THE

ODYSSEY OF HOMER

RENDERED INTO

ENGLISH BLANK VERSE.

BY

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ARGUMENT.

BOOK XIII.

Ulysses having related his adventures to King Alcinoüs and his consort, is, through the kind efforts of that prince, placed on board a vessel of the Phœacians while in a profound sleep, and in that state is conveyed across sea to the shore of his native isle of Ithaca. The crew lift him out of the ship and lay him down on the beach, still asleep; and having deposited at his side the valuable presents bestowed on him by the Phœacians, they embark and set off on their voyage homeward. Neptune, carrying out a threat of long-standing, transforms the ship into a huge rock, just as it was nearing the Phœacian port, and in this state it is beheld, in great consternation, by the natives. Minerva approaches Ulysses, disguised, when he has awaked from his deep sleep, and then reveals to him her real presence, and holds conference with him on the subject of Penelope's suitors. She aids him in depositing his treasures in a cave, and transforms him into an old man, bearing the appearance of a mendicant.

BOOK XIV.

Ulysses, in the disguise effected by Minerva, finds his way to the hut of Eumæus, a devoted servant of his household in former days, and now charged with the care of numerous herds of swine. Eumæus gives him a cordial welcome: upon which he commences a narrative, mere invention, of his adventures; stating, incidentally, that Ulysses would, at no distant date, return to Ithaca;—the king of the Thesprotians having, as he asserts, intimated this to him as a certainty. At the instance of Eumæus he takes up his quarters in the homestead cottage.
ARGUMENT.

BOOK XCV.
Minerva proceeds to Sparta, to withdraw Telemachus from the court of Menelaus. Appearing to him in a vision, she exhorts him to return home. Telemachus leaves Sparta, touches at Phere, and arrives at Pylos. As he prepares to embark on board a vessel bound for Ithaca, he is accosted by a soothsayer of Argos, of the name of Theoclymenus, stating himself to be an exile from his country, in consequence of a homicide. Telemachus yields to his entreaty to take him on board. Eumaeus relates to Ulysses, though unaware of his guest’s identity, how he himself first entered Ithaca. At length, Telemachus lands again in Ithaca, and sending the vessel into port, and committing Theoclymenus to the care of his crew, proceeds to the cot of Eumaeus.

BOOK XVI.
Telemachus, welcomed most joyfully by Eumaeus, enters into conversation with the beggar-like guest, being wholly unconscious of that stranger being his own father; and, subsequently, dispatches Eumaeus to the town in which the palace of Ulysses stood,—that he might there apprise Penelope of her son’s (Telemachus) safe return from Lacedemon. During his absence, Minerva causes Ulysses to resume his natural aspect, and hereupon he reveals to Telemachus that he is his father.

A selected number of Penelope’s suitors who had set out with the design of waylaying the vessel in which young Telemachus would be sailing homeward to Ithaca, and of putting him to death,—having missed him, return disappointed. They are detected in forming further plans for his destruction. Penelope’s upbraiding speech to their leader, Antinous.

Minerva again transforms Ulysses into a seeming beggar.

BOOK XVII.
Telemachus relates to his mother incidents of his recent excursion. He also makes known to her Theoclymenus, from whom she receives a positive declaration that her husband will to a certainty be soon in his native land and palace. Eumaeus then takes Ulysses into the city, and into the premises of his own palatial home. Though in the disguise of a ragged mendicant, he is recognised by his old dog Argus, who, after twenty years’ absence, recognises him, but is too feeble to rise. The faithful creature dies almost immediately afterwards. Ulysses enters the great banqueting hall of the palace, and sees the hundred and eight princes who were suitors of Penelope. He is grossly insulted by them. Penelope in her conversation with Eumaeus, having learned from him that a stranger had reached his house who brought some tidings of Ulysses, requests that he may be introduced to her. Ulysses being informed hereof tells Eumaeus of his design to make this visit at the close of the day, when there would be no other person in the palace.
ARGUMENT.

BOOK XVIII.

Ulysses enters the hall of his palace while the suitors are feasting, and in the guise of a mendicant asks alms of them. Being challenged to a personal encounter by another habited like himself, a beggar, also, (named Irus) he fights and nearly kills him at the first blow. Amphimomus, a suitor, treats him with great indignity, and Ulysses inveighs against his insolence, and intimates that the lord of that mansion would soon be there. Penelope, determining to make her suitors pay richly for the privilege of being permitted to ask her hand in marriage, reminds them that they ought to make her handsome presents. They comply. The gifts described. Eurymachus in the height of his effrontery throws a footstool at Ulysses, and missing his aim, upsets the cup-bearer. At the suggestion of Amphimomus, the party breaks up . . . . . . . . . 146

BOOK XIX.

Ulysses and Telemachus, the halls being empty, cause the women to be locked up in their several chambers; and then collect together all the arms in the palace, and stow them away in the armoury in the upper part of the building. Ulysses, still in disguise, is introduced as a fugitive stranger to his wife Penelope, and recounts to her a long narrative—a fiction—in which he mentions that he had seen Ulysses in the isle of Crete. Having permitted his old nurse Euryclea to wash his feet, she recognizes him by a scar left by the tooth of a wild boar on the occasion of Ulysses hunting, as a youth, in Parnassus. He strictly forbids her to mention the discovery to any one. An account of the boar hunt.

Penelope is much distressed by the long narrative, and gives orders for his being provided with a bed in the vestibule . . . . . . . . 169

BOOK XX.

Ulysses taking up with the accommodation offered for a sleeping place in the vestibule of his own palace, lies for some time awake deliberating whether he should put to death all the female servants, of whose shameful conduct, in his long absence, he had been fully informed. Minerva, in a vision, assures him that he will be empowered to destroy all the suitors. He decides on a respite with regard to the women of the household. Telemachus provides a seat for his father in the banquet-hall, apart from the suitors. He is again insulted. Minerva produces an hysterical laugh among them, which is succeeded by misgivings, and an undefined dread of approaching evil; but they resume eating and drinking, though Theoclymenus forbids mischief . . . . . . . . . . . . 202
ARGUMENT.

BOOK XXI.

An account of the huge bow of Ulysses which had been stowed away in his armoury during the twenty years of his absence. Penelope proposes that there shall be a contest, as to who, of all the suitors, should with greatest ease bend the bow and draw the string up to the arrow notch. Her hand to be the prize. One after another makes the attempt and fails. Telemachus, taking it up, is just on the point of succeeding when admonished, by a signal from his father, to lay the bow aside. Ulysses gives directions that every door and avenue of egress should be fast closed, and then calls on Eurymedon to hand the bow and quiver to him. This is resisted by the suitors, who express their contempt at his presuming, as a mendicant, even to touch the bow; but Telemachus insists on his being permitted to handle and use it.

Ulysses aiming at the twelve rings or eyelets of iron, sends the arrow through the whole of them, and, nodding to Telemachus, gives him to understand that the moment is now at hand when he will turn the bow to the use he had long contemplated, and then springs on to the elevated slab of the great threshold at the door of the banquet hall . . . . 223

BOOK XXII.

Ulysses seconded by Telemachus, Eurymedon, and Philoctetes, (the herdsman entrusted with the care of his cattle in Ithaca,) begins by shooting down Antinoeis the leader of all the suitors; and then follows the massacre of the whole number. Twelve of the female servants whose conduct had been most flagitious are hanged. Melanion, a goatherd, who had grossly outraged Ulysses, is suspended from a rafter while the suitors are being slaughtered, and is then taken down and dispatched. The bard Phemius is spared, and Medon, also, the herald . . . . . . . . . 246

BOOK XXIII.

Having for some considerable time evinced utter disbelief of Ulysses' identity, Penelope, convinced by certain tests, most joyfully welcomes him as her long lost husband. He then gives her an authentic account of his wanderings and troubles.

In the morning, afterwards, he sets out with his son and Eurymedon and Philoctetes, on his way to the residence of his aged father, Laertes . 273
ARGUMENT.

BOOK XXIV.

Mercury leads to the realms of Pluto the shades of the slain suitors. The shades of Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax, and others appear on the scene: of Agamemnon also. The address of the shade of Achilles to Agamemnon's. The reply of the shade of Agamemnon, describing the funereal rites of Achilles. The account of the slaughter of the suitors given by the shade of Amphimedon to that of Agamemnon.

Ulysses makes himself known to his father Laertes. The relatives of the suitors rise in a tumultuous mass, intent on taking the life of Ulysses in revenge for the lives of the slain. Ulysses, Telemachus, Laertes, Dolius, Enmenus and others defend themselves against the insurrectionists, whose leader, Epeithes, is killed by Laertes. A closer conflict ensues, which is abruptly terminated by Minerva, who appeals against such internecine war, and calls on the Ithacians to lay down their arms on either side. Ulysses still evincing a desire to pursue his advantage is warned by a thunderbolt. Minerva, in the guise of Mentor, ratifies conditions of Peace

CORRIGENDUM.

In page 191, l. 675, for Here in read Upon.
THUS spoke Ulysses, as in silence all
Beneath that palace roof sate motionless
And into rapture charm'd: but, words, at length
Alcinoüs found:—"Ulysses! since a guest
At these strong brasen-bas'd and lofty halls
Thou art arriv'd, ev'n thus to thine own home
Methinks thou wilt return; nor, though so long
By sore afflictions harass'd, will thy course
On further wand'rings force thee. But, to you
Phæacians! I now speak, and on you all
This charge would lay who as my constant guests
The choicest wine within our palace quaff,
To princes only proffer'd, and the strains
Of our Bard's minstrelsy so oft have heard.
Know ye—that in a shining coffer laid
(For full contentment of our stranger guest)
Are vestments, high-wrought gold, and other gifts,
All that Phæacia's senatorial lords
Have hither brought: But, now, I say, let each
His share contribute tow'rds two sev'ral gifts—
A cauldron and large tripod; shares which we,
Ourselves, when we assemblies shall convene,
As o'er the people ruling, will repay:
For, from a single giver such a gift
Too much by far demands.''

Alcinoüs spoke,

And all assenting heard, as to their homes
And to Night's slumbers the assembly mov'd.
But when again the rosy-finger'd morn,
Daughter of dawn, arose, with eager haste
They to the ship repair'd, and store of brass
(Such as a manly chieftain's need befits)
They carried down; and with adjustment nice
Alcinoüs the treasure stow'd;—himself
Beneath the benches stooping of the ship,
So to dispose of all, that injury none
Might to Ulysses' rowers with their stroke
Of cars impetuous urging on, accrue.
Then, to the palace of the king return'd,
A banquet they prepar'd: Alcinoüs
An ox to Jove, the darkly clouded son
Of Saturn, sacrificing; as to Him
Whose sway is over all. And when the thighs
They now had duly burnt, a splendid feast
They spread, and of abundance took their fill;
Demodocus, the bard by Heav'n inspir'd,
And by the people glorified, his lay
Among the guests attuning; but, intent
Upon the setting of the radiant sun,
From time to time Ulysses, whose sole thought
Was his Return, upon the solar beams
His glances anxious bent; and, as a man
Under whose hands two dark red beeves the plough
Across some fallow have, a whole day, drawn,—
His ev’ning meal is craving for, while now
The rays of the declining sun a joy
Impart, and for his supper leave him free,
With lame knees to it hast’ning;—ev’n thus dear
Was to Ulysses’ eyes the sinking disc
Of that day’s sun: and then immediate speech
With the Phaeacians (of their ears so proud)
He strove to gain, Alcinoüs in these words
’Bove all addressing:—

“King Alcinoüs!
Of all this race most noble! when to Heav’n
Libations ye have made, oh! speed me hence
Without a care! And, now, to all ‘Farewell!’
All that my heart desir’d,—an escort safe,
And ev’ry gift which Friendliness bestows,
Have to the full been granted: And may Heav’n
In my behalf its blessing shed hereon!
May I, on my return, my blameless wife
And those I love at home in safety find;
And may you all who here remain the joy
For evermore continue of those wives
Whom in your youth ye wedded, and of sons
And daughters born to you! Each sev’ral grace
Of Goodness may the gods upon them shed,
And ne’er may Fate the common weal afflict!”

He ended, and with general acclaim
His words they hail’d, whose matter so discreet
And worthy seem’d, that mandate straight went forth
That on his way the Stranger should be sped.
And then the monarch on his herald call'd:—
"Pontonoüs! when thou a cup hast mix'd,
To all within the palace carry wine,
That, having pray'rs to Jupiter uplift,
This Stranger to his country we may speed."

He spoke, and the rich wine Pontonoüs blent
And unto all in order sent it round;
Each to the blest immortals who on high
The Empyrean inhabit from his place,
Ev'n where he sate, libations off'ring.
And then Ulysses rose, and, the round cup
Into Arethé's hand delivering,
With these wing'd words saluted her:—"Farewell!
O queen! for evermore farewell! till age
Extreme, and Death, which is the lot of all,
Shall thee in turn o'ertake: but, now, I go!
And may'st thou with thy children and the tribe
Who own thy sov'reignty, and with their king
Aleinoüs, in this thy palace live,
And pleasure taste unceasing."

With these words
Noble Ulysses o'er the threshold stepp'd:
But, onward had the king a herald sent,
To the sea-shore and well-appointed ship
The way to lead. Arethé, too, a train
Of handmaids with him sent;—one in her hands
A well-wash'd robe and vestment carrying,
Another, with a heavy coffer charg'd,
Her bidding did: a third a store of bread
And dark wine bore: and, when the ship they reach'd, 110
His noble escort, as the several gifts
They took on board, (provision fit of meat
And drink) within the vessel's hold
Stow'd it away: And, then upon the deck
A coverlet and flaxen cloths they spread, 115
That at the stern in sound deep sleep reclin'd.
Ulysses might repose: but, he himself
On shipboard stepp'd, and, ut'tring not a word,
To rest compos'd himself, while they, each man
His bench in order taking, from the stone 120
(Right through for anch'rage bor'd), their cable loos'd ;
And then, with heads back thrown, upon their oars
The surges' spray uplifted, while calm sleep
Upon his eyelids fell, such as through night
No waking moments knew,—repose most sweet, 125
The nearest semblance bearing of real death.
But, as when four yok'd stallions, on the plain,
By the thong's lash excited upward spring,
And, on one impulse borne, careering fly,—
So rose in air the vessel's stern, while waves
Of deepest purple tint from Ocean's depth 130
With hollow roar dash'd after it. She sped
And sway'd not: nor could falcon hawk, of birds
The swiftest, have on wing her pace maintain'd.
Thus did that flying bark the waters cleave— 135
The man conveying who a mind might boast
With that of gods in counsel fit to cope,—
In battles oft; in tempests often wreck'd :
And now, without a fear, he sleeping lay
And all the suff'ring of his life forgot. 140
Just as a star of most resplendent ray  
Began to rise, whose brightness eminent  
The light of Morning, mother of the day,  
Is wont to usher in, the goodly ship,  
On Ocean's ways a trav'ler, near'd the isle.  

Now, on th' Ithacian coasts a port there is  
From Phorcys nam'd, (the Old Man of the Sea,)  
And two steep banks within it lie whose length  
Towards the port extends, and all the force  
Of blust'ring winds, which from without assail,  
A shelter form; and in this haven safe,  
When their secluded station they have reach'd,  
The well-built ships without a hawser rest.

A full-leav'd Olive at the haven's mouth  
Its foliage spreads; and nigh it is a cave  
Delectable, a shaded haunt to Nymphs  
Nam'd "Naiads," consecrate: and cups of stone  
And rundlets in it stand; and bees therein  
Their honey store; and distaffs all of stone,  
Of length excessive, in that cave are seen,  
The wonder of all eyes! while, in a stream  
That ceases not, the water-springs well forth.  
Two portals hath it. Those towards the North  
By mortals may be enter'd: Those oppos'd  
And Southward situate more sacred are,  
And none hereby may pass;—th' immortal gods  
Alone admittance gaining. To this point,  
By them of erst well known, th' escorting crew  
Urg'd onward, and by more than half its length  
(Such was her rate of speed, and such the might  
Of those who row'd,) the vessel on to land.
Ran fast aground: and from that well-built bark
They now stepp’d on the beach.* Ulysses first
From off the deck, in his fair coverlet
And linen raiment wrapt, still sunk in sleep,
They lifted down, and on the sand dispos’d;
And from the hold the treasures they remov’d
Which, through high-soul’d Minerva’s furth’ring aid,
Phæacia’s nobles (when, on his return,
Their shores he left,) had made his own: and these
Together heap’d where that fam’d Olive-tree
Its roots outspread, they plac’d apart, secure,
Lest, haply, ere Ulysses should awake,
Some casual passer-by should do him wrong.
But, they themselves upon their voyage home
Forthwith embark’d. Nor of those angry threats
Was Neptune now oblivious which at first
He at Ulysses launch’d, but counsel thus
Of Jove he ask’d:—

"O Jupiter! no more
Shall I among th’ immortals be rever’d,
Since mortals,—the Phæacians, who kin
With me would claim—no homage pay to me:
For, ’twas but only now my word was pass’d
That at his home Ulysses should arrive
By long afflictions tried; and that return
I in nowise have thwarted, since thou first
Assurance to him gavest and consent.
But they this chief in a swift-sailing bark
Have over sea transported,—in a sleep
Profound immers’d,—and on th’ Ithacian coast
Have they just landed him: A heap of gifts—
Brass and fine gold, and a fine woven vest
Have they with lavish hand on him bestow'd;—
Abundance, such as never from sack'd Troy
Ulysses would have carried off, had he
Unscath'd his home regain'd, and his due share
Of all the spoil receiv'd."

But, to these words
The cloud-compelling Jove this answer made:—
"Nay, nay! all-puissant Neptune! what is this
That thou hast utter'd? The immortal gods
None such indignity on thee would cast!
No light offence it were contempt to fling
Upon the oldest, worthiest of their race!
But, if there be of living mortals one
Who, by tyrannic insolence and pow'r
Impell'd, would dare to spurn thee, thou the means
Of vengeance in the future ever hast.
On thine own will, and on the wish which first
Thy mind would prompt, decide at once to act."

To him earth-shaking Neptune this reply
Immediate made: "O thou who with dark clouds
Thyself surroundest!—promptly would my will
Thy counsel follow, but thy kindled ire
With dread I ever contemplate and shun.
This beauteous ship of the Phaeacian fleet,
Now on the clouded ocean homeward bound,
(Ulysses' escort having all fulfil'd)
I fain would utterly annihilate—
That, henceforth, in this transport, such as men
In safest conduct carries, they may pause,
And persevere no more: and fain would I
Around their city a vast mountain throw."

To this the cloud-compelling Jove reply
Compliant made:—"My friend! as I conceive,
This best thine aim will meet:—When from the town
The whole collective populace their gaze
Shall on the ship be fixing—a vast mass
Of stone, (the semblance bearing of a ship,)
Do thou near land uprear, that ev'ry man
In wonderment may stare; And that great mount
Around their city throw!"  And when the god
That shakes the Earth had this suggestion heard,
To Scheria, from whence Phæacia's tribes
Their race derive, he hasten'd, and awhile
His station there maintain'd. The ship, at length,
That o'er the sea-ways had her course pursued,
With rapid onward progress now drew nigh,
And, alongside, the Shaker of the Earth
That instant rush'd, and into stony rock
Her fabric chang'd, so that in land which form'd
The bottom of the sea it rooted stood:
And this, (with stroke from downturn'd hand alone
Inflicted,) Neptune to accomplish rose,
And straightway to remoter regions sped.

But, that Phæacian multitude—the men
Who, in long oars exulting, o'er the seas
Such fame were wont to reap, in eager words
Each other question'd, and with eyeballs fixt
On him to whom he spake, one man would thus
The other challenge:—"Who is this, alas!"
That thus the rapid vessel on her course
Ev’n into harbour speeding, in the deep
Has thus infix’d her? But a moment since,
She stood entire before us!” Thus spoke one,
But how this came to pass they little knew.

At length Alcinoüs spake, and to their ears
These words address’d:—“Alas! with too great truth
To me, at length, each presage is fulfill’d,
Which, in long bygone years, my sire pronounc’d,
That Neptune—for that we an escort sure
To men upon the wat’ry main afford,—
Would with his anger visit us! He said
That at some epoch of the time to come
The god a splendid vessel would destroy,
By our Phæacians mann’d, when homeward bound
From an escorting voyage over sea;
And that a mighty mountain would the breadth
Of our whole city cover. Such events
The veteran foretold; and ev’ry word
Is now at length confirm’d: But, come! let this
Henceforth be binding on us all, as I
Command now give: No longer be it ours
Safe conduct to provide, come here who may
Our native city enter’ring: and twelve bulls
From out the herds selected will we straight
To Neptune offer, if he will but grace
Relenting show, and with this dreadful mount
Our city overwhelm not.” The king ceas’d,
And they with timid souls the bulls prepar’d;
And all the leaders and the princely chiefs
Of the Phæacian people, as beside
The altars of their sacrifice they stood,
To Neptune, that great monarch, offer'd pray'r.

