is quite right that the guests of Telemachus should take their share of all that we have. I will also give something to the stranger, and perhaps he may find among the menials someone lower than himself on whom he can in turn bestow it as a stranger's present.'

He had just then stripped the meat from an ox's foot and placed the bone in a basket which stood on the table for this purpose; and he now took the bone and flung it at Ulysses. It did not hit him however, for Ulysses turned aside his head, and the bone went past him and struck the wall.

Telemachus felt his blood boil, and he said, 'Truly it is well for thee, Ctesippus, that thou didst not hit the stranger, otherwise would my spear have gone through thy body, and instead of a wedding-feast, thy father would have had to prepare for thee a funeral banquet. Rather would I be smitten to death by you suitors, than endure any longer to see my guests ill-treated, and allow you to go to any lengths to which your insolence may prompt you.'

At the same moment Athene wrought a sign, foreshadowing the approaching destruction of the suitors. Against their will, their faces were all distorted with immoderate laughter, and the meat which they were about to raise to their mouths looked as if it had been

dipped in blood,—but they themselves knew nothing of this, only the others saw it.

Now there was a stranger in the hall who belonged to a family of soothsayers; he had come to Telemachus to beg for his protection, for he had been driven from his home. To his senses, which were keener than those of ordinary men, other signs of horror soon became apparent, and he cried aloud, ‘Ye unhappy men, what is this that I see hanging over you? Your heads and limbs are wrapped in darkness; I hear you lamenting; the tears stream down your cheeks; all the walls are dripping with blood. The door and the court-yard are crowded with shadows hurrying to the Lower World; the sun has disappeared from the heavens; darkness is spread all around.’

The suitors had no foreboding that death and destruction were awaiting them, and at these words they only laughed. ‘The stranger has lost his senses,’ cried Eurymachus. ‘Up, one of you, and help him to the door; lead him moreover carefully to the market-place, for here he can see nothing but darkness.’

But the seer answered, ‘I need no one to lead me. I have sound eyes and ears and feet, and my thoughts are as clear as ever they were. But, unaccompanied, will I get me away, for I see evil approaching which none of you shall escape.’ With these words he left the hall and the house.

When he was gone, the suitors began to tease Telemachus, and one of them said, ‘Thou art out of luck with thy guests, Telemachus; one of them is an

idle beggar, a sluggard who cares for nothing but eating and drinking; and the other is pleased to amuse himself with playing the seer. Thou wouldst do better to ship them both off and sell them as slaves, then mightest thou at least gain something by them.'

CHAPTER XLV.

ULYSSES MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO EUMAEUS AND PHILOETIUS.

WHILE this was going on, Ulysses saw Eumaeus and Philoetius leave the hall. He followed them into the court-yard and said to them, 'If perchance some god were suddenly to bring Ulysses to his home, what course would ye take? Would ye side with your master, or with the suitors?'

With beaming faces, they replied that they would stand by their master with all their heart and with all their strength. Then said Ulysses, 'Look at me, for I am he, your master. I am Ulysses, who in the twentieth year have come again to my home. I have proved you to be faithful servants who have looked and longed for my return, and ye shall not fail of your reward; if with the help of the gods I overcome the suitors, ye shall both be as dear to me as if ye were the brothers of Telemachus. And that there may be no doubt that I am indeed Ulysses, see here the scar of the wound which the boar once dealt me when I was visiting my grandfather.'

The two herdsmen were deeply moved, and threw themselves upon their master, embracing his face and

hands with tumultuous joy. Ulysses also gave expression to the warm affection he felt for them, but there was no time to spare for indulging in prolonged emotion.

He desired them not to appear to know anything, lest they should rouse the suspicion of some one who might warn the suitors. He also assigned a task to each of them. To Eumaeus he said, 'Bring me the bow when I demand it, and then go and tell the women to fasten the doors that shut off their apartments from the hall, and to remain quietly at their work, even though they hear sounds of tumult and groaning.' Then turning to Philoetius, 'At the same moment,' he added, 'must thou go out into the court-yard, and bar the door, that no one may be able to force an entrance from the street.'

After this, they returned separately to the hall, first Ulysses, and then the two herdsmen, one by one.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE BOW OF ULYSSES.

WHILE the suitors were feasting in the hall, Penelope had gone with two of her maidens to the upper chamber, where all the most valued possessions of the house of Ulysses were stored. Here were chests full of beautiful garments, and precious vessels in abundance, of gold and bronze, which had been received as presents from strangers, and were put by, ready to be given again in like manner. Here too was the great bow of Ulysses.

It had been given to him by a famous archer who himself inherited it from great men long since dead, and Ulysses had set great store by it, and never took it with him when he went away to war, but only used it at home for performing feats of strength and skill in archery. It was kept in the upper chamber, in a wooden case, which hung from a nail in the wall.

Penelope took down the case, and, seating herself, she opened it, and her tears fell as she looked at the bow, which reminded her of the happy time long ago when her husband was by her side. Presently however she checked herself, and went down to the hall, carrying the bow and the quiver full of arrows, whilst her maidens followed with the twelve axes that belonged to it.

The suitors were astonished when they saw the queen standing in the doorway with the bow in her hand, and all were silent. She said to them, 'Ye sue for me, and will that I should choose one of you for my husband. Very well then, prove to me which is the best man among you. Whichever of you can the most easily stretch the string over this bow which Ulysses loved to use, and shoot his arrow without fail through the handles of the twelve axes, him will I accept as my husband, and will accompany to his house.'