Meanwhile, Ulysses from that sleep profound
Upon the soil of his lov'ed fatherland
Awaking, recognis'd it not,—so long
Had he from that terrane an exile liv'd—
And Pallas, now, Jove's daughter, round his form
A vapour rais'd, that he in ev'ry eye
A stranger might appear, and that her lips
Might first to him tell all, and that nor wife,
Nor citizens, nor friends, the chief should know;
Ere on the suitors ev'ry cruel wrong
Full vengeance he had wreak'd. Thus, all that met
The prince's eye a different aspect wore—
The long extended roads—the havens wide
For shelter so well form'd—the steep cliff's sides
To solar rays uplifted, and the trees
In foliage so abundant! Thus stood he—
As to his feet with eager haste he sprang,
And on the region gaz'd that gave him birth;
Till in regret he moan'd, and with his hand
His thigh desponding struck, and sad at heart,
Ev'n thus to grief gave words:—

"Woe! woe! alas!
'Mid all the homes of mortal men, what land
Have I at last attain'd to? Are they sons
Of violence? Of harsh and cruel mind
Are they; and of all sense of right devoid?
Or to all strangers would they welcome give,
And doth a godlike spirit in them sway?"
Where now shall I these many treasures store?
And whither am I wand'ring still? Would, now,
That I with the Phaeacians had but staid!
Some other pow'rful prince I might have sought,
Who would his guest have made me, and his aid
In a safe escort on my voyage home
Have granted me! But, in what spot recluse
I may these large possessions now secure
I know not: Here they must not lie; for soon
The spoil of plund'ring hands would they become.
Unhappy me! The leaders and great chiefs
Of the Phaeacians in their judgment err'd,
And from strict right in this, at least, have swerv'd,
In thus to a strange coast transporting me:
To Western Ithaca their promise firm
Assur'd me I should come—, but this their word
They unf fulfill'd have left. May Jove himself,
Who penalty retributive demands,
This wrong on them avenge! Man's destiny
He makes his care; and Man's offence from him
Its punishment receives. But, now will I
My gather'd treasures count, and by the tale
Discover whether that escorting crew
Have aught thereof purloin'd, and in their ship
Far hence convey'd it." Ceasing then to speak,
Ulysses of the tripods, in whose form
Such beauty shone, the number duly told;
The cauldrons, too, he counted; and the vests
Of texture so resplendent; of which gifts
He miss'd not one; but, for his native land
His soul still yearn'd, and, as along the shore
Of the loud roaring main he slowly paced,
In poignant grief he sorrow'd. Then, at length,
Pallas before him stood,—a young man’s form
Assuming, (one that tended sheep) of mould
Most delicate, as might the sons of kings be seem.—
A beauteous mantle, double in its folds,
About her shoulders hung ;—and 'neath her feet
So soft she sandal's wore ; and in her hand
A lance she grasp'd. At sight of her, great joy
Ulysses felt,—drew nigh to her, and thus
In rapid utterance hail'd her :

"O my friend !
Since thee in this terrene I first have met,
Be welcome ! and with no ungenial thoughts
Upon me look ! These treasures at my side
On my behalf protect, and me myself
From peril guard : for though as to some god
I this petition make, and to thy knees
A suppliant come. Oh ! tell me in all truth,
That I may fully learn,—what realm is this?
What people? Of what generation sprung
Are all these men around? Is it some isle
To Westward lying? or is this a tract
That from the rich-soil'd fields of the main land
Its length extends to seaward?" Thus address'd,
The goddess of the gleaming eye replied :

"Witless art thou, O stranger! or, from far
Art thou indeed arriv'd, if of this land
Such questions thou would'st ask. Unknown, indeed,
Inglorious it is not! Many a tribe
Of those that Eastward live and face the sun,
And of the dwellers in thick darkling gloom,  
This isle well know. A rugged face it hath,  
For the yok'd steeds unapt;—and yet the soil,  
In narrow bounds compris'd, no barren waste  
Exhibits; for, wheat-harvests here abound,  
And vintages therewith: the timely show'rs,  
The rip'ning dews attend on it. For feed  
Of goats and beeves it hath a just renown;  
With all varieties of wood it thrives,  
And constant streaming waters through it flow.  
Wherefore, O Stranger! e'en to Troy itself,  
Far as men say it is from Greece, the name  
Of Ithaca would make its mention known!"

The shepherd youth here ended: and that chief  
So oft in perils tried, Ulysses, all  
With transport heard;—and in his fatherland  
His heart at length rejoiced, as Pallas, child  
Of aegis-bearing Jove, the truth disclos'd.  
And now again accosting her, these words,  
With rapid accents ut'tring, in a speech  
Deceitful he inserted,—and her theme  
Caught up to frame a fiction—the reverse  
Of all the truth; such wily cunning still  
His mind would fain indulge in:—"Ev'n in Crete,  
That spacious isle, and over sea remote,  
Of Ithaca I heard: but here, at length  
Am I myself with these possessions come,  
And yet a fugitive,—who just so much  
Have for my absent children elsewhere left,  
Since I the swift-of-foot Orsilochus,  
Idomeneus' dear son, in death laid low—
(Him who in all the spacious isle of Crete
All youths of enterprise with his fleet feet
So far outshone;—) for that my spoils from Troy
He would have seiz'd;—the booty, which to win
Such woes I had encounter'd;—hardships dread
'Mid foes, upon the scene of War;—'mid waves,
When on the ocean tost! And this because
His father 'mid the legion'd hosts of Troy
I would not stoop to humour,—while o'er those
Who with me serv'd a rule supreme I held,
His death-wound with a brasen spear I gave;
In ambush with a comrade near the road
Secreted, and as from the fields he came
Awaiting him. Thick night the sky obscur'd,
Nor did a man descry us;—and his ken
I 'scap'd, forsooth, in cutting short his life!
And when with weapon keen this deed was done,
I, without lingering, in a ship embark'd
And the renown'd Phaeacian nation sought,
And, as their suppliant, gave them from my spoils
Such gifts as won their hearts: And then did I
Petition make that they would bear me thence,
And upon Pylos land me, or the port
Divine of Elis enter, where their sway
The Epeans hold supreme: but raging winds
Their vessels from these ports, to their great grief,
Far distant drove them. Not a wish had they
To play me false! But, on the waters cast,
This coast by night we reach'd, and with great toil
Into the haven row'd. Of any food
Our evening meal to furnish no man spoke;
All eager as we were to eat: but all,
Just as we were, the dark-ribb’d vessel left
And on the earth reclin’d. And here calm sleep
My toil-worn frame soon seiz’d: while they my goods
From out their ship removing, on this spot,
Where I upon the sandhills lay outstretch’d,
Propped them all: which having done, their course
Yet saw again they to Sidonia steer’d,
And I with heavy heart was left alone.”

He couched, but she three-eyed goddess smil’d,
And with roasting hand his arm she touch’d,
Whom he knew a woman’s semblance took,—
Two in complexion fair, in stature large.
And in inpleasing works of art expert:
And she with rapid speech, in turn thus spoke:
“Art thou, indeed, and full of guile were be
Who in all grades of cunning should thyself,
Even though a god thy rival were surpass’d:
O reckless in all feeling: In thy schemes
For ever shifting: and in tricky feints
Insatiate,—even here upon the soil
That gave thee birth, thou would’st not false pretext
And closing speeches have foregone—such frauds
As from thy childhood have been dear to thee.
Come, now: since we are both in plotting vers’d,
Let us this theme abandon: for of men
Thou art in counsel and in gifts of speech
The foremost held; and ’mid the immortal gods
Myself in just discernment and the use
Of ready guile stand eminent:—But, say,
Did’st thou not know me, Pallas, child of Jove?
Me, who in all thy trials by thee stand
And thy defender am, and to the race
Of those Phaeacians thy cause endear'd?
And hither am I come, that I some plan
May with thee frame, and all the wealth conceal
Which the Phaeacians have on thee bestow'd,

Returning, as my counsel and my wish
Had prompted thee, to thy paternal land;
And that I may forewarn thee of the pangs
That thou art doom'd in thy palatial home
Ev'n yet to suffer. By thy fate constrain'd
Bear up against them all; but, no one tell
Amid all men and women, that thou thus
A wand'rer art arriv'd: the rude assaults
Of banded foes endure, and though thy wrongs
Innumerable grieve, in silence bear.”

To this astute Ulysses thus replied:—
“Quick of perception as a man may be,
O goddess, with no sure discerning ken
Would he thy form be prompt to recognise;
For, thou the semblance canst of any take.

But, this full well I know that in times past
Thy kindly grace befriended me while we
The sons of Greece our battles wag'd at Troy.
But, when we had King Priam's lofty tow'rs
In ruin laid, and in our fleets embark'd,
And the celestial power had our hosts
Upon the ocean scatter'd, I no more
Thy presence hail'd, nor on my vessel's deck
Did I behold thee stepping; that thine aid
Might from misfortune shield me. But, my course
Was but incessant wand'ring, and my heart

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Was all subdued within me, till the gods
From fearful peril timely rescue brought,
And thine inspiring speech upon the shore
Of the Phaeacian land my mind arous’d;
Thyself into their unknown city’s street
My guide becoming. But, by thy great Sire
Do I conjure thee—for not even now
Think I that Western Ithaca’s terrane
I stand upon, but on some other land
My foot have placed: nay, and I think that thou
In all that thou hast said, thy tale hast told
But to beguile me, and upon my sense
A cheat impose! In all good faith declare
If unto my lov’d country I am come.”

Whereto the blue-eyed goddess thus replied:
“On this surmise thy mind incessant dwells,
And, therefore, in thy heaviness of heart
I cannot thee abandon;—for that thou
A fluent speaker art,—of mind acute,
And in thy judgment sound. From wand’ring wide
As thine have been with an exulting heart
Returning, any other man his wife
And children, his palatial halls within,
Would fain have striv’n to see: But, no delight
Would home to thee impart, if thou thyself
Should’st there take cognizance, or question ask,
Ere by some test thy consort thou approve,
Who purposeless within thy palace sits,
While nights and days revolving fast consume
And leave her to her sorrow. I, indeed,
On thy account misgivings cherish’d none,
But deep conviction felt that thy return,  
Though all thy crew were lost, thou would'st effect.  
But, with my uncle Neptune was I loth  
Herein to strive, whose wrath implacable  
Against thee raged, for that thy deed it was  
Which blinded his lov'd son. But, now, attend,  
And to thine eyes the sight of Ithaca  
Will I make known, and thou wilt then believe.  
The port thou see'st, the name of Phorcys bears  
(The old man of the sea;) the olive, this—  
Which near the haven's entrance its large leaves  
Conspicuous shows; and near it is a cave  
Delectable, cool, shady—to those nymphs  
Call'd 'Naiads' consecrate. The wide arch'd grot  
Is this where thou didst many a hecatomb  
All perfect to the Nymphs on altars place:  
And yonder is Mount Neritos with woods  
Umbrageous cloth'd." The goddess, as these words  
She ended, all that vapour which, till now,  
Had like a cloud invested him, dispers'd,  
And all the ground lay manifest; whereat  
The toil-worn chief Ulysses with great joy  
Rejoic'd indeed—as his paternal soil  
With rapture he now hail'd, and on the swade  
Of plenty-yielding grass a kiss impress'd.  
And instantly he with uplifted hands  
The Nymphs invok'd:—

"O Naiad Nymphs, of Jove  
The daughters all! No hopes had I conceiv'd  
Of ever thus beholding you:—but now  
With humble vows these salutations glad

O 2
I here present; and, as of old, will gifts
As off’rings bring, if Dian, child of Jove,
The huntress, her consent with all good will
Shall grant, that I may length of days enjoy,
And my lov’d son, too, may his line increase.”

Minerva, goddess of the gleaming eye,
Now again spoke:—“Let not thy courage droop:
Nor let these thoughts of thine thy mind perplex!
Come!—let us now at once in the far depth
Of this unearthy grotto all the bulk
Of thine acquired treasure safely stow,
That here it may uninjur’d rest: and then
That we in conf’rence may due counsel take,
How best to do what must ere long be done.”

Thus having spoken, to the darkling cave
The goddess downward stepp’d, and secret nooks
Fit for concealment sought; and in his hands
Ulysses all that round him lay uprais’d
To carry in—the gold and unworn brass
And vestments of make exquisite,—the gifts
Of the Phæacians’ bounty: and all these
He aptly rang’d, till Pallas, child of Jove,
A stone to close it placed against the door.
Then near the sacred olive’s roots their seat
For converse having chosen,—a dread doom
That haughty suitor train to overwhelm
They fail’d not to prepare. And hereupon
The goddess this address, as counsel, spoke:

“O thou, in stratagem and plot so vers’d
Laertes’ Jove-born son, Ulysses, hear!
And ponder well how thou upon that crowd
Of daring suitors thine avenging hand
At length may’st lay;—on them who through three years
With sway presumptuous have thy palace rul’d,
Thy godlike consort with their hateful suit
And gifts of dowry harassing, while she,
In sorrow brooding on the heavy doubts
Of thy return, to each a hope holds out
And promises and messages to all
Vouchsafes to send; but far away from these
The thoughts of thy Penelope withdraw.”

To this the shrewd Ulysses thus replied—
“Shame on it! I, too, clearly, in my turn
In my own palace should the death have died,
And the dire fate of Agamemnon, son
Of Atreus, shar’d, had not thy warning words,
O goddess! told these truths. Now let thy mind
The plot contrive which on that hateful crew
May all my vengeance wreak—and then do thou
Thyself beside me stand, and in my soul
Such dauntless valour rouse as in me wrought
When we the crested pride of Ilion’s tow’rs
Cast down in overthrow. If, in that hour,
O, azure-eyed! thou would’st but at my side
Thy presence grant, I, with three hundred men,
By thy prompt succour champion’d to the fight,
While thou stood’st by, in conflict would engage.”

Pallas thus promptly answer’d “At thy side
Most surely will I stand, nor my regards
Shalt thou escape, when our combin'd designs
We shall have well matur'd: and many a one
Among that suitor train who at this hour
Thy substance are consuming, with his blood
And scatter'd brains shall in thy princely halls
The spacious pavement foul: But, now, awhile,
To all that see thee will I make thee strange:
Thy clear fine skin on trott'ring limbs shall shrink,—
That dark brown hair from off thine head shall fall,—
And such a mantle will I round thee throw
As any man, that saw it worn, would spurn.
And a dim shadiness upon thine eyes,
So brilliant now, will I diffuse, whereby
In sight of all the suitors—of thy wife—
And son,—whom in thy palace thou hast left,
An aspect uninviting thou may'st wear.
But, first do thou the Swineherd's dwelling seek,
The keeper of thy swine: a man whose heart
In fondness turns to thee—who loves thy son
And thy discreet Penelope. With his swine
Wilt thou upon him light; for near the rock
Of Corax and at Arethusa's fount
Are they now grazing, acorns for their food
That nourish strength collecting, while from pools
By mire defil'd they drink:—those aliments
Which in such herds the thriving fat increase.
With him abide, and at his side the tale
Of all he knoweth, hear: While I my course
To Sparta, (for its beauteous women fam'd)
Meanwhile must shape,—Telemachus, (that son
So dear to thee, Ulysses!) to protect.
He to wide Lacedæmon's court, the home
Of Menelaus, went; if haply there
He tidings aught might gain of thee, and learn
If anywhere on earth thou still surviv'dst.”

To this Ulysses, full of thought, replied:—
“Omniscient as thou art, why didst thou not
His mind hereon inform? To this intent
Was it, that o'er the waters of that sea
Which harvests never yield, a wanderer
He might be ever sorrowing? and foes
His substance waste at home?”

To which appeal
The blue-eyed goddess thus:—“Let not thy son
Thy thoughts o'ermuch engross: 'twas I myself
That into Sparta led him, there to win
A name of high repute;—no toil hath he
To strive in there;—for, at Atrides' court
In perfect ease he lives, and in that home
Is plenty heap'd around him. But, a band
Of certain youths there are who, in a nook
Conceal'd, on shipboard wait for him,—intent
His life to take ere on his native soil
Again he sets his foot. But this, methinks,
Shall never be.—On some one of that crowd
Who at this moment all thy worldly wealth
Are reckless wasting, sooner shall the earth
For ever close.” As thus she ceas'd to speak,
Minerva with a wand Ulysses touch'd,
And his clear skin contracted upon limbs
That now were bending, and the dark brown hair
She from his scalp remov'd, and all his frame
With the skin cover'd of decrepit age:
His eyes, till then so radiant, she dimm'd;
Unsightliness still worse,—a ragged vest,
And a torn mantle with unseemly dirt
And murky smoke defil'd she round him threw:
On this again the broad and undress'd hide
Of a fleet deer she plac'd: a staff, besides,
She gave him, and a pouch of ugliest make,

With many a rent conspicuous; and a belt
Of plaited rush, to sling it, from it hung.

When they, the goddess and the chief, had thus
Their counsels blent, they parted:—and forthwith
Minerva, young Telemachus to find,
Her way to glorious Lacedæmon sped.

END OF THE THIRTEENTH BOOK.
BOOK XIV.

BUT, from the haven by a rough straight path  
Which through the mountain thickets into tracts  
Of sylvan growth and forest regions led,  
Ulysses bent his steps, by Pallas' self  
Instructed where that noble high-soul’d one  
Eumæus, in whose charge were left his swine,—  
(Of all his serving train most sedulous  
And for his good most thoughtful—) would be found.

Seated he found him in that open court  
Where, on a far-seen site, his homestead rose—  
A dwelling large and handsome, and so rear’d  
That one a circuit might around it make;  
And this the guardian of the herd himself  
Had, in his prince’s absence, for the swine  
Consid’rate built, when nor Penelope  
Nor aged Laertes of that forethought knew.  
From large stones thither drawn the fabric rose,  
And prickly pear above, as coping, bore.  
A palisade around, thickset and close,  
From the dark pith of some oak sapling riv’n,  
Without he fix’d: And, this wide court within
Twelve styes he built, each to the other close,  
The herds' retreat for sleep; and ev'ry sty  
Its fifty sows (that in the mire itself  
Delight to couch) contain'd;—the females, they,  
For breeding kept: but—a far smaller herd,—  
Beyond th' enclosure lodg'd, slept all the males:  
Fewer, indeed; for those the despot throng  
Of suitors, as they ate, made less and less;  
The swineherd ever out of that sleek stock  
The fat and best surrendering:—Yet, of these  
Three hundred and thrice twenty number'd he.  
Hereto contiguous station'd slept four dogs,  
The aspect bearing of wild savage beasts,  
But, by Eumæus bred.

Now, he, himself,  
(An ox-hide measuring out, of beauteous tint,)  
A sandal from the cuttings aptly form'd  
To either foot was shaping: Other hands,  
His helpers, each with sep'rate duties charg'd,  
Had forward gone:—three with the grazing swine;  
The fourth into the city sent,—a sow  
For the presumptuous suitors, by constraint,  
There to deliver; that in sacrifice  
They to their full content on flesh might feast.  
But, suddenly, as, ever on the bark,  
Those dogs Ulysses saw, with outcry loud  
They tow'rd's him rush'd; but, he, with wary thought,  
At once sate down, and from his hand let fall  
The staff he held: yet, still, might he some harm  
Which ill would have beseen'd him, even here  
Have thus encounter'd,—here, in his own folds!
HAD not Eumæus with swift-flying feet
Through the porch entry rush'd, and on his Prince
Immediate follow'd, as the bullock's hide,
Whereon at work he sate, fall from his hands.
Then, all his dogs rebuking, he with throw
Most lavish of loose stones the brutes beat off,
In various roads dispersing them; and then
The prince he thus address'd:—"O aged man!
With such a sudden onset those four dogs
Had well nigh kill'd thee; and upbraidings stern
Hadst thou upon me heap'd: although the gods
Have other griefs and pangs into my lot
Already cast; for, here hold I my seat,
A godlike prince's fate to wail and mourn,
And these sleek herds' condition to maintain
For strangers to devour; while, haply, he
A mere subsistence craving among tribes
And towns of alien race is roaming far—
If he, indeed, as yet survives, the light
Of day beholdıng! But, come, follow me,
And to my herdsman's cot repair, old man!
That there, with ample meat and wine content,
Thy tale thou may'st narrate, from whence thou cam'st,
And all the sorrows of the past detail."

Thus speaking, the good swineherd to his cot
The pathway took, and when he now within
His stranger guest had led, he bade him sit,
And 'neath him certain cuttings from the shrubs
In order rang'd, and over these the skin
Of a wild shaggy goat; a couch to form
In breadth and depth capacious. And at heart
Ulysses joy'd, for that his swineherd thus
With welcome had receiv'd him, and these words
Hereat he spoke: "O Stranger! May great Jove
And all th' immortal gods the dearest wish
Accord thee of thy heart; for that thou hast
This cordial welcome granted me." Wherefore
Eumæus, in these words replying, spake:—

"O stranger! 'Twere a wrongful act of mine,
Ev'n should a wretch more hapless than thyself
Before me come, on such a stranger's claim
To cast contempt: for ev'ry one Unknown
And ev'ry Mendicant from Jove Himself
His claim prefers. But, small indeed though kind
Are our donations all; as is the wont
Of serving men who in misgivings live
Continual, when young masters rule supreme.
For, of a truth, the gods have the return
Of him long thwarted, who with warm regard
Once fav'rd me, and with substantial gifts
Ere now would have endow'd me; such, indeed,
As a good master to the servant gives
Who hath long serv'd him, (and upon whose toil
God from on high hath kindly increase giv'n)
A dwelling of his own,—a plot of land—
And such a wife as many a one would woo:
Not but that here the work on which my day
Of life is spent augments alike and thrives.
Thus, had he here grown old,—my master, too,
My lot would have enrich'd. But, he is gone!
And truly might I wish that Helen's race
Had all and utterly extinct become,
Who multitudes of men to death consign'd:
For, he, too, for king Agamemnon's fame
To Ilion went,—that stud of matchless steeds—
To War's encounter with the hosts of Troy."

Thus having spoken, he his swineherd's cloak
In haste about him girt, and to the styes
With hurrying steps betook him, where the young
Of all the sows were litter'd, and herefrom
Having two chosen, to his cot he led,
And there, as sacrifices, slaughter'd both.
Then, having scalded and in portions carv'd,
On spits he fix'd them: and, when all was roast,
Hot from the spits he carried ev'ry piece
And by Ulysses placed it. Then, white meal
Upon the flesh he strew'd, and in a cup
Of ivy-wood the racy wine he mix'd,
And face to face before the Chieftain sate,
With this address exhorting him:—"Eat, now,
O Stranger, of the swine which we in store
For all the household at the Palace keep;
But, on the fatten'd swine the suitors feast,
Who neither for that future which their deeds
Must in due time avenge, or for the claims
Of pity take one thought. The blessed gods
No favour to flagitious acts concede;
But to all honour, rectitude, and deeds
That piety in mortal men bespeak:
Ev'n open enemies and men of wills
Implacable, who on some alien coast
Invaders land, and unto whom great Jove
Hath spoil therefrom allotted, and who thus
Their ships have laded, and each homeward turn'd, 145
Ev'n among these, I say, a certain sense
Of retribution that shall come, prevails,
And no light dread withal. Now, even these,
These suitors, have some inkling gain'd, or voice
Of some god heard, as to my master's fate 150
And piteous end; for, with no upright suit
Woo they my mistress; neither to their homes
Consent they to return; but, unrestrain'd,
With despot insolence my master's stores
And worldly means they ravage and consume,
And all is reckless, unreflecting waste!
Let pass what number may of nights and days
(By Jove's permission ending and begun),
One victim, (nay, nor two) will not suffice
For them as slaughter'd victims to destroy:— 160
And, for his wine—to never ceasing loss,
By rude and careless drawing of it off,
They subject it. And, yet, his means of life
Enormous were. No hero of them all,
Whether of dark Epirus, or the isle
Of Ithaca itself such treasure hath.
Not twice ten owners with their blended all
Such affluence can boast: but, to thine ear
Will I the sum detail:—Upon main land
Twelve herds he hath: Of sheep, as many flocks: 170
Of swine, the same: And strangers in his pay,
And shepherds, a like multitude of goats
In pasture tend. Eleven of these flocks,
Each very large, upon the point extreme
Of grazing land are fed; and worthy men
Are they who overlook them: day by day
Each homeward brings a goat, whichever seems
In all those herds best fatten’d. But, these swine
Watch I and tend myself: and, of the best
Selection making, to that suitor train
I send it straight.”

Ev’n thus Eumæus spake,
And rav’nously did Ulysses of the meat
Before him eat, and with a vehement draught
Drank down the proffer’d wine, but mute remain’d,
And in the deep recesses of his soul
A scheme of vengeance fram’d which on the crowd
Of suitors should alight. But, when his meal
Eumæus had now ended, and his strength
With food refresh’d, he, when the selfsame cup
From which he drank was to the brim re-fill’d,
The wine to his guest proffer’d, who with joy
The draught accepted, and with rapid words
His host address’d: “My friend! who is the lord
In wealth and influence eminent who thus,
As thou the tale recountest, hath thyself
With his dominions purchas’d? This thou saidst,
That in king Agamemnon’s glory’s cause
He lost his life: Now, tell me—for the chance
Of my this man already having known
Whom thou thus sett’st before me. Haply Jove
And all the other gods this full well know
That if I have beheld him I could now
Some tidings give thee of him; for, in climes
Unnumber’d have my lengthsome wand’rings been.”

To this the swineherd, instant in reply,
These words return'd: "Old man! In vain would one
Who after world-wide roaming should arrive
With tidings of our prince, his wife or son
Endeavour to convince. Mere loiterers
That in sheer want of victual vagrant stroll,
Yet to be messengers of truth disdain,
To lies at random fain would utterance give:
Of these, whoever, having long time rov'd,
Among the folk of Ithaca sets foot
Forthwith my mistress seeks, and in her ear
Some fresh imposture mutters: Whereat she
With kindly welcome greets him, and the whole
Of this deliver'd narrative perpends,
Till from her flooding eyes the teardrops fall,
As of that woman's life a usage is
Whose husband in a distant land has fall'n.
Nay, haply, even thou thyself, old man!
Some tale would'st forge, if any for thy wear
A cloak would give thee and close fitting vest!
But, no: the dogs and many a swift-wing'd bird
Have but too surely from his body's bones
Their cov'ring torn; and life hath fled from him!
Or, fishes have his carcase in the sea,
May be, devour'd;—and his denuded frame
In mounds of sand envelop'd lies on shore.
Thus, far from hence hath he to fate succumb'd;
And heavy woe is in the future stor'd
For all who love him; above all, for me:
For, never more, wherever I may turn,
Shall I another master, so benign,
So gentle, find! no, not if to the house
My steps I were to bend where in this world
I first drew vital breath, and where still dwell
My father and my mother, whose joint care
My nourishment supplied: not that for these
Such deep regret I cherish, although fain
Would I once more on my parental soil
Gaze with these eyes upon them: but the grief
With which the lost Ulysses I deplore
Fills my whole heart. And though here, on this spot,
He standeth not, O Stranger! a deep sense
Of reverential homage o'er me comes
While I his name pronounce: for wondrous love
He bore me ever, and in all his thoughts
My welfare he perpended; for which cause,
However distant be our sep'rate lots,
'My elder brother' I Ulysses call!"

To this the noble, long-enduring Chief,
Ulysses, thus replied:—"My friend! since thou
With utter unbelief my speech receiv'st—
Since not a single thought thou cherishest
That this return shall ever be,—and faith
Thy mind herein hath none,—not only this
Will I declare, but with an oath affirm,
That on his way Ulysses hither speeds:
And my good tidings do thou thus requite—
When once again within his own good house
He shall set foot, do thou, in that same hour,
Becoming raiment round me throw;—a cloak
And vest withal: But, not ere this shall be
Will I, however urgent be my need,
Such garb accept; for, he who to his want
Succumbing would the speech of guile employ

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By me is loath'd as I the portals would
Of Hell itself detest. But, now, may Jove
Of Gods supreme bear witness,—and the board
Of this thy hospitality, and the hearth
Of unimpeach'd Ulysses, upon which
I here am standing—of a surety all,
As I am now to thee declaring it,
Shall come to pass: aye, in this very year
Ulysses will return! This month will end,—
The next will open on us, and his home
Shall he then repossess, and full revenge
On that man wreak whoever in this land
Would contumely upon his consort fling,
Or on his honour'd son."

To all which words
Didst thou, Eumæus, this rejoinder make:—
"Old man! for all such welcome tidings ne'er
Shall I the recompense thou namest pay:
Ne'er to his home Ulysses cometh more!
Drink on, and let our converse upon themes
From this far diff'rent dwell; and to my mind
Recall the past no more: for, all my heart
Within me 'gins to sorrow, speak who will
Of my much-honour'd prince. The oath thou nam'ist
We will abandon. Let Ulysses come
As 'tis my wish he may; aye, and the wish
Of his Penelope, his agèd sire
Laertes, and high-soul'd Telemachus,
And now for him, anew, (the only son
Ulysses hath,) my heart is deeply griev'd:
For, like some tender scion did the gods
That offspring cherish! And my speech it was
That, noble as he show'd, in mind and parts
No less endow'd than his lov'd father was,
Would he among his fellowmen be found.
But, some immortal god, or some mere man,
His steadfast mind has driv'n distract, for now
Is he to holy Pylos Island gone
Fresh tidings of his father's fate to seek;
And those presumptuous suitors in some coign
Of secret watch are lurking, on his life
Intent, as he shall homeward bend his course;
And this, that all the great Arcesian race
And ev'n the name thereof from this our isle
Of Ithaca may ever be cut off.
But, let this pass; and speak no more of him,
A captive or far fugitive. May Jove,
The son of Saturn, his protecting hand
Above him deign t' extend! But, come, old man!
The tale of thine own suff'ring's let me hear:
In all good faith inform me, that the truth
I thus may learn: Who art thou? From what race
Of men descended? Where, upon this earth,
Standeth thy native city? Where are those
To whom thy birth thou owest? In what sort
Of vessel cam'st thou hither? And, her crew?
How did they to this coast of Ithaca
Thy way effect? Their designation, what?
For, ne'er, methinks, this spot thou gain'dst on foot."

To this acute Ulysses thus replied:—
"Then, with account concise will I all this
To thee detail. But, were there at command

D 2
Such ample store of food and gen'rous wine
As might us two for yet long time to come
Here in this cot of thine suffice to feed,
And each day's leisurely repast afford
While those around their sev'ral tasks should ply,
I should not even then my tale conclude;
No, not if the revolving year pass'd by
While I on my afflictions dwelt, and all
Which by divine decree I had to brook.

"My lineage from the tribes of spacious Crete
I rightly trace, where of a wealthy man
I was the son: though many another youth
Was in his palace born and bred, the sons
Of his own wedded wife: but to myself
A concubine gave birth; one who the place
Of mother by my father's purchase fill'd.
Castor Hylacides, from whom I sprang,
In like regard upheld me with his sons
Of lawful issue: he, himself, by all
Among the Cretans, like some god, esteem'd,
So flourishing his fortunes were,—so rich
Was all his state,—so noble were his sons!
Still did Death's doom to Pluto's realms my sire
At length consign; and his high-spirited sons
His wealth between them parted, and their shares
By lot determin'd; but, to me, indeed,
But little, save a house, apportion'd they.
Still, on the strength of my acknowledg'd worth,
A wife I wedded, such as wealthy men
Might well have chosen; for no empty pride
Did I display, nor in the time of war
Did I a recreant prove. But, all this, now
Availeth me no longer: still, methinks,
Thou in the standing stubble wilt discern
All that the plant hath been. Distress extreme
Hath fixt its hold on me; yet, time hath been
When Mars and Pallas all my spirit rous'd
To val'rous daring; prowess which through ranks
Resistless rush'd, when from my troop the best
Of gallant soldiers I had draughted off
From some close covert to waylay our foe
And sore defeat inflict on him. My thoughts
Would never then before my eyes bring death,
But evermore the foremost, spear in hand,
Upon the hostile front to throw myself,
Each foe, as I displaced him, I destroy'd.

"Such was I on the field of fight: Field-work
Had never charm for me; nor, indoor life—
Though oft it proves the nursery of the great.
My heart was ever in the best-oar'd ships—
In warlike expeditions, and in spears
Of brilliant finish, darts, and implements
Of baneful use, from which the gen'ral mind
Revolted turns away. But, in mine eyes
These most delectable appear'd, and these
The Deity himself was evermore
To my young mind presenting. One man this
For his life's energies, another that
With ardour chooses. Ere the sons of Greece
With hostile expedition sail'd for Troy,
Nine times had I o'er troops and gallant fleets
The chief command 'gainst alien armies held,
And all success attended me. Herefrom 'Twas mine to choose the spoil that I preferr'd, And much did I thereafter gain by lot. Thus speedily my house began to thrive, And I soon rose to greatness, and the show Of homage 'mid the Cretans I receiv'd. But, when far-seeing Jove his will had bent On that ahorr'd invasion which the thews And sinews of so many hath destroy'd, The charge on me was laid and on that chief Renown'd Idomeneus to head the fleet Then bound for Troy: and no device avail'd This service to evade; the popular voice At that time domineering. Nine long years We sons of Greece were battling. In the tenth, When Priam's city was in ruins laid, We homeward with our ships set sail; but God The Greeks on ocean scatter'd; and on me The all-wise Jove a grievous fate impos'd: For, but for one brief month the joy I felt Of my dear parents' love;—the converse shar'd Of her whom in her youth I made my wife; And on my gains subsisted. Then, my thoughts A voyage prompted to th' Egyptian coast With well-trimm'd ships and comrades brave to sail. And nine ships fitted I, and with all speed Were all their crews assembled; and six days These comrades of my choice to feasting gave: For many slaughter'd beasts into their hands Deliver'd I, as off'ring's to the gods And for their festive board. But, on the sev'nth Crete's ample territory having left
With a brisk Northern wind, right fair, we sail'd,
As lightly, too, as if the ocean tide
Were with us flowing; nor, indeed, did one
Of all my ships a hurt sustain; but there
Unharm'd we lay, and from all sickness free,
The wind, alone, and steersmen guiding us.

"On the fifth day at that fair-flowing land
Of Egypt we arriv'd, and all my fleet
In great Ægyptus' river-stream 1 moor'd,
And on my lov'd associates laid command
Close by their fleet to tarry, and each ship
To haul ashore: fit sentries, too, I placed
On certain points their watch to hold: But they
To restive impulse yielding, and the bent
Of their own will enforcing, in brief space
The loveliest fields of the Egyptians spoil'd,
Their wives and tender infants carried off
And massacred: and quickly did the cry
Of suff'ring reach the city, whence the crowd,
By screams arous'd, at early morn rush'd forth
Till all the fields around with troops of horse
And infantry and bright brass panoply
Were overspread; and then did Jove, whose might
In thunderbolts rejoiceth, craven fear
In all my comrades waken, nor did one
The risen adversary dare to face,
Beset as from all quarters all our band
That moment were with peril and dismay.
There with keen sword-blade many of our crews
Did Egypt's hosts hew down; and some alive
They captive took, and to forc'd toil condemn'd."
But, Jove, at length, this project in my mind
Began to raise;—(but, would that on that spot
I, too, my death had met, and in the land
Of Egypt clos'd my fate! for, even then,
Fresh sufferings awaited me)—my casque
From off my head I took, and from my arm
My buckler disengag'd, and from my hand
My spear cast down, and right before the steeds
Of the king's chariot rushing, on his knees
I threw myself and kiss'd them; whereupon
My rescue he effected, and the sense
Of pity show'd, and having by his side
Within his chariot placed me, homeward turn'd
And thither led me all in tears suffus'd.
Ev'n as we went, full many a hostile arm
The ashen-shafted spear against me rais'd—
Exasperate as they were; and on my life
Intent they rush'd upon me, but their king
The death-stroke parried, while the wrath of Jove
(Protector of the friendless) he rever'd—
That god whose anger from all wrongful acts
Above all else revolts.

For many years
I there abode, and among Egypt's tribes
No slender wealth amass'd; for none were slow
In the bestowal of their gifts. But when
The eighth year's course began, a certain man,
Phœnician born, before me came; in wiles
Deep skill'd, a greedy knave, whose art
Abundant mischief among men had wrought,
And now by shrewdness overcoming me
From Egypt's shores withdrew me, and at length
Phoenicia reach'd where his domestic hearth
And all his substance lay. With him a year
Entire I liv'd; but, when the months and days
Their course had run, and the revolving year
A new career began, and, in their turn,
The seasons reappear'd, my passage he
In a sea-going bark to Libya bound
Would fain suggest, that I with him for sale
A cargo might convey: whereas, the scheme
Was but one hollow trick, whereby myself
He might on board that ship to Libya bear
And into slav'ry at huge profit sell!

"In that same ship I sail'd with him, although
My mind was then misgiving me. Her course
Before a brisk and fair North wind she kept
Till midway passage beyond Crete we reach'd:
And then did Jove their final doom decree:—
For, when we now had left the isle, and land
No longer, but the sky and sea
Alone to eyes were visible, the son
Of Saturn a grey cloud above the ship
In air o'erhung, beneath whose gloom the sea
In darkness lay. Jove, with continual crash
Thunder'd on high, and on that merchant-ship
A bolt of light'ning hurl'd, and halfway round
By Jove's flash struck she reel'd, and with the fume
Of sulphur instant fill'd; and ev'ry man
From off' her deck into the billows dropp'd.
Like sea-birds on the wave around the hull
There were they toss'd; but all return to them
The god denied, yet right into my grasp,
In all the anguish of my mind, did Jove
The yet unshiver'd floating mast direct
That I might yet be sav'd! Here holding fast,
O'er the great deep by the death-dealing winds
Was I transported. For nine days I thus
O'er billows drove, but in the tenth dark night
A huge convolving wave roll'd drifting on
To th' shore of the Thesprotians. There the king,
The hero Pheidon, the entire free gift
Of welcome on me lavish'd; for, his son,
As drawing nigh he found me by the cold
And struggling quite o'ercome, with aiding hand
Uprais'd me, and my leading guide became
Until the mansion of his sire he reach'd.
And there for raiment he around me threw
A mantle and a vest. And in this home
I mention of Ulysses heard: for he,
Pheidon, affirm'd that he his host had been
And a warm welcome on the guest bestow'd
To his own land returning. Hereupon
The treasure heap he show'd me,—brass and gold
And polish'd steel which, gath'ring for his own,
Ulysses had amass'd: and any home
To the tenth generation might that wealth
Have well maintain'd; such store of it there lay
In the king's palace hoarded. But that chief,
He said, was to Dodona gone, advice
Celestial to solicit from the Oak.
Of Jove, whose top in crested foliage tow'rs,
His voyage to direct, as now again,
By public entry or by screen'd approach,
The wealthy citizens of Ithaca,
So long time exil'd, he would fain rejoin.

"Then, on his hearth libation having made,
He, on an oath, assur'd me that the ship
Was from the shore thrust forth, and all its crew
To prompt attendance held who should the Chief
Conduct to his lov'd fatherland. But me
He first despatch'd; for a Thesprotian keel
By chance was to Dulichium bound, the land
In wheaten crops abounding: and command
To that ship's crew he gave with escort prompt
To lead me to the king Acastus' court.
But, that to all past sorrows some fresh source
Of suff'ring might be added, a base plot
These men's minds enter'd thus to deal with me:—
As soon as our sea-going ship a point
From land remote had reach'd, that instant they
To days of Slav'ry doom'd me. Upon this,
My mantle and my vest—my raiment all—
They took from me, and round my body flung
In lieu thereof these tatters and this strip
Of merest rags which thou with thine own eyes
Art at this moment gazing on. That night
Off the till'd lands of Western Ithaca
They laid their ship, in which, with a stout rope,
They tightly bound me down, and then to shore
Betook themselves, and in all haste a meal
Upon the shingle ate. But gods they were
Who without effort all my fetters loos'd;
And then when I a strip about my brows
In folds had bound, through the smooth rudder's length
glided down, and to the briny flood.  
My breast committed, and with outstretch'd hands 580  
The waters cleft, and swam; and in brief space  
The station I had quitted—from their place  
Of landing now far distant; But my steps  
Into the copse of a free blossoming wood  
Up'd me, where, upon my breast laid flat, 585  
Awhile I pause'd; they, all the time, with moans  
Their loss bewailing, though no good they judg'd  
From further search could come: whereat again  
On board they went. But, without effort made,  
The gods thus screen'd me, and, from that retreat 590  
Down guiding me, my steps have thus far led  
That to this sheltering station I might come,  
And reach a wise and understanding man:—  
For, Fate so wills it,—I am still to live!"