She gave the bow and arrows, as she spoke, to Eumæus, and told him to take them to the suitors. At the sight of the favourite bow of their master, both he and Philoetius were constrained to weep, but Antinoüs spoke roughly to them, saying, 'Why do ye thus weep, making the heart of the queen heavier than it is already? Either cease to behave like women, or else leave the hall.' Then turning to the suitors he added, 'We will all make trial of the bow, but it will be no easy matter to stretch the string across it. Not every man can do as Ulysses did.' But in his heart he hoped that he himself would succeed.

Which was the harder, to stretch the string over the bow, or to shoot straight through all the twelve axe-handles, it is difficult to say; both alike were feats only to be accomplished by a master hand. In those days it was customary, if a bow were not going to be used for some time, to unfasten one end of the string in order to save the strain upon it, and when the bow was again needed, it was necessary to bend it down, and at the same time stretch the string, until the loop at the end had caught the hook at the extremity of the bow.

The stronger the bow, the harder it was to bend, and the bow of Ulysses was of quite exceptional strength.

While the suitors were looking at the bow, Telemachus said, 'I am astonished at myself. My dear mother proposes to leave the house, and yet this causes me no pain. But let me first myself make trial of the bow. If I am able to shoot even as my father, then can I also protect his house, and there is no occasion for my mother to leave it.'

As he spoke, he laid aside his sword and mantle, and began to prepare the hall for the contest. In order that the axes might be placed correctly, he first drew a narrow straight line from the door to the opposite wall, and along this line dug a trench in which to set them. The floor of the hall was not of wood, but was simply made of earth well flattened down.

Telemachus placed the axes in the trench at equal distances, and stamped down the earth round them, that they might stand securely. When he had finished, he took the bow and tried to string it. Three times he put forth his utmost strength, and each time he came a little nearer to success. The fourth time he might have done it, but his father beckoned to him to try no more, and Telemachus put down the bow, saying to the suitors that he was too weak to bend it. He asked if either of them would undertake to do better, and Antinoüs said that they should all try their luck, one by one, in the order in which the wine was passed round.

The first of the suitors who made the attempt, quickly perceived that he would never be able to string the bow, and said despondingly, 'There is not one of us but will have to go elsewhere in search of a wife.'

But Antinoüs upbraided him, and replied that though he might be too weak, there were better men than he among the suitors, who would not fail to accomplish the task. He thought it well, nevertheless, to bid Melanthius kindle a fire and fetch a ball of lard, with which to grease the bow and make it more pliable. After this, one suitor after another made trial of the bow, putting forth his utmost strength, but all in vain.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ULYSSES MAKES TRIAL OF THE BOW.

By this time the bow had almost gone the whole round of the suitors; all but Eurymachus and Antinoüs had tried in vain to string it. It was now the turn of Eurymachus, who greased it carefully, turning it round and round before the fire, and then with a mighty effort tried his utmost to bend it; but he soon perceived that the bride was not for him. In deep mortification he cried aloud, 'It is not the loss of the marriage that I chiefly mourn, for there are many other women in the cities of Greece, but because the people will say that the suitors are far from being able to accomplish that which Ulysses did—this it is that vexes me the most.'

Antinoüs had also begun to lose confidence, and he said, 'This is not a good day for the trial. To-day the citizens are making a feast to Apollo, and who could expect to have success with the bow on the day sacred to the archer-god? To-morrow let us offer sacrifices to him, and then renew the contest. Now is the time for eating and drinking.' To this all the suitors agreed, and they sat down again to the tables, the servants bringing them food and wine.

Then Ulysses rose, and said, 'With your leave, ye suitors, as ye have for this day given over the contest, I will venture to make trial of the bow. I would fain see how much there yet remains to me of my former strength.'

At this Antinoüs was much annoyed, and he said, 'Thou shameless man, is it not enough honour for thee to sit among us as a guest and be permitted to listen to our talk,—a privilege granted to no other—and now wilt thou make trial of the bow? Thy words proceed from fulness of wine. If thou shouldst succeed in bending the bow, we would send thee, I swear, to the cruel king Echetus, who would maim and torture thee. Remain thou quiet, eat and drink, and think not to measure thyself against younger men.'

But Penelope, who was already interested in the stranger, interposed and said, 'Dost thou think, Antinoüs, that if the stranger were to succeed with the bow, I should take him as my husband?'

'That is not what we fear, O queen,' returned Eurymachus, 'but it would be an eternal disgrace to us if it were to be said among the people that a stray beggar had accomplished that which the suitors were unable to perform.'

But the queen replied, 'Your reputation is not such that ye need be so much concerned to preserve it unblemished. The stranger is now indeed in pitiful case, but he has the air of belonging to a noble family. Pass over to him the bow. If he is able to string it, I will give him a mantle and doublet, and also a sword and spear, and will send him away in a ship, whithersoever he will.'

Then said Telemachus, 'With regard to the bow, I alone shall decide, and if I choose to give it to the stranger, there is no one here who has a right to hinder me. But thou, dear mother, go away to thy distaff, and keep thy maidens employed at their work. I will settle what is to be done about the bow.' Penelope was filled with astonishment at the resolute speech of her son, and she did as he desired.