To this, Eumæus, did'st thou thus reply:— 595  
"Most hapless of all strangers! In my mind  
Strong feelings hast thou rous'd, while thou thy tale  
Hast at such length narrated: Such distress  
Hast thou endur'd! Thy wanderings so long!  
But, still, methinks, the statements thou hast made 600  
Cohere not well; no, nor will all thou say'st  
Of great Ulysses' fate my mind convince.  
Becomes it thee, considering who thou art,  
To speak thus recklessly, and idly lie?  
As to my prince's safe return, of this 605  
I fully conscious am that he the hate  
Of all the gods incurr'd, for that they fail'd  
To bow his spirit among Trojan foes  
Or by the hands of traitor friends, when he
Alone wound up the heavy task of War.
Then would all Greece have rear'd on high his tomb,
And glorious fame had he achiev'd;—renown
That to his son in ages yet unborn
Should have descended. But, by Harpies, now,
Of all the honour wrong'd that should be his,
Hath he been torn away. Myself, indeed,
From men withdrawn, among these swine abide;
Nor ever to the city visit make
Save when discreet Penelope, as news
From any quarter reaches her, may chance
To urge my going. But, the crowds that throng
His palace-courts continual question ask—
Both they who our long-exil'd prince lament,
And they whose hearts exult while all his wealth
(As yet unreach'd by vengeance) they consume.
Yet, for my part, no joy have I deriv'd
From eager seeking and from question ask'd,
From that day forth on which by forg'd report
A native of Ætolia play'd me false,
Who stated that, upon the death of one
By his hand slain, he over many a realm
Had wander'd wide, and thus my dwelling reach'd.
With sedulous zeal I welcom'd him. He said
He saw Ulysses with Idomeneus
Upon the isle of Crete, where he his ships
Shiver'd by storms was tarrying to refit.
His tale was that Ulysses there declar'd
That, in the summer days or autumn-tide,
With many a gather'd treasure, and with bands
Of noble comrades, home would he return.
And now, do thou, old man, in sorrow vers'd!
For that the deity to this retreat
Thy steps hath led, seek not with feign’d accounts
To gladden me, nor my belief beguile;
For, on that ground regard nor welcome none
Wilt thou from me e’er win: my sole constraint
Would Jove then be, who round the stranger throws
His guardian care; and that mere pity’s dole
Which, haply, is thy due.”

Hereon, the Chief
In many a counsel apt, Ulysses, spoke:—
“An unbelieving mind hast thou, indeed!
By no sworn oath have I inveigled thee,
Nor would I sway thee now. But, come, this pact
Let us alternate frame, and may the gods
Th’ Olympian realms inhabiting to both
Their witness bear! If to this house of thine
Thy sov’reign lord shall come,—then, with a cloak
And vest, as my apparel, to the isle
Dulichium send me (where I fain would be);
But, if thy prince arrive not, as my words
Are now affirming, give thy servants charge
From a steep rock to fling me, that henceforth
Each coming beggar may the deed eschew
Of trying to cajole.”

The swineherd thus
In turn rejoin’d: “O Stranger! High renown
And worth, indeed, among all men at large
Would in that case be mine to win, in time
Then current, and in years that must ensue—
That I, when underneath this home-stall’s roof
I had receiv'd thee and with welcome hail'd,
Should afterwards a mur'd'rous onslaught make,
And rob thee of thy very life! How prompt
Should then my depreciating pray'r, if thus
I could transgress, to Saturn's son ascend!
But, lo! for our repast the time draws nigh;
And those who here my occupations share
Will speedily come in, that in the cot
They may an ample ev'n'ning meal prepare."

Such intercourse of kindly speech they held.
And now the swine approach'd, and they, withal,
Who fed them, and whose care it was to close
Within their wonted sleeping place the herds.
And such a grunt arose from all those swine
Their styes re-entering as tongue of man
Could ill describe; but, to his fellow hinds
Eumenes these few words address'd:—"The best
Of all those swine bring hither, that the beast
I may in sacrificial slaughter kill,
And to my guest here offer, who from far
A wanderer is come. And we, ourselves,
Hereon may well regale, on whom the charge
Of all these white-tusk'd swine hath heavy lain
And no brief labour cost us; while there are
Who all the fruit of our perpetual toil
Are, unrestrain'd, devouring." As he spake,
With temper'd steel a billet log he clave,
And, presently, the herds a huge fat sow
Of five years' growth led in, and on the hearth
At once a standing made for it: nor then
Of all the rev'rence to the immortals due
Did that swineherd (right-minded as he was)
Oblivious prove, but, first fruits offering,
The hair from off the victim’s head he pluck’d
And to the fire consign’d, and all the gods
In pray’r invok’d that shrewd Ulysses might
His home regain. Then, with the oaken brand
Uplifted (which he clave) the sow he smote,
And life was momently extinct. They next
The throat incis’d, and all the bristles singed;
And with all speed the carcase was cut up.
The swineherd then upon the luscious fat
The cruder portions placed, from ev’ry side
Beginning with the limbs: some fragments, too,
Sprinkling with flour he on the embers cast:
The remnants they cut small, and on the spits
Adroitly fix’d and roasted and drew off.
Then upon boards the mass entire they rang’d,
And to his feet Eumæus rose, (whose mind
For all that now was due was taking thought)
The joints and flesh to sever; and as thus
He carving stood, the whole in seven parts
He now apportion’d: one, upon a vow,
He to the Nymphs and Mercury assign’d
The son of Maia; and to all around
The residue he handed: but his guest
Ulysses with the white-tusk’d sow’s long chine
He, as of special courtesy, supplied,
And caus’d his princely spirit to rejoice;
So that from that for ever fertile mind
These thoughts in words found utterance;—“May’st thou be
To father Jove as dear as thou by me
Art at this moment held, who all this good
On such a being as in thy regards
I must appear, hast with all rev'rence heap'd!"

But thus didst thou, Eumæus, in few words
Make answer:—"Eat! thou guest of mine, whose soul
No earthy spirit testifies! With all
That now before thee lieth make good cheer!
The deity one boon may grant, and one
Withhold, as to his judgment seemeth best;
For is he not omnipotent!" He spake;
And to the gods the primal off'ring made,
And, having of the wine libations pour'd,
He in Ulysses' hands, (c'en those of him
Who many a city had in overthrow
Destructive laid,) the brimming goblet plac'd,
And near his portion his own station took.
Then did Mesaulius at that board their bread
To each present,—he whom, of his own thought,
(And to Laertes and the queen unknown)
Eumæus, when his prince was far away,
Had as a bondsman taken. His own means
Of certain Taphians bought him. And on all
That on the table spread before them lay
Did they now lay their hand; but, when no more
For wine or viands they began to care,
Mesaulius the feast's remains withdrew;—
And with abundant bread and flesh content
They soon to bedward hasten'd. But the night
Untoward, with a clouded moon, drew on,
And through its darkling hours downpouring show'rs
From Jove in Heaven fell, and that West wind,
Whose blast the sure precursor proves of rain,

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Began to rage; and, while it yet blew hard,
Ulysses call'd to those around, as though
The swineherd he would prove, and for himself
Eumæus' mantle borrow,—if, indeed,
He would the cov'ring lend, or of some hind
That serv'd him there the like petition make;
For, with but only a too sedulous zeal
The swineherd had befriended him: And thus
Ulysses 'gan to speak:—

"Hear, now, the words,
Eumæus! and all you who with him serve!
To which, although to vaunt I may appear,
I must give ut'trance; for that crazing wine
Has set me on, which oft the wisest man
Ere now hath stirr'd up into noisy song,
Or into burst of friv'rous laughter thrown,
Nay, even rous'd to dancing, or some speech
Impulsive prompted, which 'twere better far
Had ne'er been utter'd. But, since now at length
This outcry I have made, what more remains
To tell you I withhold not. Would that I
Were still in youthful prime, and that my pow'rs
Were now as then robust, when 'neath the walls
Of Ilion I a secret sally plann'd
And headed, too: Ulysses and the son
Of Atreus, Menelaus, took the lead,
And, as a third, I also held command;
For this of me they ask'd. And when the town
And its high tow'ring ramparts we had reach'd,
We in dense shrubs around the bulwarks lay,
And among bulrushes and swamps crept close
Upon our weapons resting, night the while
With dire disasters having gather’d round, and wind
With freezing rigour blowing from the North;
Snow overhead impending—and a rime
Of cold intense, so that about our shields
The ice encrusted lay. Now, in that band
Each man his mantle and due raiment wore
And tranquil slept, and with their bucklers all
Their shoulders had well cover’d. I alone
When with my comrades I went forth, no cold
Extreme like this surmising, had my cloak
Unwisely left behind, and on I went
With my shield only and a glossy belt
Accoutred; but, when now the night one third
Had well nigh wasted, and the stars had set,
I to Ulysses spoke, who near me lay,
And with my elbow stirr’d him; but, his ear
Was prompt to hearken, and my words were these:—

"‘O thou in counsel ever ready! Son
Of aged Laertes! not much longer space
Of time shall I ’mid living men be found;
For, this chill air is killing me: no cloak
Have I to wear: some god on me this guile
Hath practis’d, that with this sole tunic clad
I here should be: but, help for it is none!’
I ceas’d to speak; but, he without demur
On this expedient lighted;—so alert
Was he at all times to advise or fight!
And in an undertone he thus replied:—

"‘Remain thou mute; lest any Greek at hand
Homer's Odyssey

Thy voice o'erhear.' So murmur'd he, and then,
His head upon his elbow resting, thus
Aloud exclaim'd:

'Attend to me, my friends!
A heav'n-sent dream hath on my slumbers stol'n:
Far are we from our ships: let one of you
To Agamemnon, son of Atreus, speed
(The pastor of his people,) that command
He may this instant issue for more men
To join us from the fleet.' Such were his words,
And, all alacritiy, Andromon's son,
Thoas, upstarting to his feet, his cloak
Of purple hue threw down, and to the fleet
Began to run; and with no little glee
Did I the while, till golden-throned morn
Again shone forth, within that raiment lie!
Oh! that I were this moment young as then!
Would that my vigour were as then robust!
For, then, some herd that in this home-stall serves
His cloak would offer; for twain reasons, too—
From impulse of mere kindness—, and the sense
Of deference owing to the man I am:
But, as it is, while this vile garb around
My body hangs, they view me with mere scorn.'

"But, to this speech Eumæus thus in turn
Responsive spake:—'Old man! In all thy tale
Thyself art irreproachable, nor word
Of idle import or to right oppos'd
Have thy lips utter'd. For which cause, no vest
Shalt thou for this time want, or aught else miss
Which should the wants of such a suppliant meet,
Who in keen suff'ring's hath been tried, and thus
Entreaty makes; but, at return of morn,
Thou thine own tatters must perforce resume;
For, changes num'rous of such cloaks and clothes
For men to don we have not: one alone
Here have we for each man: But, when that son
Whom well Ulysses loveth shall return,
He, of his own accord, will for thy wear
A mantle and close-fitting vest bestow,
And to such place despatch thee as thy wish
May urge thee first to visit.” With these words
Eumaeus to his feet at once upsprang,
And near the embers on the hearth a couch
In order rang'd, and hides of sheep and goats
Upon it flung: and there Ulysses lay—
And over him a mantle thick and wide
The swineherd cast, which, should a flooding rain
Tremendous fall, might timely change supply.

Thus, in that cot Ulysses slept, and near
Slumber'd the youthful herdsmen; but, no couch
From all his herded swine so distant placed
Eumaeus would content; and, stepping out,
He certain weapons chose, at sight of which
Ulysses' heart was gladden'd, thus to mark
How, when himself was distant deem'd, such zeal
His substance was protecting. A keen blade
Eumaeus round his brawny shoulders slung,
And a stout, close, compactly woven cloak
From the rude blast to screen him, with the wool
Of a huge, high-fed goat, he round him threw,
And a well sharpen'd lance he grasp'd, from dogs
Or men to hold him harmless. Thus array'd
He sallied forth, that where the white-tusk'd swine
Beneath a cavern,—from the Northern gale
Securely shelter'd—lay, he too might lie.

END OF THE FOURTEENTH BOOK.
BOOK XV.

HER way, meanwhile, to Sparta's ample site
Pallas Minerva sped, the noble son
Of great Ulysses to remind;—to prompt
His voyage home; and urge a quick return.
And there Telemachus and Nestor's son
In the guest chamber of the entrance hall
Of Menelaus' home she found reclin'd.
The son of Nestor in repose most sweet
Unconscious lay: no sleep Telemachus,
That night, subdued; for, through its heav'n-sent hours, 10
His anxious mind with many a heavy thought
His absent father's destiny revolv'd:
And Pallas, as beside his couch she stood,
Thus 'gan to speak:—"Telemachus! No more
Will it avail thee, through so many days 15
From thine own home thus absent, to remain
A wanderer;—in that palatial house
At once thy treasures leaving, and a crowd
Of proud presumptuous ones; lest they in lots
That wealth dividi ng should at length disperse,
And thou a thriftless voyage shalt have made.
Now, with all speed great Menelaus urge—
(That chief in fight so valiant!)—that forthwith
He from this port dispatch thee; that at home
Thine unoffending mother thou may'st find:
Now that her father and her brothers urge
Her nuptials with Eurymachus,—ev'n him
Who all his rivals in resplendent gifts
Exceeds, and, in those off' rings which to brides
All suitors make, a lavish increase adds.
Well may'st thou dread lest from that princely home
Some portion of its wealth, in spite of thee,
Withdrawn should be. Nor unobserv'd of thee
Is this strong impulse in a woman's mind;—
Her aim it is the house to elevate
Of him who shall her consort be; but, thought
From that time forth for any offspring born
To her first husband, or for him to whom
Her maiden troth was given—(him now dead—)
She taketh none, nor of his destiny
Aught question asketh she! Go, now, thyself,
And from thy household the most trusty choose,
And all that thou possessest to her hands
At once confide; until before thine eyes
The gods a worthy wife at length shall bring.

"But, more than this must I disclose; and this
Perpend thou well:—Of all that suitors throng
The leaders at this moment eager watch,
In secret covert to surprise thee, keep,
'Twixt Ithaca and rugged Samos' isle,
Upon thy death intent, ere on the soil
Of thy paternal land thou set thy foot:
But, this, methinks, shall never be: The earth
Will sooner certain of those suitors claim
Who all thy means are wasting. From the isle
Steer thy good ship aloof; and in the night
Spread thou thy sails, and some immortal god
(Who'er thy champion and deliv' rer be!)
Shall on thy stern propitious breezes waft.
But, when thou first on the Ithacian shore
Thy landing shalt accomplish, to the town
Thy ship and all its crew with haste dispatch,
And first the Herd seek out who of thy swine
The keeper is;—who with a genial soul
Affecteth thee. Beneath his roof that night
Take thou thy rest, and bid him hereupon
The city visit, that Penelope
He may apprize of thee from Pylos' isle
Securely landed and in safety lodg'd."

Thus having spoken, to Olympus' height
Her course she sped; but, from his gentle sleep
Telemachus the son of Nestor wak'd,
As with his heel he touch'd him, and these words
In the same moment spake:—"Pisistratus!
Thou son of Nestor, rise! and, bringing out
Thy strong-hoof'd coursers, to the chariot's yoke
Attach them that we may our journey speed."

But, unto this Pisistratus, the son
Of Nestor, answer made:—"Telemachus!
However this our journey we may urge,
Through the dark night we cannot drive: but, morn
Will soon be breaking: rest awhile, at least,
Until that hero, on whose spear the fame
Of battle rests, Atrides Menelaus—
Of sundry gifts a donor—shall them all
Within yon chariot stow, and many a speech
Of cordial kindness adding, shall us both
Upon our journey speed. Throughout his life,
A guest the gen’rous man should keep in mind
Who to his home hath welcom’d him.”

He spoke,

And Morning on her golden throne anew
In light return’d; and Menelaus, bold
And brave in fields of fight, was from his couch
And from the fair-hair’d Helen’s side upris’n,
And now approach’d his guests; but, when the son
Of great Ulysses saw him, the brave youth
A glossy tunic with all haste drew on,
And o’er his manly shoulders a broad cloak
Enfolding, through the chamber-door went forth,
And thus his host address’d:—"O Menelaus!
The son of Atreus! thou, whom Jove himself
Hath cherish’d,—of thy people Chieftain nam’d!
Speed me, I pray thee, to that well-lov’d spot,
My fatherland; for, to regain that home
My heart within me yearns.”

To which appeal

That valiant warrior Menelaus thus:—
"Telemachus! a ling’ring space of time
I will not here detain thee, thy return
So ardently desiring. With reproach
Should I the host upbraid who to his guests
A welcome gave, and with extreme regard
One should esteem;—another fiercely hate!
Those acts which to strict equity conform
Are worthiest ever: and the selfsame wrong
Doth he commit who from his home would drive
The guest who fain would linger there,—with him
Who stays the man that on his way would speed.
And graceful is it, on a guest receiv'd
All friendliness to lavish;—and to one,
Who fain would leave us, with a ready will
To proffer means of quitting. But, do thou
With me here tarry until splendid gifts
I shall have brought, and on the chariot rang'd,
That here thine eyes may view them: and command
Will I unto our handmaids give, a meal
In our palatial hall to spread: so much
As stores within, at present, may supply.
It wakens courage and a merry heart,
And a refreshing stay is it, on meats
To sit and feast ere on a lengthsome route,
The bounds of which they know not, travellers start.
But, if through Hellas and the central point
Of Argos thou would'st now thy progress shape,
I will myself thine escort be: my steeds
Shall to their yoke be harness'd, and the homes
Of men and cities shalt thou look upon,
Not one of whom without a parting gift
Will from their coasts dismiss us, but some pledge
To bear away will bring,—a tripod, say,
Of brazen work, a caldron, or two mules,
Or a gold cup."
But, thus, in sage reply,
Telemachus:—"O Menelaus! son
Of Atreus, cherish'd one of Jove himself,
Great leader of thy people! Fain would I
To my own house return; for, when that home
I quitted, no protector left I there
My own to care for, lest, while thus my sire—
That godlike man!—I seek, myself on death,
May be, should rush; or, treasure of great price
Should, in the palace stolen, from my hands
Thus pass away for ever."

But, when this
Brave Menelaus heard, an order prompt
Both to his queen and her attendant train
Of handmaids he gave out a feast forthwith
Within the palace to prepare, such store
Of viands bringing on, as in those halls
Uptreasur'd lay: And Etroneus, son
Of aged Boëtheus, from his sleep arous'd,
(For, at a distance dwelt he not) approach'd
And from bold Menelaus order took
To kindle embers and some flesh to roast:
And not unmindful of that strait command
The serving man, as he gave ear, remain'd.
But, to his chambers, where sweet scented fumes
Were all diffus'd, great Menelaus went,
Not singly ent'ring there,—for Helen, too,
And Megapenthes at his side stepp'd close.
But when that treasury they reach'd where lay
His heap'd abundance, Atreus' son a cup
Of globous form selected, and his son
Young Megapenthes a wrought silver bowl
He bade remove; and by the coffer's side
Where all th' embroider'd raiments, (by herself
In beauty work'd,) were lying, Helen stood:—
Helen! of womankind most goddess like,
One of these garments, which by far the rest
In size surpass'd and in the needle's art,
Uprais'd to view, and brought it forth from where
In the last layer it lay, and like a star
Effulgent gleam'd. And now through all the house
They took their way, until Telemachus
Without they found, and Menelaus then
The youth address'd:—"Telemachus! May Jove,
That consort of Queen Juno, who on high
In crashing thunder soundeth, so to thee
Thy journey homeward speed, as thou hast wish'd:
But, gifts from wealth within my mansion stor'd
Will I on thee bestow, which in themselves
Most ornate are and costly: a carv'd bowl
Pres't I here—all silver—but with gold
The rim is blent, and Vulcan's work is it.
The hero Phædimus, Sidonia's king,
This upon me bestow'd as from his home,
Where I had welcome found, I took my way;
And now is it my wish to make it thine."

With these words ending, in his hands the cup
Atrides placed; and Megapenthes next,
The silver bowl uplifting, brought it round
And right before him laid it: Helen then,
Who near him stood, th' embroid'ry in her hands
Awhile retaining, the young chief address'd:—
“And this, too, is a gift from me, dear youth!  
A keepsake may it be from Helen’s hands,  
Till, when the happiest of all nuptials thou
Shalt in due season celebrate, thy bride  
With this may be adorn’d: but now, meantime,
In thy lov’d mother’s keeping let it rest
Within thy palace stor’d; and with glad heart
May’st thou that noble home and country reach!”

With this address, into the young man’s hands
The scarf she gave, and he with joy elate
The gift accepted: and Pisistratus,
The presents gath’ring, in the wicker frame
Of his sire’s chariot placed them, and for all
That care requir’d took thought. Then to his house
The fair-hair’d Menelaus led his guests,
Where, on the well-rang’d benches and on thrones
They took their seats; and in a golden cruse
Of beauteous form a handmaid water brought
And o’er a silver caldron pouring it
For due ablutions car’d; and at their side
A shining table placed: and then did she
Who o’er that house had oversight a meal
Begin to spread, with many a viand choice
The board supplying, while from food in store
Their taste she strove t’ indulge. And nigh at hand
Boëtheus’ son the meat in portions carv’d,
And to each guest presented; and the son
Of Menelaus as their Cup-bearer
The wine draughts proffer’d, and on that repast,
Thus for their relish serv’d, their hands they laid.
But, when for wines and viands relish none
To either guest remain'd, Telemachus
And Nestor's noble son the horses yok'd,
And into their bright inlaid chariot sprang,
From the guest-chamber and re-echoing porch
Departure making. And, then, Atreus' son,
The fair-hair'd Menelaus, in his hands
A golden cup extending, fill'd with wine,
(That, ere they started, the libation due)
He there might make) his youthful guests rejoin'd,
And, as before their horses' heads he stood,
He with the cup saluted them, and spake:—

"Farewell! ye youths! and greetings from me bear
To Nestor, 'pastor of his people,' nam'd—
For, through the long campaigns in which we sons
Of Greece with Troy did battle, he to me
A loving father's tenderness evince'd."

To which Telemachus replied:—"Rest sure,
O thou of Jove upheld! that with thy wish
Compliant we, when home we shall arrive,
To Nestor will thy gracious words report.
And then, too, when to Ithaca restor'd
And in my home secure, may I the tale
To great Ulysses, under his own roof,
Recount, how I came hither, and from thee
Such gen'rous welcome met, and gifts at once
So num'rous and so costly brought away."

While thus he speaking stood, on his right hand
A bird flew down: an eagle—in its clutch
A large white goose retaining, a tame fowl
From out the open court: and in its track
A throng of men and women with loud cry
Came pressing onward; but, the bird, as now
Above their heads it hover'd, to their right
Wheel'd round, the horses fronting: at which sight
They no light joy evinc'd, and ev'ry heart
Around them grew elate: whereat the son
Of Nestor, young Pisistratus, these words
Enquiring spoke:—"Now! Menelaus! Chief
Of all this people, and of Jove himself
Long cherish'd! Say, if the great god on high
This portent hath to us alone display'd,
Or to thyself?"

Thus did he anxious ask;
But, Menelaus, that illustrious Chief
Of Mars so highly favour'd, pause'd awhile,
As though with inward musings to decide
How this might well be answer'd; but, ere word
Her husband spake, the long-rob'd Helen thus
The youth address'd:—

"Now, to my speech attend—
And, as th' immortals shall my thoughts impel,
(Moreover, as, methinks, will come to pass,)
This presage I enounce:—Ev'n as this Bird
From that high mountain which its birthplace is,
And where its young are fledg'd, at one fierce swoop
The goose bore off which in these princely halls
On dainty food has thriven,—even thus
Ulysses by unnumber'd suff'ring's tried
And on far regions as a wand'rer cast,
Will homeward come, and his full vengeance wreak,
Or, is ere now arriv’d, and fate condign
For all the suitors of his wife prepares.”
To this discreet Telemachus replied:—
“May Jove whose crashing thunder peals on high,
Consort of Juno, thy divining words
In time fulfil! Then, in my father’s home
Would I to thee my vows uplift, as though
A goddess there invoking!”

With these words
The scourging thong on either horse he laid
And with impetuous start the city left,
Making at once for th’ plain. And through that day
The steeds their yoke upon their shoulders shook
Until the sun went down, and dusky gloom
All paths and causeways darken’d: Phære then
They reach’d, and into Diocles’ abode
At once their entry made; (The son was he
Of that Orsilocheus whose sire the name
Of Alpheus bore,) and there, to sleep compos’d,
That night they lay; and Diocles with gifts
Enrich’d them both; such as a host to guests
Is wont to offer. But, when rosy morn
Upon them shone the steeds again they yok’d
And into that bright inlaid chariot stepp’d,
And from the porch and corridor where winds
Loud echoes rais’d, their way began to speed.
And sharply did the charioteer the pace
Of those fleet horses quicken, as the thong
He constant plied; though, nothing loth, they flew.
Soon reach’d they Pylos’ soaring tow’rs, and then
Telemachus thus Nestor's son address'd:—

"O son of Nestor! how wilt thou that word
To me fulfil which, granting my request,
Thou did'st in good faith pledge? We, from the first,
Ev'n for the love our fathers interchang'd,
Fast friends must term ourselves: our ages, too,
Co-equal make us; and to make us one,
Henceforth, in mind, this journey more and more
Will now avail: but, further than the ship
Convey me not; let me here take my stand;
Lest, while my will far otherwise inclines,
Thine aged sire, upon the thought intent
Of making me his guest, should in his house
Entreat me stay: whereas, an urgent cause
My prompt return enforces."

Thus spake he,

And Nestor's son reflected how aright
He should the promise keep; perceiving which
This seemingly best counsel he pursued:—
His horses to the ship and ocean's brink
Aside conducting, those resplendent gifts,
The raiment and the gold, so recent brought
From Menelaus' home, in the ship's stern
He made secure; and, as to use all speed
His friend he counsel'd, in wing'd accents spake:—
"Enter without delay thy ship, and word
To all thy comrades send, ere I my home
Regain, and my aged sire of this apprize:
For on my mind impress,—and deeply, too—
Is that quick temp'rament my father owns.
He would not part with thee, but would himself
Here, on this spot, his welcome speak: nor yet,
Methinks, wilt thou hence empty-handed sail,
For hot will be his anger!"

With these words
The glossy-coated horses he drove home
To holy Pylos’ city, and with speed
His dwelling reach’d. Telemachus, meantime,
With eager exhortations on his crew
Commandment laid: ”Now, in our dark-ribb’d ship,
My friends! her gear arrange; and we ourselves,
Our voyage to complete, will put to sea.”

So spake he, and they all with ready ear
The orders heeded, and in haste the deck
Ascended, and upon the benches sate.
Thus earnestly to all the toils impos’d
Was he his thoughts devoting, as with pray’r
To Pallas, at the stern, he off’rings made,
When, on the sudden, right before him stood
An alien, a soothsayer, from the town
Of Argos fleeing, on the death of one
By his hand slain: He from Melampus’ race
His generations trac’d, who of old time
In Pylos liv’d,—the mother of sleek sheep—
And wealth had he possess’d,—a noble house
Among the Pylians owning, till at length
Among some other tribes a home he sought
From his own people fleeing, and from one
Of all men living the most noble deem’d,
High-minded Neleus, who through one whole year
Had all the substance of his wealth by force
To his own lands annex'd: But he, the while,
By tie and pledge severe was in the house
Of Phylacus a captive held, and pangs
Most cruel there endur'd, both in his suit
Of Neleus' daughter, and through a dread blow
His mind awhile deranging, which that Pow'r,
The Fury, fearful to encounter, struck.
But, from the threaten'd doom of death he fled,
And when from Phylace to Pylos' meads
The bellowing oxen he perforce had driv'n,
For noble Neleus' most unworthy acts
He vengeance took, and to his brother's joy
A bride for him o'er sea escorted home.
Then with another race his day of life
Awhile he spent, and Argos made his home,
Whose fertile meads in thriving flocks abound:
And there, so will'd his Fate, he tarried long
And over many an Argive clan held rule:
A wife, too, there he wedded, and a house
Whose vaulted roof rose high in air he built.
And of two gallant sons, Antiphates
And Mantius, the sire became. The first
In after years Oicleus' father was;
And this Oicleus parent was, in turn,
Of that Amphiaraus styl'd of old
"The rallier of the nations," whom at heart
The ægis-bearing Jove and Phœbus, too,
With ev'ry show of favour dearly lov'd:
Still on the threshold, even, of old age
He never stood, but victim to the bribes
By faithless woman taken, died in Thebes.
Alcmæon and Amphilocthus his sons
Surviv'd him:—and to Mantius, too, were born
Two sons: the elder, Polyphides nam'd,—
The younger Clytus: but, Aurora, thron'd
In golden light, from among living men
Young Clytus took away; (a fate which he
Solely to his surpassing beauty ow'd,)
That with th' immortals only he might live.
But, when this Amphiaraus was no more,
Phebus on Polyphides, as a sage
Of thoughts sublime, and among men the best
Of mortals held, prophetic pow'r bestow'd;
And, (while to indignation by his sire
At that time mov'd) the Hyperesian state
He rul'd supreme, and from his fixt abode
To men at large in divination spoke.
This man's son Theoclymenus it was
Who now was drawing nigh, and within sight
Of young Telemachus his station took
As near the dark-ribb'd ship that youth his pray'r,
Libations duly made, was off'ring up:
And with wing'd words he thus accosted him:—

"O friend! for that I meet thee on this spot
In hallow'd rites of sacrifice engag'd,
By these, and by the deity himself,
Yea, and by thine own proper self and all
Who with thee company, declare to me
Thus of thee question asking,—and the truth
Withhold not—Who art thou? and of what race
Of men descended? In what spot of earth
Standeth thy city? And thy parents, where?"
Discreet Telemachus thus answer made:—
"Stranger! in phrase sufficiently exact
Will I inform thee:—I from Ithaca
My lineage trace: Ulysses, (if, indeed,
Such a man ever liv’d!) my father is:
But, no:—to death, and in some fearful shape,
Hath he succumb’d; and for this cause a crew
Of comrades choosing and a dark-ribb’d ship
I hither came, my long lost father’s fate
Alas! to learn."

Then Theoclymenus
Still further spoke:—“And from my native land
I, too, must now absent myself, this hand
A kinsman having kill’d. He brothers had
And friends, too, many, in the Argive realm,
And potent is the influence of Greece.
The doom, then,—the destruction which from these
Appears to threaten me, I flee: and fate
A fugitive, too, made me among men.
Oh! let me, therefore, in thy ship embark
Thy supplianct as I am, and into flight
Thus driven; lest my life they take,—for now,
Ev’n while I speak, methinks they track my steps."

To him Telemachus: “From my good ship
I surely will not spurn thee, if therein
Thou fain would’st forward speed: Come thou with me,
And on such store as in reserve we hold
Shalt thou regale.” Thus speaking, from his hand
He took his brass-tipp’d spear, and on the deck
Of the trim ship secur’d it; he himself
Homer’s Odyssey.

His vessel’s side ascending, and his seat
In the stern taking. Theoclymenus
He at his side bade sit, as now the crew
The hawser ropes were loosing; and command
Telemachus now issued the ship’s gear
To get in trim; and they with eager will
At once complied, as in its hole the mast
Of pine-tree they uprais’d, and with stout ropes
To the cross-deck secur’d it, and the sails
With twisted ox-hide hoisted. And a wind
Propitious did the blue-eyed Pallas grant—
A breeze that on the currents briskly blew,
So that with quicken’d speed the ship her course
Might through the ocean’s briny billows speed.
At length they Crouni near’d, and Chaleis fam’d
For its fair-flowing waters; and the sun
Now set, and all the highways of the deep
In shrouding darkness lay. The vessel then
By a good tack made Phere, as she drove
Before the genial breeze of a fair wind
By Jove himself vouchsa’d. The hallow’d site
Of Elis next they reach’d, where sway supreme
The Epians hold. And from this point his bark
Telemachus upon the isles bore down
Whose promontories sharp just catch the eye,
Doubtful if he should death itself evade,
Or, on some evil like a captive fall.

Meanwhile, Ulysses in the swineherd’s hut
With noble-soul’d Eumæus feasted well;
And nigh at hand regaling lay the hinds
Who at that station labour’d. And when now
To eat or drink yet longer none desir'd,
Ulysses thus began,—intent to test
The swineherd whether welcome such as this
He still would proffer, and entreaty make
That he would in that shepherd's cot remain,
Or to the city let him bend his way:—

"Eumæus: and all you who round him serve!
Mark what I now would say: At early dawn
I fain would to the city turn my steps
And there solicit alms, that staying here
Thine and thy comrades' store I may not spoil.
Complete instructions give me, and a guide
Reliable supply, who may my way
From hence point out: but, I from street to street
Will, as of urgent need, a vagrant roam,
For chance of a poor cup-full, and a cate
Of wheaten bread. And when within the halls
Of the high-soul'd Ulysses I arrive,
I shall new tidings to Penelope
Pretend to bring, and 'mid that saucy throng
Of suitors will I throw myself, their hearts
To prove, if they who at unnumbered feasts
Luxurious feed, to me a scrap would spare!
Adroitly as a serving man could I,
Command me as they might, among them wait;
For, this may I well say,—and, mark me well
And hearken:—by good-will of him who bears
The messages of Jove,—that Mercury
Who upon all that men can dexterly do
A kindly favour and repulse confess,
No living man would with me try to cope
In cherishing the fire upon the hearth,
In cutting up sear kindling wood; in th' art
Of carving meat and roasting, and in th' act
Of pouring out the wine—; such offices
As for their fellow-men of high degree
Subordinates perform."

But to this speech
Eumæus! worthiest swineherd! in distress
Thou thus repliedst:—"Alas! alas! my guest
How can a thought like this thy mind have cross'd!
Surely, on death itself thy heart is bent
If thou among those suitors,—a bold throng
Whose arrogance and outrages to heav'n
Itself uprise, would'st throw thyself. Such men
As thou among them serve not, but mere youths
In cloaks and vests attractively array'd,
Who with their bright and glossy heads of hair
And features full of beauty on them wait.
The tables, highly polish'd, bear a load
Most ponderous of bread and meat and wine.
No: bide thou here! No one,—nor I, nor those
That with me serve can by thy presence loss
Of anything sustain: but, when the son
Of great Ulysses shall at length arrive,
A mantle and a tunic on thy limbs
Will he himself bestow, and speed thy way
To whatsoever home thou fain would'st reach."

Hereto Ulysses, who of cares and ills
Such weight had borne, this answer made: "To Jove
May'st thou, Eumæus! ever be as dear
As thou by me art held, whose welcome here
An end of all my wand’ring and of toils
Most harassing hath made. What plight more ills
On Man entails than being forc’d to roam!
But, through their baneful glutony how oft
Do men with troubles load themselves, whose lot
Is exile and adversity and woe!
Well, then! since here thou would’st that I should stay,
And bid’st me that dear youth’s return await,
Tell me, I pray thee, how the Mother fares
Of thine Ulysses,—and his Father, whom
When he from Ithaca set sail, he left
Upon the confines of a ripe old age:
Are they, as chance may have ordain’d, still found
’Mid those on whom the sun yet throws his beams,
Or, both deceas’d, to Pluto’s realm consign’d?”

To him Eumæus thus:—“A faithful tale,
Stranger! will I narrate: Laertes lives—
But, pray’r to Jove is ever off’ring up
That ling’ring, as he doth, the walls within
Of his own palace, life that earthy frame
May soon relinquish: for, with anguish keen
He sorrows for his long-lost son, and her
Whom in her maiden prime he took to wife,
(Right minded as she was!) who, by her death
In poignant grief immers’d him, and the sense
Of premature decay induced; for, she
Whelm’d in regret for her illustrious son
A death most piteous died! May no such end
Be any one’s that, near my dwelling lodg’d,
My friend hath prov’d, and kindly deeds perform’d!”
While yet she liv'd, indeed, my joy it was
To seek her out, and question ask of her;
For, with her noble daughter Ctimena
In flowing garments rob'd, her youngest born,
My infancy she cherish'd; with that child
My training I receiv'd, and hardly less
Than Ctimena did she myself regard.
But, when to loveable Youth's prime we grew,
To Samos was this daughter sent; and great
The dowry presents were, by suitors made.
But, for myself a rural home was chos'n,
Where with a mantle and close-fitting vest,
Raiment most splendid, she had furnish'd me,
And sandals for my feet supplied, when now
Her love for me more kind than ever prov'd:
All which I now must miss; but the blest gods
On that employ to which my time I give
Increase of profit have bestow'd, and thus
Provision have I found of meat and drink,
And, upon supplication any, whose appeals
My rev'rence claim'd, have timely succour giv'n.
But, from my queeny mistress not one word
Of comfort,—not one proof of kind good will
Hath it been mine to meet with, since that pest
Upon her home hath fall'n,—that tyrant throng
That seek her hand. And freedom great of speech
Would her attendants, even to her face,
Fain exercise, and into all things pry:—
On glutony and wine their minds are set,
And, thereupon, through rural haunts to range—
Of some fresh tale the bearers; which the mind
Of all such servants evermore elates."
Whereto Ulysses, in reply:—"'Tis strange!
Eumeus! that when thou an urchin wast
Thou should'st so far from thy paternal soil
And from thy kin have wander'd: Come, now, say
And in good faith, inform me—Did thy home,
(That broad and spacious town within whose walls
Thy parents dwell) to rapine fall a prey,
Or did some fell marauders on thee rush
While over flocks or herds thy lonesome watch
Thou wast maintaining, and on board their ships
Embanking bear thee off to the domains
Of him thou here art serving, and did he
By righteous purchase gain thee?"

Whereunto
The chief of all Earth's swineherds thus replied:—
"Stranger! since thus thou questionest, and fain
So much from me would'st learn, remain thou mute,
And, thy seat here maintaining, take thine ease
And drink that wine: The nights are lengthsome, now,
And we to slumber may betake ourselves,
As we may equally with raptur'd ears
To some recital listen. 'Tis not well
That thou before thy wonted hour the couch
Of rest shouldst seek: for, slumber in excess
A hurt becomes. And, yet, let any here
Who in good earnest wishes it, go hence
And freely sleep; but, when, at morning light
He his repast hath made, let him take thought
For my dear master's swine. Let us, meanwhile,
Within this hut potations free enjoy,
And to our full contentment eat, while each
The mem’ry wakens of his own past griefs;
For, let but time enough elapse, the man
Who has sharp trials brook’d, and through the world
A wand’rer rov’d, will on his by-gone woe
Exulting dwell. However, to the tale
Proceed we, which shall thy enquiries meet:—

"An isle there is, whose name thou may’st have heard,
Which off Ortygia lies, where Sol appears
To turn his course; ’tis Syria call’d:—in breadth
Not far extending, but exceeding rich
Is all its soil; for grazing stock most apt;—
In flocks abounding, and of vineyards full,
In wheat crops, too, prolific. Famine there
The natives never visits; nor, indeed,
Comes baneful malady in any form
To make the people suffer, but, as men
Their families among, in the chief town,
In age begin to droop,—that god who wields
The silver bow, Apollo, at his side
Diana bringing, with those gentle shafts
Which painless wounds inflict, the agèd ones
Assails and kills. Two cities in this isle
And two departments are there;—each of which
By equal distribution shares alike:
And there did Ctesius Ormenides,
My father, like some god, o’er both hold rule.

"At this our isle, at length, arriv’d a crew,
Phoenicians all,—(that nation which on sea
Renown have ever won)—shrewd, greedy knaves
Who an enormous cargo had on board.
Of toys and playthings. Now, about this time,
Beneath my princely father’s roof there liv’d
A woman of their country, with the gifts
Of fairest features and fine stature grac’d,
And in all female’s fancy-work expert.
This woman to these subtle traders soon
A victim fell. One, converse with her held
Where, near the moorings of their ship, the sea
Her bath supplied: and here his couch and love
He wheedled her to share: Persuasion strong
Which, be their skill and talents what they may,
The minds of women into folly leads.
Then question ask’d he of her, who she was—
And of what land a native;—whereupon,
With answer prompt, her father’s house she nam’d:—
‘Sidon my birthplace is,—a site which brass
Abundant yields;—and I the daughter am
Of Arybas, a rich and affluent sire—
But, certain Taphians, men to rapine prone,
Rude hands upon me laid, as from the meads
My steps were homeward wending, and, at once
On shipboard thrusting me, to that same house
Where now I serve they bore me off,—a sale
Thus of my freedom making;—but, a sum
Of no poor mean amount the buyer paid.’

“But, further question the Phoenician ask’d:—
‘Doth, now, thy mind impel thee with ourselves
Thy home again to visit, there once more
Thy father’s and thy mother’s house to see,
And on themselves to bend thine eyes? For still
Are they both living;—still reputed rich.’
"And thus replied she:—'Ev'n thus let it be:
If by a vow you mariners your faith
Consent to bind, that to my native home
Unharm'd you will transport me.' And the oath,
As she prescrib'd, they swore. And when their word
They thus had pledg'd and ratified, once more
The woman spoke, and with them parley held:
'‘Henceforth, remain ye mute; and let not one
Of your associates, when upon the road
Or, haply, by the bubbling spring we meet,
A word to me address, lest any one,
Into the mansion having made his way,
Should my aged lord apprize, and he, some guile
Surmising, should myself in cruel bonds
Forthwith confine, and some sure project frame
To work your ruin. Now,—all speech repress,
And such provision as you need, go, buy:
And when your ship is with due victual stor'd
Let a prompt message reach me in the house,
And gold, and whatsoever else to hand
May at the moment come, will I bring down,
Aye, and with all goodwill would I much more,
My voyage-costs to pay, as value give.
For in this good man's palace have I charge
Of his own son, a knowing wily child,
That alongside in open air could run,
And he, too, in your vessel should embark,
And, to whatever foreign tribe you sell,
He would a gain of no light worth secure.'