Eumaeus took up the bow, and was about to carry it past the suitors to give it to the beggar, but they called out to him, 'If thou doest that, we will kill thee, and throw thee to thine own dogs to devour.' Eumaeus became alarmed and put down the bow again; but on the other hand, Telemachus cried out, 'If thou doest it not, I will hunt thee out of the house.'

Thus threatened on both sides, Eumaeus remembered his duty, and gave the bow and quiver to Ulysses. Then he went to Eurycleia, and told her that Telemachus desired that the doors leading from the hall to the women's chambers should be shut. At the same time Philoetius went out into the court-yard and barred the gate; and then they both returned to the hall.

Ulysses, meanwhile, was turning the bow from side to side and examining it carefully, to see if any worms had found their way into the horn of which it was made. One of the suitors remarked that he must surely be well accustomed to handle a bow. 'Perhaps,' he said, 'he has a similar one of his own at home, or maybe he is set on making one like it.' Another said to his neighbour, 'He will never be able to string it, but will only make himself a laughing-stock.'

They had but little time however for gibing, for

in a very few moments they perceived to their dismay that Ulysses had already bent the bow and strung it, just as lightly as a musician draws a string over his lyre and winds it up to the right pitch. Then, in order to try whether it was fastened tightly enough, he held the bow in one hand, and with two fingers of the other he played upon the string, which gave out a sweet sound like the voice of a swallow.

The suitors were pale with fear, but Ulysses was full of joy at finding that the bow and the string were alike in good condition. At this moment a peal of thunder sounded through the hall, a token sent by Zeus for the encouragement of Ulysses, and he rejoiced the more. He took an arrow and laid it upon the bow-string; then aiming through the centre of the first axe-handle, he pulled the string, and the arrow flew straight through all the twelve handles and lodged in the wall beyond.

Then he turned to Telemachus, and said, 'Thy poor guest has not disgraced thee, Telemachus. No great effort did it cost me to string the bow, neither have I failed to hit my mark. My strength is even as it was of old. But now, while it is still light, it is time to prepare the supper for the suitors.' As he spoke, he made a sign with his eyes, and Telemachus, who understood him, seized his sword and spear, and hastened to place himself by the side of his father that the struggle might now begin.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SUITORS BEGINS.

THEN Ulysses threw off his mantle and leaped up on to the threshold. The bow and quiver were still in his hands, and the arrows he poured out at his feet,—all but one, which he laid upon the bow-string. ‘Ye suitors,’ he cried, with flashing eyes, ‘the trial of the bow has proved that I am no novice, and now will I see whether Apollo will enable me to hit a mark at which no one has aimed as yet.’

As he spoke, he let fly the arrow at Antinoüs, who was in the act of raising with both hands a double-eared cup to his lips, and thinking of nothing so little as of death. How should he conceive that one solitary stranger would venture to attack him, surrounded as he was with a host of friends? He fell back, dropping the cup, and overturning the table in front of him with his foot, as he sank lifeless to the ground.

The blood streamed forth, defiling the bread and roasted flesh, and the suitors rose tumultuously from their seats, crying out with one voice to Ulysses, ‘This shall be thy last shot, for he whom thou hast slain was the most excellent man in all Ithaca, and now shalt thou be food for the vultures.’ They looked round for the arms that had formerly hung in the hall, that they might

send a spear through the beggar's body,—but the walls were bare.

The suitors had no suspicion that Ulysses had killed Antinoüs otherwise than by accident, but he quickly undeceived them. With eyes like flame, and in a voice of thunder, he cried, 'Ye dogs! who thought that I would never come back from Troy, and wasted my goods, wooing my wife when I was yet alive, ye have persisted in your iniquities, fearing the punishment neither of gods nor men; but now is death awaiting you one and all.'

At these words the suitors became paler than before, but the cunning Eurymachus quickly recovered himself, and said, 'If thou art indeed Ulysses who has returned, I cannot blame thee for thine anger, for true it is that many evil deeds have been done by the suitors. But Antinoüs, he who was in truth to blame for them all, lies dead upon the ground before thee. His object was less to gain the hand of thy wife than to make himself king of Ithaca, for which cause he devised all this wickedness, plotting even to kill thy son. Spare thou the rest of us, and for all that we have consumed of thy goods, we will make thee a full return.'

But Ulysses answered, 'If ye should one and all offer me, not only all that ye possess, but all that may ever come to you, I would not rest until ye had paid the full penalty of all your crimes. This choice alone remains to you,—whether ye will defend yourselves, or meet death without resistance.'

Then Eurymachus cried out to the rest, 'Ye hear what he says—he will shoot us with his arrows until he has killed us all. Defend yourselves therefore; draw

your swords, and hold up the tables in front of you as shields; so let us all set upon him at once, and perhaps we may be able to drive him from off the threshold, and call to our friends in the city to come and help us. Then there will soon be an end of his shooting.'

He drew his sword, and snatching up the nearest table, he sprang towards Ulysses with a cry; but at the same moment he received an arrow in the breast, and fell to the ground, dragging down upon him other tables covered with food and wine.

After him Amphinomus tried to overpower Ulysses, but Telemachus, who was behind him, hit him in the back with his spear, and he fell down dead also. Thus he met his doom, because he had neglected to attend to the warning of Ulysses on the previous day.¹

¹ See p. 178.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE PUNISHMENT OF MELANTHIUS.

TELEMACHUS now went up to his father and said, 'I will go to the upper chamber where we put by the arms, and fetch down what we need;' and Ulysses replied, 'Fetch them quickly, my son, before I have exhausted my arrows.' Telemachus immediately armed himself and the two herdsmen, and brought down also weapons for his father, with which Ulysses equipped himself when he had shot all his arrows.

A very large number of the suitors were still alive, but they were at a disadvantage, for while Ulysses, Telemachus, and the two herdsmen were completely armed, they had neither helmets, swords nor spears. Melanthius perceived this, and said to them, 'I will bring you weapons, as many as you need.' Through a narrow door between two of the pillars, there was a way up to the chamber in the upper storey where the arms had been stowed away the night before, and Melanthius, who had guessed where they were, soon brought down twelve shields and as many spears and helmets for the suitors.

Ulysses was greatly concerned when he saw the suitors arming themselves, and he said to Telemachus, 'How

have the suitors come by these arms? Either some faithless maid-servant has brought them down from the upper chamber, or else it is Melanthius who is helping our enemies.'

'O father!' replied Telemachus, 'it is my fault, for I did but close the door of the chamber, and did not lock it. But thou, Eumaeus, watch Melanthius to see if he climbs up thither again, for it must certainly be he who is helping the suitors.'

It was not long before Melanthius again disappeared from the hall, and the two herdsmen were sent after him. They found him in the chamber, turning over the weapons; he felt sure that his friends would conquer if they were properly armed, and was about to hurry down again with an old shield and helmet of the time of Laertes, when the two herdsmen, who had placed themselves unperceived one on each side of the door, seized him, as he was about to leave the room, by both his arms.

Thus taken by surprise, Melanthius trembled all over with fright and dropped his booty, and the two men dragged him back into the chamber. They tied his feet and hands behind his back with a tight rope, and then strung him up to one of the beams of the roof. Eumaeus also mocked him, and said, 'Thou hast a very comfortable bed there, Melanthius, but forget not to rise at day-break, to bring the fattest of thy goats to thy beloved suitors.' Then the two herdsmen hastened back to the hall, leaving Melanthius hanging from the roof in great agony.

CHAPTER L.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SUITORS.

JUST at this moment, there appeared at the door of the hall, Mentor, the former friend of Ulysses, and both sides appealed to him to join them. Ulysses was full of joy at seeing his friend, and cried out, 'Help us, Mentor, and do not forget that we have been comrades from our youth.' On the other hand the suitors said, 'Mentor, if thou allowest thyself to be beguiled by Ulysses, we will slay thee also, and divide thy goods between us, and we will drive away thy wife, thy sons and thy daughters from their home.'

But Mentor placed himself by the side of Ulysses, and calling to his memory the brave deeds he had wrought before Troy, he assured him that he would now also triumph over his enemies. Ulysses at once divined that it must be his ever-faithful protector, the goddess Athene, who had assumed the form of Mentor, and he was right. In another moment, Mentor had disappeared, and in the form of a swallow, Athene flew up to one of the rafters of the roof, from which she could watch the struggle.

The suitors were still hopeful that through their great superiority in numbers they would be able to get the better of Ulysses. The bravest of those who

had as yet escaped death was Agelaüs, and he urged on his companions to fight valiantly, saying, 'Soon he must give in, Mentor has already withdrawn himself, and we have only four enemies to deal with. Hurl now your spears,—not all at once, but ye six first who stand in front.'

They obeyed his directions, but Athene turned aside the spears that they should do no injury to Ulysses and his friends; one went through the door, another struck against one of the door-posts;—all failed to reach their mark.

Then the other side took aim, and each of their spears killed a man. Fresh horror fell upon the suitors; but they dragged away the corpses of their friends into the background, that they might draw out the spears and use them again. Those who had not already shot made another effort, and again six spears were hurled, but most of them went quite astray, and those that hit the enemy did but graze their skin.

Again it was the turn of Ulysses and his friends, and again the number of the slain equalled the number of the spears hurled. One of those that fell was Ctesippus, who had thrown the ox-foot at Ulysses,¹ and Philoetius, by whose spear he had been struck, cried out, 'Take that as a return for thy stranger's present.'

Now Athene, who had stationed herself on one of the rafters, had with her the Aegis, that invisible but irresistible weapon of the gods, with which they were able in a moment to confound their enemies by striking terror into their hearts. At this moment she raised the Aegis, and the suitors, smitten with despair,

¹ See p. 196.

threw down their arms and ran wildly about the hall like a herd of cattle maddened by a pursuing gadfly. The others had now an easy task, for the suitors made no further attempt at resistance, and they had but to slay them one by one.

The soothsayer of the suitors hoped to save his life by piteous entreaties. He clasped the knees of Ulysses, and said, 'I have never injured thee nor any of thy people, and many a time have I implored the suitors to cease from their evil ways. I was but the soothsayer. Have pity on me, and slay me not with the rest!'

But Ulysses looked darkly at him, as he answered, 'Many a time, if thou wast their soothsayer, must thou have called upon the gods, with the prayer that they would cause me to perish in a far land. Thou art worthy of death, even as thy friends.' And as he spoke, he plunged his sword into the throat of the miserable man.

The singer Phemius stood trembling in a corner beside his lyre, and now he also came forward and threw himself at the feet of Ulysses, saying, 'Spare me, I entreat thee! for it would but bring evil upon thine own head if thou shouldst slay the singer whose gift of song comes to him from the gods themselves. Not of mine own will did I serve the suitors, but because they compelled me, and to this Telemachus can testify.'