"Thus speaking, to the lordly house she sped:
But, they, among our people a full year
Abiding still, a cargo of great bulk
For their large vessel bought, and when its hold
Was with its full freight loaded, and the time
For their return arriv'd, a messenger
Was to this woman sent. A cunning man
My father's house thus enter'd, in his hand
A golden necklace bearing, ev'ry link
With bits of amber jointed: and our maids
And my rever'd, lov'd mother, (at that time
Within the palace group'd) on ev'ry side,
As in their hands they mov'd it to and fro,
The necklace view'd, and on it fix'd their gaze,
And payment for it tender'd; but, a sign
This dealer to my nurse in silence made,
Which done—he to the vessel's side return'd;
And she, that very instant, by the hand
When she had seiz'd me, into open air
From out the house went forth, and in the porch
The cups and tables lighted on where those
Who on my father waited had regal'd,
And now were to the public meeting gone,
And to the people's council. Hereupon,
With rapid action, in her bosom's folds
Three bowls she hid, and safely took away,—
I, witless! running with her,—as the sun
Began to set, and every road and track
In shrouded darkness lay. But, with all speed
The well-known port we reach'd, off which there lay
The fleeting fast Phoenician ship, whose crew
When they on deck had placed us, hoisted sail
And o'er the wat'ry ways their voyage made,
Joye granting wind propitious. Night and day
For six whole days we through the waters sped,
But, when the son of Saturn, mighty Jove,
The morning of the seventh day led in,
Dian,—that arrow-queen, the woman smote;
And with a hollow heavy sound,—a cry
Like some sea-bird emitting,—in the hold
She downward fell; whence, to become the food
Of porpoises and fish, upon the deep
They cast her forth, and I, a mourning child,
With them remain'd: but, wind and the sea-wave
Their course befriending, to th' Ithacian coast
At length the vessel took, where with his means
Of wealth Laertes bought me; and to this
I owe that with these eyes of mine the land
Of Ithaca I ever saw."

Hereto
Ulysses,—from the race of Jove himself
Divinely sprung,—congenial answer made:—
"Eumæus! much hast thou my mind impress'd,
Thy tale to me recounting, and the wrongs
Thy spirit hath encounter'd. Nathless, Jove
With all this dire adversity much good
Hath also blended; for that at the close
Of long continuing labours thou at last
The house hast enter'd of a kindly soul
Who meat and drink in ample store provides;
And fortunate appears the life thou liv'st,
While through Earth's scatter'd cities and the homes
Of man so long a wand'rer, here I stand."

Such commune held they; no long sleep t' enjoy,
So brief a time reclining: for, the morn
In beauty thron'd soon broke. But, on the beach
The comrades of Telemachus their sails
Had now begun to strike, and in all haste
The mast were low'ring, that the ship itself
They might into the port by rowing bring.
The anchors they cast out, the hawser ropes
Made fast, and on the ocean-brink stepp'd forth;
And, their repast preparing, the dark wine
Diluted for their drink. When now, howe'er,
Their fill of this provision they had ta'en,
Discreet Telemachus thus spoke:—“Launch now
Our ship, and for the city make, while I
Inland awhile proceed, my hinds to see;
But, in the eventide, when I my lands
Now under tillage have survey'd, myself
Will to the city also bend my steps,
And with the morning light, the wage will I
To each man for his ended voyage pay,
And ample shall your feasting be on meat
And sweetly flavour'd wine.”

To whom again
Spoke Theoclymenus:—“But, my dear son!
Whither shall I betake myself? Whose house,
'Mid all who rugged Ithaca control,
Shall I presume to visit? To the home,
At once, of thy dear mother, thine own house,
Shall I proceed?”

To which Telemachus:—
“But for good reasons, I should bid thee seek
Book XV.]  

HOMER'S ODYSSEY.

Our house, direct, where failure none could be
Of prompt and cordial welcome: As it is,
Thou ill enough would'st fare: for I, myself,
Perforce must absent be; and audience none
Will my lovd mother grant, for by that throng
Of suitors rarely is she seen; but far
From all remov'd she in an upper room
A web is ever weaving. But, the name
Of one, indeed, will I to thee disclose
To whom, as to thy host, thou may'st resort—
Eurymachus, the noble-minded son
Of Polybus the wise, whom all the mind
Of Ithaca, as though a god, reveres:
For, he by far the worthiest is; and keen
Is his desire the consort to become
Of my woed mother, and the homage win
Which is Ulysses' own. But, Jove whose throne
Is on Olympus,—Jove, who in the skies
Immortal dwells, alone the future scans
Which may the day of their o'erwhelming doom,
Long before marriage, to its ending bring."

While thus he spoke, a hawk—the herald swift
Of Phoebus—on his right appear'd, a dove
In its claws holding, as the bird it tore
And to the ground its feathers threw midway,
Between the ship and great Ulysses' son.
And Theoclymenus from out the throng
Of his associates calling him and hold
Of his hand taking, to Telemachus
These words address'd:—"Telemachus! This bird
Flew not upon thy right without th' intent
Of the celestial pow'r; for when these eyes
Its coming right before me mark'd, I kenn'd
A portent from on high. 'Mid all the clans
Of Ithaca no generation shows
More princely than thine own: but, to all time
Its honours will be dominant."

The son
Of great Ulysses thus rejoin'd:—"I well
May wish, O stranger! that these words of thine
Just utter'd may, in time, be all fulfill'd;
For, promptly then should'st thou of my goodwill
Full proof behold, and presents from my hand
So many win, that all who thee should see
Thus richly gifted would thy fortune hail
And call thee happy."

To Piræus, next,
His comrade true he spoke:—"Piræus! son
Of Clytius,—seeing that in all things else
More faithfully than all who with me sail'd
To Pylos thou obey'dst me,—so, ev'n now,
This stranger here, within thy walls receiv'd,
With all due zeal make welcome; and the shows
Of all observance testify till I
Myself shall be returning."

In few words
Piræus—whose good spear renown had won—
Thus answer'd:—"Though, Telemachus! thou here
Should'st for long time be tarrying, I this man
With due regard will tend, and nought that host
To guest should kindly proffer shall he want."
Then the ship's deck Telemachus again
Ascending, bade his comrades speed on board
And loose the cables; and with earnest haste
They muster'd all, and on the benches sate:
He, the meanwhile, beneath his feet a pair
Of beauteous sandals binding, as a spear
Of supple strength whose point with sharpen'd brass
Was deftly wrought, he from the deck withdrew;
And then the ropes they loos'd, and launching forth
They to the city, as Telemachus
Had order issued, instantly set sail.
But, he with quickly pacing feet his way
Uphill pursued, until the hut he reach'd
Where lay the herds of his unnumber'd swine,
'Midst whom Eumæus,—noblest of his race
And to his masters kind and faithful—slept.

END OF THE FIFTEENTH BOOK.
MEANWHILE, Ulysses and that noble herd,
   The guardian of his swine, in the lone hut,
Some embers having kindled on its hearth,
For their repast made ready, and the hinds
Despatch'd with-swine that on the herbage graz'd.
But, now did those same dogs, whose wont it was
To bark in fierceness, on Telemachus
Begin to fawn, nor, as he nearer drew,
Rais'd they a yell: and, when their kindly mood
Ulysses mark'd, and the sound overheard
Of human foot's approach, these few wing'd words
He to the swineherd spoke:—"'Tis very sure,
Eumæus! that some inmate of thy home
Will soon his entry make, or one with thee
Familiar grown; for, look! the dogs bark not,
But fondly gather round him, and the sound
I hear of coming feet."

Scarce had these words
His lips escap'd when at the entrance gate
His lov'd son stood! The swineherd, all amaz'd,
Sprang to his feet, and, as he rose, the cups
Which for the mixing of the dark rich wine
He at the moment handled, from his hold
Fell instant to the ground. He forward stepp'd
The prince to hail, and on his brow a kiss
Of salutation press'd and both his eyes,
So radiant, and his hands;—and the warm tear
From his own eyes down flow'd the while, and as
When some fond father in a close embrace
His son enfolds—his only one—the child
Of his old age, from some far distant land
In the tenth year returning, and for whom
Full many a bitter pang of anxious care
He hath encounter'd,—so that high soul'd man
The swineherd, as Telemachus he held
And hung upon, all over kiss'd; as one
From death deliver'd—and in tones of grief
These hurried words pronounc'd:—"Then art thou come,
Sweet light of mine! Telemachus! What time
Thou in that ship to Pylos sail'dst, I said
I never more should see thee: but, draw nigh—
My own dear child! Come in:—that on this spot
I may with joyful spirit, in my hut,
These eyes upon thee fix, so fresh arriv'd
From regions far from home! Unfrequent, too,
Have been thy visits to these rural haunts,
Or among those who o'er thy many herds
Take oversight; for, 'mid the gen'r'al mass
Of the Ithacians liv'st thou,—since thy will
Spectator hath constrain'd thee to remain
Of all that waste and havoc which the crowd
Of suitors on thy father's house have brought."
Telemachus thus answer'd:—"My assent,
My friend! thou hast: since for thy sake, indeed,
Am I here come, that with these eyes of mine
I may upon thee gaze, and from thy lips
Sure tidings learn, if in our palace yet
My mother lives, or whether of that crowd
Some suitor have her wedded lord become,
And that same couch, whereon Ulysses lay,
So long left tenantless, be cast aside
And by defiling cobwebs overgrown."

Eumæus, best of men, this answer made:—
"Most certainly in thy palatial home
She liveth still, and with a tranquil soul
Endureth long; but, all her nights and days,
So dreary, she in tearful grief consumes."
Thus,—speeches interchang'd—Telemachus
His brazen spear resum'd, and, passing on,
Cross'd the stone threshold; but, as nigh he drew
To where Ulysses sate, the father fain
Would from his seat have mov'd, but, as in front
Telemachus now stood, he this forbade,
And thus exclam'd:—"O stranger! where thou art,
Sit, prithee, still; for, in this cot of ours
Some seat shall we discover, and the hand
Is nigh which will provide it." Thus spoke he,
And stood no longer, for, with brushwood green
The swineherd piled a heap, with woolly fleece
Surmounted, and Ulysses' much-lov'd son
Thereon sate down. And, near them both, the herd
Roast flesh in trenchers placed;—meat from their meal
Of the day previous left; and bread with haste
In baskets serv'd he up, and in a cup
Of ivy-wood a luscious wine draught mix'd;
And then to great Ulysses face to face
His station took; and all to that repast
Thus duly ranged before them laid their hands;
Till, when nor meat nor drink could further tempt,
Telemachus the swineherd thus address'd:—
"My friend! whence comes this stranger? In what mode
Did any mariners on this our coast
Contrive to land him? Of what race did they
Themselves declare to be? For here, methinks,
As a pedestrian came he not!"

Where to
Eumæus! thus replied'st thou:—"All this, child!
Will I correctly state:—In spacious Crete
His lineage he would trace, and mention makes
Of peopled cities numberless where to
His wanderings had driven him; a fate
To which some god had destin'd him. At length,
A fugitive from some Thesprotian ship,
He to my hut has found his way, from whence
To thee will I consign him. Thine own will
Consult. He is thy suppliant declar'd."

To this Telemachus:—"In all thou say'st,
Eumæus! thou my spirit hast much griev'd,
For, how could I a welcome in my home
To this strange guest afford? I am but young,
And on my hands rely not yet, the man
To thrust aside who first on me would fain
A quarrel fix: and in my mother's mind
Doubt lingers still, and oft doth she revolve
Whether with me to tarry here, and charge
Of our domain to keep, her husband’s couch
With due regard revering and the voice
Of all our people,—or, that Greek accept
And follow, whosoever in the crowd
That now their suit are pressing worthiest proves
And richest dowry offers. But, since now
This stranger to thy hut is come, a cloak
And vest will I provide,—apparel rich;
A two-edg’d sword, too, as a further gift,
Shall he receive, and sandals for his feet:—
And whither his desire may be to sail
I will his transport care for. But, if thou
Would’st this fain do,—let him thy care become
And in thy homestead keep him. Raiment meet
And victual, too, abundant will I send,
That neither thine nor thy associates’ store
He may impov’rish. But, among that crowd
Of suitors entrance none, with my consent,
Shall he attempt: for, far too mad a pride
Exhibit they; and, what if they should jeer,
And mock him! That to me were bitter grief!
No light exploit has one lone man t’ achieve
Who would contend with many,—let his might
Be what it may: and his they far exceed.”

To this Ulysses—that high-minded one,
So oft in trials vers’d,—rejoin’d:—“My friend!
Since I with freedom may thus speak, I’ll say
Thy words have torn my very heart, while thus
Thou to my ear the odious tale hast brought
Of all that in that palace (as thou say'st)
The suitors are designing, to the will
So adverse of a being like thyself!
Tell me—: Hast thou without a murmur stoop'd
To this controlment? or, to some god's voice
Their judgment yielding, do the common herd
Their public hatred vent on thee? or, blame
Dost thou attach to brothers on whose strength
A man would fain rely, arise what might
From fierce contending strife? Oh! would that I
Were but as young in body as in mind!
Or that Telemachus, or even he
(That chief without reproach!) Ulysses' self
Might hither find his way, a wanderer,—
(For even yet, may be, a hope survives)
Oh! then might any mortal man this head
From off my shoulders take, if I my foot
Once having on Ulysses' threshold placed
Prov'd not to all that crew a deadly bane!
But, if, indeed, my single-handed pow'r
Were by their multitude o'erwhelm'd, ev'n then
Far sooner in my own palatial home
Would I my deathblow meet, than day by day
Such shameful outrage look upon, as blows
To strangers rudely given,—handmaids dragg'd
Most brutally through those most noble halls,—
The wine drawn off incessantly, and bread
In wanton waste consum'd;—no good, no end
In all this aim'd at; on pretext of that
Which never is to be.”

Telemachus
Thus answer made:—"In all good faith will I
To this reply, O stranger! Anger none
Cherish the people 'gainst me; no, nor hate;
Neither impeach I brothers on whose strength
A man would fain rely, arise what might
From fierce contending strife. For, Saturn's son
Hath thus our house left isolate: one son
Alone Arcesius had, Laertes—sire in turn
Of our Ulysses only, whose sole child
I myself am, and in his lonely house
He left me, and in me had comfort none.
For this cause, foes unnumber'd throng our home:
As many princes as these islands sway—
Dulychium, Samos, and Zacynthus crown'd
With forest growth; as many, too, as pow'r
In rugged Ithaca assume, their court
Are to my mother paying, and the source
Of all our means are hastening to destroy.
The odious suit she cares not to reject,
Nor any termination to 't contrive:
But they, meanwhile, my substance idly spend
And will to nought reduce it, aye, and soon
An end will make of me. But, all this still
Rests on the will and pleasure of the gods.

"Father Eumæus! speed thou quickly hence,
And to discreet Penelope impart
That I from Pylos am arriv'd and safe,
And here will I abide: but, when this news
Thou hast to her, and her alone, convey'd,
Return thou hither; nor let any Greek
Among them all the wiser be; for great
The number is on my destruction bent."
Then, O Eumæus! spakest thou:—"Of this
I am aware, and all have well discern'd:
Thou speak'st to one who taketh thought hereon.
But, say—and tell me frankly, shall I now
At once with message on this errand speed
To sorrow-struck Laertes, who though long
For his Ulysses sorrowing would oft
Our works of husbandry inspect, and ate
And drank with those who in the palace serv'd
When humour so impell'd him; but, since thou
To Pylos in that ship thy voyage mad'st,
Nor eats, nor drinks (for such is the report),
Nor labour sup'rintends, but moaning sits
In heaviness and grief, until the skin
Shrinks on his aged bones."

Telemachus
In turn:—"Thy news are painful; but, to grief
We for the present must abandon him:
For, if at all 'twere giv'n to mortal men
Their dearest wish to single out and gain,
Far before all would I the safe return
Of my lov'd father ask for. No:—do thou,
When thou thy tale hast told, the hut regain,
And stray not in the fields in search of him,
But charge my mother that, of all unseen,
She send, at once, that handmaid whose sole care
The household rules, the vet'ran to apprise."

Thus spoke the prince, and on the swineherd press'd
Compliance with his counsel: and forthwith
Eumæus, sandals taking up, his feet
For journeying bound and tow’rds the city sped.
Yet, did he not, as from the hut he mov’d,
Minerva’s glance elude, who now drew nigh
In form most like a woman fair in mien
And tall in stature,—one in all the arts
Of female handiwork expert: and thus
At the door-entry of the hut she stood
To great Ulysses manifest, but from sight
Or notice of Telemachus withheld:
For not unto all mortals do the gods
Themselves reveal. Ulysses and the dogs
The goddess saw; but not a bark was heard;—
For with a howl the creatures through the hut
Rush’d right across, as with a winking eye
Minerva signall’d; and with conscious glance
Ulysses hail’d her present deity.
Then from the hut forth stepping, till the space
Beyond the main wall lying round he reach’d,
The Chief at length before th’ immortal stood,
And Pallas thus address’d him:—“Jove-born son
Of aged Laertes! in so many wiles
Expert! Ulysses! In the hour that is
Thy son apprise, nor longer hide the truth
That all thy counsels being now matur’d
Which shall upon those suitors’ heads their death
And doom bring down, he and thyself may now
The far-fam’d city enter; nor will I:
For any lengthen’d space of time withdraw;
So keen is my desire in this sharp fight
My part with ye to bear.”
Minerva spoke,
And with a golden wand Ulysses touch'd:
A robe of purest freshness, and a vest
About his chest she drew, and increase great
Of bulk, and aspect of more youthful years
Bestow'd on him; and now again his skin
A swarthy hue assum'd; his hollow cheeks
Fill'd out, and downward, too, from chin to gorge
Cropp'd out a gorgeous beard of rich black hair.
Thus having wrought, the goddess disappear'd,
And to the hut Ulysses bent his steps,
At sight of whom, with eyes upon him fixt,
His lov'd son in astounding wonder stood,
And by a sudden dread o'ercome, as though
In presence of some god, his glance awhile
Averted, as in these wing'd words he spake:—
"O stranger! to my sight transform'd thou seem'st
From what a moment, only, since thou wast!
Diverse is all thy raiment, and thy skin
The tint it lately bore no longer shows.
Thou, of a certain truth, some god must be
And an immortal habitant of high heav'n.
Thy grace bestow on me, that sacrifice
That shall be welcome we may celebrate
And gifts in gold elaborate offer thee."

Whereon, that patient Chief, Ulysses, thus
In answer instant spoke:—"No god am I!
What semblance would'st thou to th' immortal ones
In me discover?—I thy father am,
On whose account thou, with a saddened heart,
Woe upon woe encounter ring hast so long
From lawless ones indignant outrage borne.
Then did he kiss his son, as down his cheek
A tear he shed which fell to ground; for yet
Had he, without once yielding, his full heart
Perforce restrain'd: but, young Telemachus
(Nowise convinc'd that this his father was)
This prompt rejoinder made:—"No:—thou my sire
Ulysses art not! But, herein some god
Would fain beguile me, that with grief enhanc'd
I may continue sorrowing. No man
Of mortal born by any pow'r of mind
Could this which I now look upon have wrought;
For that no easy feat would ev'n a god,
Howe'er desirous, find it, thus to make
A man, or young or old! But only now
Thou wast, of a most certain truth, in years
Well stricken, and in garb repulsive cloth'd:
And, now, behold! thou all the semblance hast
Of those blest gods whose home is in the skies!"

But, answer thus Ulysses made:—"My son!
No longer will it now be just that thou
Should'st thus beyond all bounds in wonder muse,
And as one stupefied the coming greet
Of thy dear father hither: for, than he
No other as Ulysses on this land
Will ever set his foot:—but I, the man
Himself, in many a dire affliction tried,
And to long wand'ring doom'd, have now, in this
The twentieth year, upon my native soil
At length a landing made. The change thou seest
The work of that Minerva is whose soul
In forays oft delighteth, and whose pow'r,
(For such a pow'r she hath) from time to time
My semblance fashion'd at her will; the form
Now choosing of a mendicant, and next
Of youthful visag'd man, around whose limbs
Hung raiment elegant. A facile act
Is it with those who th' Empyrean hold
A being of the Earth to elevate
Or to degrade."

Thus speaking, he sate down;
But, now, Telemachus, in close embrace
His noble father folding, wept indeed;
And tearful was that tenderness;—for both
Tow'rds sorrow yearn'd, and with a louder plaint
Did each to grief give ut'rance than that cry
Which eagles or crook-talon'd vultures raise,
From whom some hinds their unfledg'd young have stol'n.
Drops, that might move to pity, from their eyes
Were they now shedding, and upon the flood
Of that most tearful sadness would the beams
Of the fast-setting sun have haply fall'n,
Had not Telemachus in hurried speech
His father thus appeal'd to:—"In what ship,
Dear father mine! did mariners to this coast
Of Ithaca convey thee? Of what land
Did they report themselves? for that, methinks,
As a pedestrian thou cam'st not here."

Patient Ulysses thus:—"The facts, my child,
I will relate to thee. That people, fam'd
For good ship-service, the Phæacians,

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Whose wont it is sure passage to provide
For whosoever on their shore alights,
To this our coast escorted me. A crew
Who o'er the main in a fast sailing bark
Convey'd me (by profoundest sleep subdued)
Left me, still sleeping, here: and splendid gifts
Had they bestow'd on me, of brass and gold
Abundant, and choice raiment from their looms;
Treasures which, by celestial promptings led,
I left to lie in caves hard by. And now
By counsel of Minerva am I come
A conference to hold which shall decide
The bloody doom and death of all our foes.
Speak, then: their numbers in my ear rehearse:
Describe, them, too;—that I at once may learn
How num'rous and of what degree they are;
For, then will I,—when counsel of that mind
I shall have ta'en which no upbraiding knows—
The doubt resolve, if we by other hands
Unaided could against them all make head,
Or, failing this, external succours seek."

Telemachus discreetly thus replied:—
"O father! Of thy glorious renown
Have I through life been hearing:—that thy hands
Were all in all a warrior's; that thy thoughts
In conference were all wisdom: but, these words
Of thine are somewhat startling,—and surprise
Intense comes over me. It cannot be
That two should in a conflict singly strive
With many and most pow'rful. For, not ten
Alone, nor twice ten, only--; many more
The throng compose, and speedily shalt thou
Their force discover:—From Dulichium
Come fifty-two young men, select esteem'd,
And six attendants form their train. A score
And four from Samos island, too, arriv'd:
Twenty there were who from Zacynthus came,—
All youths of Greece:—From Ithaca itself
Twelve; and all held to be the best o' th' isle:
With these the herald Medon companies,
And that old bard of heav'n-inspir'd song;
Two serving-men, in culinary art
Adepts esteem'd, the multitude complete.

"If with all these in one compacted band
We should within the palace have to cope,
What have I not to fear lest, there arriv'd,
Thou would'st at but too dire and dread a cost
The wrongs their arrogance has wrought avenge.
If thou to any one, whose aiding hand
Would succour bring, thy thoughts could'st now direct,
Name him at once, and say whose willing mind
With zeal would thus befriend us."

This appeal

Ulysses answer'd thus:—"Then shalt thou hear:
Perpend thou this, and listen; and reflect
Whether Minerva and our father Jove
Would meet our need;—or, shall I further still
For champions seek, to aid us?"

In his turn

Telemachus thus spoke:—"These whom thou nam'st

H 2
Are powerful allies, indeed! albeit thron'd
On high, in th' clouds of Heaven: and their sway
O'er all the race of mortal Man extends,
And o'er Immortals, too!"

The godlike Chief

To this made answer:—"But for a brief space
Will these celestials tarry ere the cry
And din of that sharp conflict shall be heard,
And the dread issues of the slaught'ring Pow'r
Shall, in my own palatial halls, between
These hated suitors and ourselves be tried.
But, at the break of day return thou home
And all thy wonted converse with the crowd
Of those false-hearted ones renew; for then
Shall our Eumæus lead me to the town,
As a mean mendicant and aged man
Again disguis'd: and if in mine own house
They contumely should cast on me, do thou
With a stout heart endure it while I thus
Such outrage may be suff'ring; aye, although
They through the house should hale me by my feet,
Or, even darts and missiles throw at me.
Though of all this thou may'st a witness prove,—
Forbear, and check thyself; yet, in soft terms
Thou may'st appeal, and from those senseless acts
Exhort them to refrain; but, to thy words
Regard will they pay none:—for, that dread day
Which shall pronounce their doom is but too nigh.
And further will I counsel thee, and this
Keep well in mind: When Pallas (all whose thoughts
Are wisdom) shall such admonition give,
With inclination of my head a sign
Will I to thee convey, at sight whereof
Do thou as many martial weapons seize
As in the palace lie, and in the depths
Of the high chamber stow them; and, when quest
Shall by the suitors for those arms be made,
With gentle speech beguile them, and say thus:—
'Beyond the reach of smoke are they secure:
So unlike as they now appear to those
Which, when for Troy he sail'd, Ulysses left:
For, foul are they become in ev'ry part
Where vapour from the fire has sullied them;
And this, too, which of greater import seems,
The son of Saturn bade me keep in mind:—
The hazard that, if, haply, through excess
Ye should break forth inebriate, and in strife
Among yourselves be struggling,—with those arms
Ye might each other pierce, and all the grace
Of hospitable banquets and the suit
Which ye are here pursuing, turn to shame:
For the steel blade itself lures men to blood.'

"But, for ourselves, Telemachus! alone—
Leave thou two swords, two spears, and two good shields
Of bull's hide form'd, upon our arms to bear;
That when on these we shall have thrown ourselves
We instantly may handle them; and then
Pallas Minerva and the allwise Jove
A spell of weakness on our foe will cast:
And, more than this I lay on thee: my words
Most faithfully observe! If thou indeed
Art a true child of mine, and if my blood
In thee be flowing,—let no mortal learn
That in that home Ulysses is arriv'd:
Let not Laertes, nor Eumæus know,
Nor any one that in that palace serves,
No, nor Penelope herself:—for, thou
And I alone the female mind must sift
That there prevails; and all the serving men
In turn approve; each one that in his heart
Reverses and fears us; or with mere contempt
Regards us both, and without thought of thee,
(Considering who thou art!) thine honour wounds."

The noble son then spoke:—"O Father mine!
The spirit that I own, in time to come
Methinks thou wilt discern. No thoughtless turn
Hath my mind ever taken;—but, thy plan,
Methinks, will neither of us twain befriend;—
And, I beseech thee, ponder on't awhile:
For, tedious would that session be which thou,
On this stern scrutiny intent, must hold,
While, in thy palace undisturb'd, that crowd
With ruffian hands are laying waste thy wealth
And nothing sparing. I would urge thee, still,
Those women to discover by whose acts
Thou outrag'd art,—and, those without offence.
But, fain would I forego the men to test
At their own dwellings; for, at later date
This work might we accomplish, if, indeed,
Thou of some guiding portent knowledge hast
By ægis-bearing Jove to thee vouchsaf'd."
That goodly bark which young Telemachus
And all his comrades had from Pylos borne,
Was to th' Ithacian port brought in,—and now,
When through the deepest water they had pass'd,
The ship they dragg'd ashore, and the brave crew
The weapons took therefrom, and all those gifts,
So splendid deem'd, to Clytius' house convey'd.
A herald then to find Ulysses' house.
They forward urg'd, who to Penelope
The tidings might announce that on the isle
Telemachus had landed, and the ship
Still under sail had to the city sent;
That the illustrious queen in timid doubt
No tear should shed of tenderness. The twain,
Herald and swineherd, of the self-same news
To the princess dispatch'd to make report,
Met on the way; and when the house they reach'd
Of their high-minded prince, the herald thus,
Amid the handmaids standing, cried aloud:—
"O Queen! thy much lov'd son is safe arriv'd!"
But, having to Penelope drawn nigh,
The swineherd to her ear the message brought
Entire, which her dear son had bid him give.
And, when he all had told, his way he took
The herd-stall to regain, and from the courts
And palace turn'd away. But, all the throng
Of those proud suitors sadden'd were at heart,
And in amazement ponder'd: and, forthwith,
From out the palace issuing, the space
Before the mansion's outer wall they fill'd,
And there, at each gate-entry took their seats.
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus.
An exhortation thus commenc'd:—"My friends!
A bold exploit, indeed, hath, with display
Of wondrous daring, by Telemachus
Been just achiev'd;—I of this voyage speak,
Which we affirm'd he never would effect!
But, come:—we will our fleetest vessel launch,
And fishermen as rowers will enlist,
Who, with all expedition us'd, our friends
May thus advise and quickly homeward send."

Scarce had he ceas'd, before Amphinomus,
His station shifting, the dark ship descried
In the deep harbour floating, and the crew
Taking in sail, and in their hands the oars
On high uplifting: and with careless laugh
He thus exclaim'd:—"No longer need have we
To speed a messenger! Here, in the port
Are all our crew! And some immortal god
Hath their informant been, or, they themselves
The ship descried through ocean making way,
And fail'd to overtake it."

Thus spake he,
And they, all rising, to the beach repair'd
And drew their ship ashore;—their serving-men
(A worthy band) the weapons from the hold
To land removing. But, the suitors now
The Forum in a body sought; though none
Into that council-hall admittance found,
Or young or old, themselves except; or seats
Beside them shar'd. And here Antinoüs,
Son of Eupithes, his harangue commenc'd:—
Most strange is this! How have th' immortal gods
This man from peril rescued! Day by day
Our scouts, in turns, upon those breezy heights
That jutted out to sea their watch maintain'd,
And from the setting of the sun we ne'er,
Throughout the livelong night, on shore took sleep,
But, in our rapid sailing bark, at sea
The morn awaited; as in covert close
On this Telemachus to fall we lay,
Whom having seiz'd we there should have destroy'd.
Meanwhile, some god upon this very shore
Has landed him! Now, let us here some scheme
Complete which may Telemachus take off,
Nor let him e'er again our grasp elude:
For, while he lives, I certain am, our ends
Will never be attain'd. In matters grave
Whereon t' advise, and in all pow'r of thought,
He is, himself, most able; and the voice
Of all the populace has long since ceas'd
To bring to us reports we care to hear.
Now, ere he can the Greeks to conf'rence call,
Take you good heed:—for, as I think, no more
Will he inactive prove, but on us all
His anger vent, and, being once stirr'd up,
He will to ev'ry one proclaim how we
To kill him by a bloody death had schem'd,
And fail'd to seize our man. Then, as these deeds,
So wicked deem'd, their hearing reach, the crowd
Will adverse sentence pass; and fear there is
That they herewith may offer violence,
And from this land of ours expel us all,
And we some alien home perforce must seek.
Let us beforehand with him prove, and far
From where he in the city is,—in fields,
Or in some road where he is journeying,
His life proceed to take; and thus may we
His wealth and all his substance make our own,
By lots the whole partitioning, and then
The palace to his mother's use concede,
And to the lord she may in wedlock choose.
But, if such reasoning please you not—; if this
Your will the rather is, that he his life
And all the wealth of his forefathers' home
Should still retain,—no longer let us here,
In numbers thronging, with our wonted waste
Those treasures squander which their owner's heart
So dear esteems,—but, let each man of us,
No longer in the palace lodg'd, his suit
With proffer'd dowry press; and then may she
To the most lavish donor of such gifts
(Thé man by fate allotted) yield her hand."

He ended; and they all sate mute:—Whereat
Amphinomus uprose,—[the noble son
Of Nisus, king Arethius' princely heir]
Who from Dulichium's verdant meads and plains
For rich wheat harvests fam'd, the leader was
Of fifty-one young suitors; he, himself,
As one with gifts of pleasant speech endow'd,
By queen Penelope most welcome held:
For the best sense had he, and us'd it, too.
He, with a kindlier mind, this grave address
To all around deliver'd:—"No—my friends!
Myself, for one, can no desire avow
To kill Telemachus. An awful crime
Is it to slaughter one of kingly race!
First let us from the gods some guidance seek,—
Then—if the will of Jove omnipotent,
As by the oracle declar'd, this deed
Shall counsel us to do,—myself the blow
Will strike, and all of you to action urge:
But, if the gods our purpose would divert,
My earnest word of counsel is—forbear!"

Thus spake Amphinomus, and his appeal
Their full approval gain'd, and from their seats
Uprising all towards Ulysses' house
Their steps began to bend; and, there arriv'd,
Upon a polish'd throne each suitor sate.

But, startling was the fresh surprise prepar'd
The minds of that proud overbearing crowd
To overtake, which now Penelope
Herself was framing, who in her own home
The menace'd murder of her son had heard
By Medon told, the herald who their plot,
While list'ning, had discover'd; and she now
With all her female train into the hall
Of that palatial mansion entry made;
And, as the haughty crowd her eyes discern'd,
A station near the pillar which upbore
The goodly roof above her she assum'd,
And to her cheek a veil she held while thus
Her speech she to Antinoüs address'd
And (by his name arraign'd) upbraided him:
“Antinoüs! malignant that thou art—
Malicious plotter! Common fame, forsooth!
Speaks of thee as the ablest of thine age,
Both in sound judgment and in speech, 'mid all
Who here in Ithaca resort: but, no—
Thou of a truth art not that man! Mad fool!
Wherefore hast thou the death and mortal doom
Of my Telemachus design’d? nor heed
To suppliants takes any aught, whose cause and claims
Jove testifies? Unhallow’d is the thought
That injury against our neighbour schemes.
What! Hast thou never learn’d how to this home
Thy father, fleeing here, for safety came,
By panic terror of our people scar’d,
Indignant as they were, for that, intent
On chasing across sea the Taphian crews
(That pirates were,) he the Thesprotians’ rights
Had reckless spurn’d? And these were our allies:
Aye—and they fain thy parent would have kill’d,
His heart’s life-blood have taken, and his wealth,
Ample and precious as it was, dispers’d;
But that Ulysses stay’d their hands, and though
To wreak their vengeance raging, drove them off:
And this same man’s inheritance thou now
With contumely art squandering; his wife
Thou with thy suit art harassing;—his son
Thou seek’st to murder, and upon myself
A load hast heap’d of mis’ry! But, henceforth,
I bid thee pause: and see that thou like charge
To all thy fellows give.”

In prompt reply
Eurymachus the son of Polybus
Uprose and spake:—“Most just Penelope!
Daughter of Icarus! Renounce distrust:
Let nought that thou hast dwelt on be to thee
A cause of dread. The man exists not here,
Nor here will ever come, nor will be born,
Who on thy son Telemachus his hand
Will dare to lay, while I, at least, survive
The sunlight to behold. For, this to thee,
O queen! I here declare,—and all my words
Fulfill’d shall be—his life-blood from my spear
Should in an instant drop; for that the Chief
Who many a city had in ruins laid,
Ulysses, oftentimes, when upon his knees
He, in my childhood, seated me, choice bits
Of roasted meat between my fingers put,
And ’twixt my lips, red wine! And for this cause
Telmachus to me the dearest far
Of all men living is; nor warning aught
Would I for my part give him, death to dread
From any suitor here: From hand divine
No man that fate can shun.”

Thus ended he,
Her spirit comforting,—but, in his heart
He was a murder compassing! Then pass’d
Penelope into those upper rooms
Where splendour shone around, and there, in tears,
She her lov’d husband mourn’d, till o’er her eyes
Minerva sweetly soothing slumber shed.

At even-tide the swineherd, homeward bent,
Ulysses and Telemachus rejoin'd; 715
And they, a tender swine of one year's age
For the repast of ev'ning having slain,
Their meal, like men well practis'd, had prepar'd:
But, now, Minerva, at Ulysses' side
Her station taking, struck him with a wand,
And all the semblance of an agèd man
Once more in him created, and vile garb
Around his person cast, that in this guise
Eumæus, as his master face to face
He look'd upon, no feature might detect
And in his mind perpend it; or forthwith
To queen Penelope thereon report.

Telemachus first spoke: "Here, then, thou com'st,
Most excellent Eumæus! Now, what tale
Is in the city current? Are the throng
Of tyrant suitors from that lurking place
Where late they lay in watch, come home again?
Or do they still their vigil keep, myself
And ship expecting?"

To which words,
Eumæus! thou thus gav'st reply:—"Concern
I felt not this to learn or question ask,
As through the streets I pass'd; for, all my care,
When of my message rid, was with all haste
This herd-stall to regain: But one whose speed
Was great indeed,—a herald from thy crew
With news dispatch'd,—fell in with me, and he
Thy mother first inform'd:—But,—for this fact
I well can speak, as with these eyes of mine
I saw it: Just as now beyond the walls
I hurried of the city, where the ridge
Of Hermes runs, a swiftly sailing ship
I saw our harbour ent'ring; and a troop
Of men were there on board;—deep laden, too,
It seem'd with shields and iron-shod long spears;
And 'These are they! methought—: though for a truth
I must not vouch it!'"

Thus Eumæus spoke:
And at his words Telemachus with smiles
His eye upon his father fix'd, but glance
On good Eumæus bent he none. At length
From all exertion ceasing, as a meal
Of ample viands they had now prepar'd,
They ate at ease, nor thought had they to take
Lest each should not his equal portion share.
But, when for drink or eating relish all
Began to cease, their thoughts to bedward turn'd,
And all the blessed gift of slumber shar'd.

END OF THE SIXTEENTH BOOK.
BOOK XVII.

BUT, when the rosy morn, dawn's offspring, rose,
   Telemachus, with beauteous sandals shod,
And with a sturdy jav'lìn arm'd, which well
His grasping palm besitted, tow'rd's the town
His journey took; and to the swineherd thus
At parting spoke:—"Now, fatherly old man!
I to the city must my steps direct
That my lov'd mother may, at length, her eyes
Upon me bend; for, this pernicious grief
And flooding sorrow never, as I think,
Will she abandon, until face to face
She shall thus see me: but, this earnest charge
I lay on thee—Our hapless stranger guest
Conduct thou to the city, that he there
May as a mendicant some food entreat;
And then may any one at will a cate
Of wheaten bread and a small cup full give:
But, hamper'd and distracted as my mind
With trouble is, I cannot for the needs
Provide of all. And if the stranger's ire
Hereat shall chafe, so much the worse for him!
For in frank phrase to speak is my delight."
The shrewd Ulysses hereupon thus spoke:—
"My friend! No wish of mine would stay me here:
'Tis better that a mendicant in town
For food should be a suppliant than in fields:
For, whosoever hath a kindly will
May thus befriend me. And, no longer now
Avails my age that here, among the swine,
I should abide, and such a master serve
As would to all requirements of his will
Obedience claim. Go thou;—and this good man,
With thy request compliant, will forthwith
Conduct me to the city;—when, at least,
From these hot embers on the hearth some warmth
I shall have felt, and heat from the sun's rays
Shall from on high be gleaming: for the garb
Which on my limbs is hanging is so spare
And wretched, that the early matin rime
May with its chill o'erpow'r me; and ye say
The city distant lieth." Thus spake he,
And with light onward step Telemachus
Through the hut hasted,—schemes of vengeance dire
On all the suitors plotting. But, when now
He had the palace reach'd, his spear he lower'd—
By the tall bearing-pillar of the roof
Awhile to leave it; and, the threshold stone
Of that proud mansion crossing, pass'd within.
Him, long before the eyes of others saw,
His nurse, aged Euryclea recognis'd
As on each throne-like seat, which cunning art
So variously had fashion'd, she a fleece
Of wool was laying; and with tearful eyes
She onward rush'd. All the handmaidens, too,
That with her in the princely mansion serv'd
Of brave Ulysses, round about him throng'd,
And, with most tender welcome, on his brow
And shoulders many a kiss of joy impress'd.
Then from her chamber came Penelope—
The goddess-presence of Diana's self
Or golden Venus rivalling, and, all tears,
Her darling son in her enfolding arms
Awhile she held, and kisses on his head
And both his eyes, so radiant, impress'd,
And in the tones of sorrow these wing'd words
Began to utter:—"Thou, at length, art come!
Telemachus! my own sweet light! My thought
Hath long time been that never, never more
Should I upon thee look,—since in that ship
Without my knowledge and against my wish
Thou sail'dst to Pylos,—of thy father's fate
Fresh tidings there to learn. But, tell me, now,
What, haply, have those eyes of thine beheld."

To this discreet Telemachus replied:—
"O Mother mine! renew not thou my woes
Nor move my heart within me, who but now
From death in its most fearful form have fled;
But, having thine ablutions made, and robes
Of spotless purity around thee thrown,
With all thy female train to th' upper room
From hence go forth, and there to all the gods
A vow pronounce that hallow'd hecatombs
Thou wilt on altars offer up, if Jove
The deed of our retributive revenge
Will anywise effect for us. But, I
Must to the Forum speed, a stranger thence
to bring along who on my voyage home
Hath my associate been, and whom, indeed,
With my brave comrades onward I dispatch'd,
And on Piræus this commandment laid
That when he home had led him, he as host
Should welcome him and with all zeal regard
Till I myself should come."