'It is true,' replied Telemachus. 'Kill him not, father, for he is guiltless, and so is also the herald Medon, who took care of me when I was a child. Spare

him likewise, if perchance he has not already fallen in the struggle.'

In his fear, Medon had crept behind a high seat, and covered himself with an ox-skin that he might not be seen. He now came out, and embracing the knees of Telemachus, said in a timid voice, 'Friend, here I am; speak to thy father that, in his wrath, he slay me not with the suitors.'

Ulysses smiled and spoke to him reassuringly. 'Fear not,' he said, 'Telemachus has saved thy life, that thou mayest know for thyself, and tell the same to others, how that it is far more profitable to do well than to do evil. Go, thou and Phemius, into the court-yard and remain there.' They did not wait for a second bidding, but went at once to the altar of Zeus that stood in the court-yard, and seated themselves upon the steps, that they might be in safety should Ulysses in his fury be tempted to forget the promise he had made to them.

Ulysses looked into all the corners to see if any of the suitors had hidden themselves away, but he found no one—all were by this time lying dead upon the floor. He now told his son to knock at the barred doors of the women's chambers, and call in the aged Eurycleia. When she entered the hall and saw Ulysses standing among the corpses, covered with blood, she was about to cry aloud for joy, but Ulysses stopped her, saying, 'Rejoice in silence, mother, for hateful to the gods is loud exultation in the presence of death. This is the punishment with which the gods have requited the suitors for their wickedness. They had regard for none, neither for good men nor for bad, and therefore have they come to a shameful end.'

He then asked her which of the women had been faithless and had taken the part of the suitors, and she answered, 'In thy house there are fifty maidens; the greater number of them have honoured thy wife and myself, but twelve have allied themselves to the suitors, choosing rather to share in their life of pleasure than to fulfil their tasks obediently.'

Ulysses bade her send the twelve faithless maidens into the hall. They had already been dismayed by the sounds of tumult and groaning, and guessed in part what was going on; but when they came into the hall and saw their friends lying dead in pools of blood, it was far more horrible than they had imagined, and they broke out into bitter weeping and lamentation.

They were not allowed, however, to give way to their grief, but were obliged to help Telemachus and the two herdsmen to carry the corpses out into the court-yard. One upon another the bodies of the suitors were piled in heaps, but their souls were conducted through the air by Hermes to the Land of the Dead.

The faithless maidens had then to take damp sponges and cleanse the tables and chairs from the stains of blood, and to scrape the floor with spades. When this was accomplished, Telemachus and the two herdsmen drove them into a corner of the court-yard, and hanged them all with one long rope. Thus they were punished for their evil deeds, and Melanthius also was brought down from the upper chamber, and put to death.

After this, the men washed their hands and feet, and returned to the hall. Ulysses told them to kindle a fire upon the hearth and bring some sulphur to purify

the air, for the house was defiled by the spilling of blood and unfit for gods or men to inhabit, and it required to be purified with burning sulphur.

He then desired that the other women, who had been faithful, should be sent for; and as they entered the hall, one by one, they greeted him with the utmost joy.

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CHAPTER LI.

EURYCLEIA CARRIES THE GOOD NEWS TO PENELOPE.

ALL this time, Penelope was lying in her chamber, wrapped in a deep slumber which had been shed upon her by the gods. Eurycleia was now commissioned to awaken her, and she hastened upstairs, stumbling more than once in her eagerness to tell the good news.

She ran to the queen's bedside, and called to her, 'Wake up, Penelope, dear child, and see for thyself the fulfilment of thy heart's desire. Ulysses is here, and has overcome the proud suitors.'

Penelope opened her eyes and looked at her in astonishment. 'Thou art beside thyself,' she answered. 'Why dost thou mock my bitter sorrow? Better hadst thou let me sleep on, for sweeter slumber I have never enjoyed since the day that Ulysses left me. If it had been any other than thou, I would have rebuked her severely for this ill-timed mirth, but thou art protected by thine age.'

'I mock thee not, dear child,' answered Eurycleia. 'Ulysses is here without a doubt; he is the stranger whom everyone scorned. Telemachus knew this long ago, but he kept it secret.'

At these words Penelope sprang up and put her arms round the neck of the old nurse, shedding tears

of joy. But soon she began to doubt, and said, ‘But even if it is true that he has come back, how could he alone get the better of all the suitors?’

Eurycleia answered, ‘I saw nothing, but I heard the groans of the dying. We women sat together in a corner at the back of the house, in great fear and anxiety. The doors leading to the hall were barred until Telemachus called me; then I went in, and found Ulysses standing amidst the corpses with a joyous countenance. Now they are all lying in the court-yard, and Ulysses is burning brimstone to purify the house. Come down and rejoice after thy long sorrow, for Ulysses is indeed at home again; he has made himself known to thy son, and has punished the wicked suitors.’

But Penelope was not yet satisfied, and she said, ‘Dear mother, do not rejoice too hastily. Thou knowest well, that though the return of Ulysses would give joy to all, yet to none could it bring such happiness as to myself and my son. But it cannot be as thou sayest. Some god must, in his wrath, have come to punish the suitors for their insolence, but my dear husband has not been permitted to return to his home. He has died in misery in some far land.’

Eurycleia could not understand her mistress, and was vexed with her for doubting the good news. ‘What is this that thou sayest?’ she cried impatiently. ‘Thy husband is sitting below beside the hearth, and thou art unable to believe that he is here! By a sure token I know him, as I will tell thee,—even by the scar of the wound that he received in the boar hunt. I saw it when I washed his feet, and wanted to tell thee, but he would not have it so. Come down, and if I am

deceiving thee, thou mayest put me to death with torments.'

'Mother,' replied Penelope, 'thou knowest not the ways of the Immortals. But let us go down to my son. I will see the slaughtered suitors and him who has slain them.'

CHAPTER LII.

ULYSSES AND PENELOPE.

PENELOPE went down to the hall, and seated herself near the hearth. Ulysses was sitting by the wall opposite, leaning against the pillar, and waiting, with his eyes cast on the ground, until she should speak to him. But she remained silent, turning these things over and over in her mind; now it seemed as if it must be Ulysses himself who was sitting there so near her, and then again it seemed as if it could not be.

All had expected to see Penelope beside herself with rapture, opening her arms to her husband and embracing him with tears of joy; but instead of this, she preserved an unbroken silence, and continued to sit apart in the hall, as if she had no concern with the stranger. Above all, Telemachus was troubled and astonished, and he said to her indignantly, ‘Mother, why dost thou remain at such a distance from my father, vouchsafing to him not one single word? No other woman in the world would behave in such a manner if her husband had returned to her after twenty years, when she had given up all hope of ever seeing him again. Thou must carry a stone in thy breast rather than a heart!’

‘If he is indeed Ulysses,’ replied Penelope, ‘we shall soon understand one another. There are tokens which are known to none but us two.’

At these words, Ulysses turned to his son with a smile, and said, ‘Let her make trial of me; she will then be convinced of the truth. Perhaps she despises me now, on account of these ragged garments which are covered with dust. But we must not neglect to take thought for our safety; for the danger which threatens us is great. He who slays a single man, even a poor man and one that has but few friends, must leave his home and his family in order to escape from vengeance. But we have killed the flower and pride of the city, the most distinguished young men in the state. We must take care that the news of what we have done is kept from coming to the ears of the people until we have had time to leave the city. Let us, then, deceive the citizens. Put thou on thy festal robes, and let the maidens deck themselves as if for a feast; bid Phemius also bring his lyre, and let us have playing, and singing and dancing, that the citizens may hear it, and think that a wedding is being celebrated in the house.’

The instructions of Ulysses were carried out, and many of the citizens who passed the house that evening, said to themselves, ‘This then is the marriage of the queen. At last she has become faithless to Ulysses, and has made up her mind to wait for him no longer.’

Meanwhile Ulysses had caused himself to be bathed and anointed, and had dressed himself in princely garments; and Athene restored to him the full beauty

and stateliness of appearance which he had possessed before she turned him into a beggar. After this he again seated himself opposite to his wife, and said to her, 'Thou hast a heart of stone, above all other women. Now, mother,' he added, turning to Eurycleia, 'do thou prepare my bed for me, that I may rest. Her heart is as hard as iron.'

'Remove his bed,' said Penelope, 'outside the sleeping chamber, and spread soft coverings over it.'

She looked hard at the stranger as she spoke, for this was the test by which she intended to prove whether he was indeed her beloved Ulysses or not. If he had let her words pass without perceiving that there was anything strange in what she said, she would have been convinced that it was not her husband, but some other, whom the gods had permitted to take his form and overcome the suitors, in order to deceive her.

But Ulysses replied with indignation, 'How can they remove the bed? Only a god to whom all things are possible could accomplish that feat,—the strongest man would inevitably fail. For, in the place now occupied by the sleeping chamber, there once stood a mighty olive-tree with a trunk as thick as a pillar. Round this tree I built the stone walls of the chamber, and when I had made an end of enclosing it, I cut down the trunk to the height of a bed-post, and fashioned to it the remaining part of the bed; I adorned it also with gold and silver and ivory. It cannot be,—I will not admit that is possible—that the bed has been sawn away from the trunk and removed to some other place.'

Penelope was unable to restrain her emotion, or

remain quietly in her place, when she heard the stranger speak with such full knowledge of the secrets of Ulysses. She was now sure, beyond a doubt, that it was indeed her long-lost husband who had returned to her, and the tears streamed from her eyes as she ran towards him and twined her arms round his neck, kissing him over and over again. 'Now I am certain of thee,' she cried, as soon as she was able to speak, 'for thou hast told me the secret of our bed, which is known to no other but to us two and to the old servant who came hither with me from my father's house.'

There was no longer any check to the rejoicings of the whole household, and great indeed was their joy. That morning's sun had dawned upon a household oppressed with care and sorrow that seemed well-nigh hopeless, but a few short hours had changed their grief into gladness and exultation.

CHAPTER LIII.

ULYSSES AND LAERTES.

THE next morning, Ulysses rose early from his couch, and awoke Telemachus and the two herdsmen; and when they had all provided themselves with arms, they left the city. As they went through the streets they met many of the townspeople, but they were not perceived by them, for Athene had covered them with a cloud.

They were soon on the road leading towards the house in the country where the aged Laertes was now living; for Ulysses had a great longing to see his father again, and he wished also to avoid the first outbreak of fury, when the citizens should become aware of the slaughter of the suitors. When they reached the place, he desired the others to go forward towards the house, but he himself stayed behind to seek out his father, whom he expected to find in the garden.

Since the aged Laertes had been driven by his grief for his lost son to leave the city, he had taken up his abode in a mean little house with a small piece of ground attached to it. Instead of living as formerly in kingly state, his condition was now that of a poor slave. From morning till night he toiled at hard work, and

refused all the luxuries to which he had been accustomed in happier days. An old steward, Dolius by name, lived in the homestead with his six sons; and his aged wife waited upon the grey-haired king. Gladly would she have tried to make life pleasant to him, but Laertes would only accept the most indispensable services;—a miserable bed, poor fare and dirty clothing, such was the mode of life on which he insisted.

Ulysses went into the garden, for he knew that this was where his father was accustomed to spend his days, in hard work. Soon he found the unhappy old man, digging as usual about the roots of the vines. The poorest slave could not have been dressed in more wretched clothes; they were of the coarsest material, and soiled with mud and dust. Below the knees he wore leggings of ox-hide, and on his hands rough gloves, as a protection against the briars. A goat-skin cap covered his head, and shielded it from the hot sun.

Ulysses remained for some time standing by a pear-tree, and as he gazed upon the forlorn appearance of his aged father, the sight drew tears from his eyes. Then he advanced towards him, making a little noise to attract his attention. The old man was stooping over his work with bent head, but now he raised himself and looked at the stranger.

‘Of a truth, old man,’ began Ulysses, ‘thou art no novice in the art of tending a garden. Everything that grows here, shrubs, trees and vines, all alike bear witness to thy skill and diligence. But I am surprised that thou art not thyself better cared for; thou art lean and shrunken from want of good food, and thou

wearest filthy clothing. It cannot be that thy master is dissatisfied with thy work and pays thee badly,— moreover thou hast not the appearance of a man born to be a bondsman. In form and stature thou art rather like to a king, and it were more fitting that in thine old age thou shouldst have a comfortable bath, a good meal and a soft bed whereon to rest. Whose servant art thou, and whose is this garden? And tell me once again that which I desire to know. On my way hither I met with a man of whom I enquired, but he was in haste, and his information was not clear. I was in hope that here in Ithaca I should meet with a former friend; tell me, I pray thee, whether he yet lives, or has already descended to the Land of Shades. I entertained him once in my house, and never have I received a guest whom I have loved so well. He told me that he was the son of Laertes, and that his home was in Ithaca. Of the esteem with which I regarded him I gave abundant proof at his departure, for I sent him away laden with many goodly gifts.’

Tears filled the eyes of the old father as he replied, ‘Alas! he is no longer here, and his place has been usurped by wicked men. In vain wilt thou hope for any return for thy gifts; for my son, the friend to whom thou hast shown hospitality, is gone for ever. Far away from his home and his friends, his corpse has without doubt been long ago devoured by the fishes of the sea, or else he has been slain on dry land and has been food for vultures and wild beasts. We, his parents, alas! have not been permitted to prepare his body for burial, neither might his wife Penelope close his eyes, nor lift up her lament beside his bier. But

tell me thy name, and from whence thou art come, and how long a time has passed since my son was with thee as thy guest.'

'I come from Alybas,' replied Ulysses. 'My father is the son of Polypemon and my own name is Eperitus. I am now on my way to Sicania, but contrary winds have driven me hither. If thou wouldst know when I entertained thy son, it is now the fifth year since he left me to return to his home. At his departure, favourable omens presented themselves, at which we both rejoiced, and we hoped that we should often again meet at the friendly board, and exchange gifts one with the other.'

Grief overshadowed Laertes like a black cloud, as he was thus vividly reminded of the absence of his son, and he groaned aloud, and cast dust upon his head. At this spectacle Ulysses could dissemble no longer, and bursting into tears, he threw his arms round his father and embraced him, crying out, 'Father, it is I, the son for whom thou art sorrowing, who, in the twentieth year, have returned to my home. Cease therefore from weeping and lamentation; we must prepare for battle, for I have avenged the honour of our house, and have slain the suitors.'

But Laertes feared it might be some impostor, and he said, 'If thou art indeed my son, give me some token by which I may know thee.'

'Willingly,' replied Ulysses, 'and first I will show thee the scar of the wound which was long ago dealt me by the boar on Mount Parnassus, when I was sent by myself and my mother on a visit to my grandfather Autolycus, that I might receive the present he promised

me when he came to see us here in Ithaca. I will moreover recall to thy remembrance how once, when I was a child, I walked with thee, holding thy hand, through this very garden, and, child-like, begged for many things. Then didst thou give me for my own, thirteen pear-trees and ten apple-trees; forty fig-trees also, and forty rows of vines.'

By this time Laertes was quite convinced that it was indeed his dearly loved son Ulysses who now stood before him, and it seemed to him that his life had become suddenly illumined with golden rays of joy and hope. But the surprise was too much for the old man; his strength gave way, and he would have fallen to the ground, had not Ulysses caught him in his arms and supported him until he regained consciousness. Then the aged king raised his hands to heaven, and cried aloud, 'O Father Zeus, I see indeed by this punishment of the suitors that thou reignest supreme in heaven and earth! But I fear, my son,' he continued, turning to Ulysses, 'that the kinsmen of those whom thou hast slain will soon seek thee out here and lay hands upon thee.'

'Fear nothing,' replied Ulysses, 'for we may reckon upon the assistance of the gods themselves. Let us now go into the house. Our friends have already preceded us thither, and are preparing the morning meal.'

Arm in arm they went towards the house, and there found Telemachus and the two herdsmen, who were looking out for them, having set all things in readiness for the feast. Laertes now consented to be bathed and anointed by the old woman, and to put on a princely garment; and presently he came forth from the bath,

looking another man, for Athene had restored to him all the strength and vigour of his early days before the long years of sorrow that had broken his heart. All were full of admiration at his changed appearance, and he himself, rejoicing in the renewal of his powers, felt the desire for battle kindle within him as he thought of the heroic deeds of his youth. 'O son!' he said, 'were I but still possessed of my former strength, as in the days when I took by assault the town of Nericus on the mainland! How gladly would I have stood yesterday by thy side to smite down the suitors and rejoice thy heart.'

The steward Dolius and his six sons were at their work in the fields, but when they heard from the old woman of the unexpected guests who had arrived, they hastened back to the house, and greeted their beloved master with eager joy. Then they all sat down to eat and drink together.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FINAL STRUGGLE.

ULYSSES had not long left the city when the news of the previous night's disaster began to be rumoured abroad,—first as a mere report, but soon followed by more certain information. In many houses, the tidings aroused both rage and sorrow ; and with sighs and groans the kinsmen of those who had been slain betook themselves to the palace, and demanded the corpses of their friends. The bodies of those who had come from the mainland, or from the neighbouring islands, were also carried away over the sea to their homes.

Then the friends of the suitors assembled in the market-place, and one of them, Eupheithes, the father of Antinoüs, rose and addressed the citizens: 'Of a truth,' he said, 'there is no one who has brought such grievous calamity upon us as this Ulysses. First he carried away in his ships all the flower of our city, the most distinguished young men of Ithaca ; countless were the youths of noble birth who followed him to the war. Where are now those ships ? and where are their crews ? The ships have been destroyed, and the crews have perished. And now he has deprived all our most illustrious families of their last hope, in that

he has slain their sons. Let us go out at once against him, before he has time to flee away to Pylos or to Elis, for we should be disgraced for ever if we allowed him to escape our vengeance. I, for one, would care to live no longer, but would rather be reckoned among the dead.'

Thus he spoke, but after him rose Medon, the herald, who said, 'Listen to me, ye citizens. Not without the help of the gods has Ulysses accomplished this marvellous deed. With my own eyes I saw how a god came, in the form of Mentor, and stood at his side, inspiring him with courage, while the suitors were at the same moment filled with fear.

When they heard this, many of the kinsmen began to hesitate about risking their lives against a man who was thus manifestly befriended by the gods. And now another of the friends of Ulysses, the aged Halitherses, arose, and said, 'Listen to me, also. For this calamity which has befallen you, my friends, ye have but yourselves to blame. Neither to me nor to Mentor would ye listen, when we appealed to you to put an end to the ill-doing of your sons. And, in truth, an evil course was theirs who consumed the goods of Ulysses, and persecuted his wife. Now at least follow my counsel, and remain here quietly, that ye draw not down upon your heads yet further misfortune.'

These words produced a deep impression, and the greater part of the assembly dispersed, and returned each to his own home. A considerable number, however, followed Eupeithes, and having armed themselves, rushed tumultuously out of the city, towards the homestead where they expected to find Ulysses.

Ulysses had meanwhile strengthened himself with

food and wine, and had bidden his friends to do likewise. He was well aware that, in all probability, his enemies would soon pursue him; and when the meal was ended, he sent one of the sons of Dolius to go and look if they were coming. Hardly had the youth crossed the threshold when he perceived in the distance a great cloud of dust that announced the approach of the enemy, and he hurried back to tell his master.

All seized their arms without delay, even Laertes and Dolius, though both were old and grey-headed; and issued forth from the house. At this moment a powerful ally approached, even Mentor; but Ulysses knew in his heart that it was a still more powerful friend,—Athene herself, his divine protector,—who had again come to his aid. Joy filled his soul and beamed from his eyes, as, turning towards Telemachus, he said, ‘I trust, my son, that to-day thou wilt not fail to maintain the honour of our house, for the men of our race have ever been distinguished above other men for strength and courage.’

‘Thou wilt see, dear father,’ replied Telemachus, with sparkling eyes, ‘whether I am likely to prove a disgrace to my family.’

‘O ye gods!’ exclaimed Laertes, full of joy and pride at hearing the exhortation and the reply, ‘what a happy day is this for which ye have spared my life, when I see my son and my grandson stimulating one another to deeds of valour!’

By this time the enemy had advanced within reach, and Mentor, who was near Laertes, went up to him, and said, ‘Make thy prayer to Zeus and to Athene, and then hurl thy spear among thy foes.’

At the same moment, Laertes felt himself filled with redoubled strength, and in obedience to the command of Mentor, he hurled his spear, which struck Eupeithes, the leader of the opposing band. The point of the spear penetrated his helmet, wounding him in the head, and he fell to the ground, smitten to death. Then Ulysses and Telemachus drew their swords and threw themselves upon the enemy, while far above the din of battle was heard the voice of Athene, who cried aloud, 'Ye men of Ithaca, forbear to continue the strife, and turn your minds towards peace.'

The terrible voice filled the enemy with fear; they threw down their arms in terror as they betook themselves to flight, and Ulysses, unable to control his warlike impulses, rushed after them with raised sword. But at this moment a thunderbolt sped from the unclouded sky and fell to the ground, at the feet of Athene. The goddess knew the token, and she said to Ulysses, 'Cease from the battle, or thou wilt have to fear the wrath of Zeus.'

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
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
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