He ceas'd to speak,
But, ev'ry word, unwing'd, sunk deep in her;
And Queen Penelope, when in her bath
Ablution she had made, and with the robes
Of spotless purity her form array'd,
To all the gods a solemn vow pronounc'd,
That on the altars hallow'd hecatombs
She would as off'rings lay, if Jove himself
The deed of just retributive revenge
Would anywise effect. Then, spear in hand,
Telemachus the palace left,—his dogs
So swift o' foot, close following; and a charm
Unearthly did Minerva round him throw,
As all on his advancing presence gaz'd
With admiration wond'ring. Ev'n the crowd
Of those presumptuous suitors throng'd around
With speeches fair upon their lips,—but wrongs
Most foul in mind and heart contemplating.
But, as he from this concourse turn'd aside,
Telemachus to Mentor made advance,
With whom in converse join'd sate Antiphus
And Alitherses, who from earliest years
His father's friends had prov'd; and at their side
He sate him down, as they, all eagerness,
Bade him from first to last his tale narrate.
And then drew nigh Piræus (he whose spear
So oft had won him fame) the stranger guest
Leading into the Forum,—from whose side
Telemachus, but for a moment, turn’d,
And then approach’d them, when Piræus thus:—
“Telemachus! send women with all speed
To where I dwell, that I may send to thee
All Menelaus’ gifts.” But, to these words
Telemachus discreetly thus replied:—
“Piræus! On the issues of these days
We cannot reckon: If the hateful crowd
Of suitors should within the palace walls
By treach’ry take my life, and all the wealth
Which from my ancestors on me devolv’d
Attempt to make their booty, my heart’s wish
Is that thyself, or some of these our friends,
Should claim and ever hold it as your own.
But, if the seed I am about to sow
Shall in the death and overwhelming doom
Of these fell suitors germinate,—do thou
In gleeful triumph bring (while large content
My own heart fills) those gifts to my own home.”

Then did he that long harass’d man, his guest,
Into the palace lead, and when they now
Within the mansion stood, their cloaks they laid
On couches and on thrones, and in the baths
Of shining marble their ablutions made;
And when th’ attendant maidens had their feet
First lav’d, and oily unguents on them pour’d,
In woollen mantles and more seemly garb
They rob'd themselves, and from those polish'd baths
Forth issuing, upon the couches sate.
Then in a sumptuous golden vase contain'd
A handmaid brought in water: this she pour'd
Upon a laver all in silver wrought
And for all cleansing apt: and close at hand
A polish'd table placed: And then did she
Who, winning all respect, had oversight
Of the palatial storehouse, set on bread,
And many cates therewith before them placed
Of zest most delicate, therewith to please
As the supply at hand her wish might serve.
And opposite sate Queen Penelope
Upon a couch recumbent where the shaft
Of a tall column of the palace rose,
And in her hands the threads of finest wool
She from a distaff wound. And now did they
The proffer'd viands handling freely eat,
Until, when appetite no longer crav'd,
Penelope, appealing, thus began:

"O my Telemachus! to th' upper room
Will I, indeed, ascend; and on that couch
There throw myself which, flooded with my tears,
So wretched hath become since with the sons
Of Atreus my Ulysses sail'd for Troy.
And now, alas! though at this moment none
Of all that hateful crowd of suitors yet
Have in the palace set their foot,— thyself
From me th' exact recital would'st withhold
Which of thy father's coming home might speak,
Or tidings any of his destiny
From anywhere report.” To which in turn
Telemachus:—

“To all that thou hast ask’d
Assenting, O my mother! I will now
A faithful tale narrate. To Pylos first
Our course we shap’d, and Nestor’s regal home—
(The pastor of his people call’d): and he
In those high halls as an accepted guest
With cordial welcome nobly greeted me;
And, as a father hails with joy the son
Just to that home return’d from which by space
And time he long hath parted been, ev’n thus
With zealous care did Nestor and his sons,
Illustrious as they are, my welfare tend.
But tidings none, from any one on earth,
Of the forlorn Ulysses had he gain’d,
Or living or defunct; but, on my way
With two yok’d horses and a car complete
Did Nestor speed me to that prince whose spear
In war had won imperishable fame—
Atrides Menelaus; and with him
Saw I that Argive Helen, in whose cause
(So will’d the gods) the legion’d hosts of Greece
And Troia such afflictive ills endur’d.
And Menelaus, who, in battle strife
So valiant ever shone, with question prompt
The earnest wish desir’d to learn which thus
To glorious Sparta had transported me:
And all the truth I instantly reveal’d;
And he thereon thus spoke:—’Ah! shame upon’t!
These puny dastards, then, would fain the couch
Have slept in of the bravest of the brave!
As when a hind that wanders from her young
But lately dropp’d, and still from parent’s milk
Their nurture drawing,— lays them where but now
A lion couch’d;—then strays to browse, and roams
The hill-side woodlands through and verdant meads—
And that fierce lion, to his den return’d,
A direful doom on fawn and hind inflicts,
So will Ulysses on those foes of thine
The sternest vengeance wreak. O Father Jove!
Minerva, too, and Phæbus I invoke—
Would he were now as when, in days gone by,
In Lesbos’ city,—beauteous in its site—
He rose to wrestle in a contest sharp
With Philomela’s son, and with rude force
Gave him a fall;—to all the Greeks a joy!
Should this Ulysses on those suitors fall,
Their doom were prompt enough: their nuptial days
In bitter rites would end! But, for that tale
Which at my hands thou askest and with prayer
So earnest plead’st for, utterance of mine
Evasive should not ‘scape me, nor would I
Thy hope deceive; but what that prophet true—
The old Man of the Sea to me disclos’d,
I will repeat;—withholding not one word.
This he affirm’d, that in a certain isle
Ulysses, so long harass’d, he beheld
All bath’d in tears, in the palatial home
Of that fam’d nymph Calypso, who, by force
Was there detaining him; nor pow’r had he
To reach his native land: for, not a ship
With oars equipp'd had he, or fit comates
To pilot him across the spreading seas.'
 Such was the tale by Menelaus, son
Of Atreus, told ;—on hearing which, my course
I homeward turn'd, and the immortal gods
Who to the shore of my lov'd fatherland
Sped that return, propitious breezes sent.”

Thus spake Telemachus; and many a thought
And feeling in his list'ning Mother rous'd—
When Theoclymenus thus zealous spoke :—
“O august consort of Laertes' son!
Herein this youth no certain knowledge hath—
But, mark thou well my words ;—for, error none
In those averments will be found which now
I am about to utter; nor reserve
Will I maintain. Let Jove, o'er Gods supreme,
My speech attest:—that board, too, where thy guests
Such welcome meet; and great Ulysses’ hearth
Whereeto I have drawn nigh,—that at this hour
Ulysses may in his own fatherland
Be sitting found, or slowly stealing on,
As he into the gross atrocious wrongs
That here are rife an inquest stern pursues,
And for each suitor of them all a doom
Which shall o'erwhelm them hastens. Of all this
The omens I discern’d as on the deck
Of our good ship I lay, and to thy son
Telemachus, that moment, I spoke out.”

To whom Penelope:—“I would, indeed,
O stranger! that these auguries of thine
Might their fulfilment meet! For, promptly then
Shouldst thou my cordial kindness feel, and gifts
From me receive, possessing which, all friends
That met thee thy good fortune would salute."

Such interchange of speech awhile they held:
Meanwhile, upon the flat smooth levell'd swade,
Before Ulysses' princely courts outspread,
The suitors of Penelope were met
With quoits and lances to disport themselves,
Where, in days past, with scorn and contumely
Their wont had been to revel. But, as now
The hour of ev'ning meal approach'd, and flocks
From all the pastures round came thronging in
(The wonted herdsmen leading them), these words
The herald Medon to the suitor train
Began t' address:—(For, of the heralds, he
Most favour'd of them was, and at their feasts
Attendance gave :) "Young men! since from your games
Thus far contentment large you have deriv'd,
Re-enter now the mansion, that our feast
We may in order set; for, as the hour
Most opportune for night's repast draws nigh,
'Tis no unwise resolve to eat thereof!"

He ended: and, with one accord upris'n,
They to the palace turn'd; and, there arriv'd,
Their mantles on the couches and the thrones
They threw aside, and of the full-grown sheep
And prime condition'd goats made sacrifice,
And fatten'd swine they added, and a cow
From off the pastures taken, that the feast
Complete might be: But, in the self-same hour
Ulysses and Eumæus from the hut
Were their departure hast'ning for the town:
And thus the high-soul'd swineherd reas'ning spake:—
"O Stranger! since thine earnest wish it seems
(And 'twas my master's charge upon me laid)
This day the town to enter,—be it thus:—
But, fain would I myself in thee behold
The trustful overlooker of these stalls:
Yet, with the homage of respect and fear
Herein to him must I defer, whose wrath
I haply might provoke; and the rebukes
Of those who with a sov'reign power rule
Are in their nature stern. But, speed we now!
For day hath well nigh glided past, and when
The eve sets in the air will keener prove."

But, full of many counsels, to these words
Ulysses thus replied:—"All this I know:
What thou hast urg'd, escap'd me not; and that
Which thou enjoinest is to one address'd
Who well hath comprehended: Go we, then,
And all the journey through be thou my guide;
But, if thou chance to have by thee a shoot
Already from its parent stem lopp'd off,
Bestow on me the same, my weight to poise,
For, of a slipp'ry path thou mention mad'ft."

He spoke:—and from his shoulders downward slung
A leathern pouch most mean to look upon
And full of rents; a plaided band withal.
But now Eumæus in Ulysses' hand
A staff which might a man inspirit plac'd;
And forward sped the twain: the dogs, meanwhile,
And men behind them leaving, o'er the hut
Safe guardianship to keep; and in this guise
The swineherd to the town his master led;
The semblance bearing of a mendicant
In sorriest plight, and of one bow'd by age
And by a staff supported; vilest garb
About his body hanging. Even thus,
Along the rough road trudging, they at length
The town approach'd, and that fair bubbling fount
Drew nigh to—(by the skill of man contriv'd)—
The people's constant and entire supply—
Which Ithacus and Neritus of old
Had with Polycetor giv'n. All circling round
Arose a copse of poplar trees whose growth
In kindly moisture thro'ye; for, from a crag
That high in air uprose, a frigid stream
Was ever downward rushing. On that height
An altar stood whereon whoever there
Their journey's course directed, to the Nymphs
A votive off'r'ing made:—And, at this spot
Melantius, son of Dolius, with the twain
Ulysses and Eumaeus met; as he
The goats was leading which of all the herds
The sleekest were by far—; an ev'n'ing meal
To furnish for the suitors; and two hinds
Were following close: But, as, at length, his glance
On the wayfarers fell, he with vile speech
By name Eumaeus taunted, and at both,
With gestures full of outrage and affront,
Began to rail, and brave Ulysses' ire
Awak'd within him as he thus exclaim'd:
"Here, sure! is the mean leader of the mean!
And thus the deity for evermore
The like links with the like. Unhappy wretch,
Eumeus! whither mays't thou chance to lead
This starveling wight, this pest'ring mendicant,
This kill-joy at our meals! who, as from door
To door-post he his shifting station takes,
His shoulders will be rubbing, while for bits
He (not for tripod or for caldron) begs!
Should'rt thou to me thy comrade here consign
About my house-stalls to keep watch,—my pens
To clean,—and a green bough to hold in hand,
To lure the kids along,— If nought but whey
His bev'rage were, he would a stout thigh grow!
But, no! Since he in mischief an adept
Must long have been, with no good will would he
To labour turn: he, at the people's heels
For ever cowering, his choice has made
For his insatiate maw to beg alone:
But, frankly I declare to thee,—(and all
Thus told and threaten'd will fulfilment meet,—)
If to Ulysses' mansion he should come,
His ribs, while he with missiles through the halls
On ev'ry side shall be assail'd, will soon
Full many a footstool graze and fret away
As, from men's hands, around his head they'll fly!"

He ended, and as by Ulysses' side
He onward pass'd,—in his mad insolence
He at the prince's hip a leap essay'd
And kick'd it; but, displacement from the spot
Compell'd he none:—unstagger'd and unmov'd
Ulysses stood, but, pausing, mus'd awhile
Whether with rapid onset he at once
Melantius' life should with the cudgel take,
Or, having from the ground his body rais'd,
The head dash down to earth. But, he forbore,
And bent his mind t' endure. Whereat, with eyes
Upon him fix't, the swineherd words of blame
Began to utter, as, with hands and voice
Uplifted he thus pray'd:—"O fountain nymphs!
Daughters of Jove! If, ever, at your fane
Ulysses hath the thighs of victims burnt,
With luscious fat of lambs or tender kids
The portions cov'ring—, grant me but the boon
That this same Prince may hither live to come,
And may the deity his escort prove!
Then would he all those insults which thou, thus,
Melantius! flingest—, scatter to the winds—
Stray vagabond as in this town of ours
Thou long hast been! For, shepherds villanous
Make sheep and herds as vile!"

Melantius
The goat-herd thus retorting spoke:—"How now!
What has this dog, in all pernicious arts
So vers'd, been pleas'd to tell us!—that same one
Whom on some coming day, from Ithaca
On board a well appointed dark-ribb'd ship
I shall to distant regions see dispatch'd,
Where a rich living he may earn for me:
For, may Apollo of the silver bow
But when he rose and went to his seat,

Kneeling, so the nature showing his love,

A message sent without, and as they paint it

A form, having its motions in them same

The Phoenicians had his name-inscribing column in

Whereat I pass as the serpent's blind

He towards him drew; thus spoke — in very truth.

Kneeling: this, the messenger of the prince

Is of great beauty, and by every eye

Most plain to be discovered: Mai countless homes

At once may it be marked: one part thereof

From out the other rises: and the court

With wall and coping is adorned:—Its doors
That folding close are with no mean skill wrought:
A palace, truly, such as none would scorn:
But, a dense throng, meeseems, are in its halls
A high feast holding, and a savour rich
Of some burnt sacrifice is rising here,
And a melodious harp, too, from within
Its tone gives out, by the immortal gods
Associate of these banquetings ordain'd."

Whereeto, Eumæus! thou this answer mad'st:—
"Well hast thou judg'd, who on none other theme
Discernment want'st; but, come! how next to act
Let us due counsel take. Wilt thou the first
This noble dwelling enter, I the while
In this spot tarrying? Or, if to stay
Thou would'st prefer, I will myself precede:
But, linger not,—lest any one that here
His glance may cast on thee, should with a blow
Assail, or spurn thee hence: for which ill chance
I charge thee to take thought."

To whom, in turn,

Patient Ulysses thus:—"This know I well—
I am reflecting: and what thou advis'st
Is by my forethought met. Advance thou first,
And I will here abide, for, stranger none
Am I to wounds by throw of missiles made,
Or to assailant blows. Within this breast
Is a stout heart to suffer! On the waves,
And on the fields of fight, how many shocks
Have I encounter'd! So let this mischance
Befal me as it may. But, power none
Hath man a hungry stomach to hide close!
A pestilent exactor, which at times
To ills unnumber'd among men may lead.
On its behalf, broad ships with all their gear
Are for the seas equipp'd, and plagues inflict
On those whose ports befriend them not."

They converse held. Now, Argus, the aged dog
Of the wayworn Ulysses, stretch'd at length,
His head and ears was seen to raise! Of old
Ulysses' self had fed and rear'd him up,
But use of him made none;—for, but too soon
To sacred Ilion he his voyage took.
The youngsters had, ere then, the mountain-goats
And deer and hares pursued with him; but, when
His owner from that home was distant gone,
Argus,—despis'd—amid manure was left
Of mules and oxen, which in heaps immense
Before the doors was mass'd, until some hinds
That in Ulysses' homestead serv'd, a load
Would thence cart out upon the spacious lands
As compost to disperse: and thus the prey
Of insects vile lay Argus. But, when now
So nigh Ulysses he beheld, his tail
He to and fro mov'd cheerily: his ears
He instant dropp'd; but, to that master's feet
Once more to drag him—strength avail'd him none.

Ulysses, as the faithful swineherd's glance
With ease he shunn'd, and from a distant spot
Upon the creature gaz'd, a falling tear.
From his eye wip'd away; but to his herd
In the same moment spake:—"A marvel 'tis,
Eumæus! that in such defiling dirt
That dog should lie! Of beauteous form is he,
But, whether he, thus gifted, in the course
Was fleet as he is handsome; or, for use
Was valueless, as are the hounds which men
Beneath their tables keep, I cannot learn:
As a mere show do masters for him care?"

Hereto, Eumæus! in reply thou spak'st:—
"This, I may truly tell thee, is the dog
Of one who far from hence has died the death.
Were he but all, in frame and in exploits,
That of old time he was, when from this home
Ulysses sail'd for Troy, thou at the proof
Both of his speed and spirit would'st, indeed,
Have wond'ring gaz'd: for, never from the beasts
That chasing into glens and forests dense
He had t' encounter, was he known to flinch;
And well traced he their whereabout! But, now
Is he on evil fallen, and his lord
Hath in some unknown region, from this soil
(His fatherland) remote, to fate succumb'd.
The reckless handmaids here no kindly care
On Argus have vouchsaf'd: but, servants thus,
When their employers can no longer rule,
All inclination lose to what is right:
And Jove, that from on high beholds us all,
One half of any man's good points annuls
When that day comes upon him which his life
To a slave's lot reduces."
With these words
The noble house he enter'd, and his steps
To where the suitor train were thronging bent.

But, in the selfsame hour in which his eyes
Upon Ulysses, after twenty years,
One moment rested, the dark gloom of death
On Argus fell.

But, as Eumæus, now,
The palace hall was entering, the eye
Of young Telemachus, 'mid all that there
Were gath'ring round, by far the foremost was
The swineherd to descry; and by a sign
He promptly to himself Eumæus led,
Who, as he round him glanc'd, a casual seat
From that attendant's side remov'd who heaps
Of viands to the crowd was offering
That there had met to feast. The seat thus ta'en
He at the table of Telemachus,
Now fronting him, arrang'd: and there a place
Himself assum'd; whereat, as he his share
Drew forth, the herald meat before him rang'd,
And bread from out the basket drew.

And now,
After brief lapse, Ulysses his own hall
Had well-nigh enter'd,—as a mendicant
Disguis'd, and as an aged decrepit man
That on his staff walk'd feebly: raiment vile
About his limbs was hanging, and a place
Upon the inner ashen sill he chose
Where, 'gainst a cypress column (which, of old,
Some artist hand had with ingenious toil
To a high polish brought; and all its length
By plummet rul'd)—he sate him down and lean'd. 570
But, to his side the swineherd summoning,
Telemachus thus spoke—(a loaf entire
From out the splendid basket drawing forth,
And meat—so much as in his clasping hands
He could comprise,—into Eumæus' own,
The meantime, heaping) "To yon stranger take
What here I give thee, and to him the whole
Present; and then an alms let him entreat,
And all the crowd of suitors supplicate.
No mendicant his diffidence should plead." 580
He spoke, and at the words Eumæus sped,
Till, by Ulysses standing, these brief words
He utter'd:—"Stranger! this Telemachus
To thee a gift hath sent, and charge on thee
He lays to ask of all an alms; the throng
Of suitors thus petitioning,—and adds
That mendicants no diffidence should plead."
Ulysses, ever ready, this reply
In turn address'd:—"O Jove! 'mid men at large,
May happiness on this Telemachus
For ever light: and whatsoever thought
His mind revolves, with all success desir'd
Be it to him fulfill'd." Such were his words,
And in both hands the portion having ta'en,
He at his feet, where that mean wallet lay,
Outspread it; and while Phemius in the hall
His minstrel melody was tuning, ate.

Ulysses ceas'd to eat,—the bard to sing,
And loud the din of suitors' voices rose,
When Pallas to Ulysses drawing nigh
With exhortation urg'd him in that crowd
An off'ring to beseech of wheaten cakes;
That of the suitors he the reverent
And godless might discern. Not that herein
A single one from his impending doom
The goddess would exempt. Thus, from the right
A circuit making, of each guest an alms
With outstretch'd hands, as one to begging train'd,
He 'gan to ask: and they, as pity mov'd,
Gave, in their turns,—but in amazement gaz'd,
And of each other question, who this man
Might be, and whence, began to ask; until
Melantius the goat-herd with this speech
The crowd address'd:—"Ye who the noble queen
Are here with your suit urging, to my words
Attend awhile: they to this stranger point—
For, I before have seen him. To this spot
The swineherd has conducted him; but I
No certain knowledge of him yet have gain'd,
Nor of what tribe he comes at all can learn."

He ended: but, Antinoüs with blame
Enmæus thus arraign'd:—"O Swineherd! thou
Thyself but too well known! Why to this town
Hast thou this man conducted? Of the tribes
Of vagrants and mean mendicants that prey
As kill-joys on our banquets, have we not
A concourse ample? Is it nought to thee
That such as these, here gath’ring, all the means
Will of thy master waste? And whence, forsooth,
Hast thou thus forward call’d him?"

But, hereto

O Swineherd! didst thou instant answer make:—
"Antinoüs! though thou may’st fortune boast,
Thou speakest as but ill beseemeth thee:—
For, who that from an unfamiliar home
Himself at feasts arrives, a stranger-guest
Would welcome make save from the number chos’n
Of handicraftsmen, soothsayers, or those
Who can diseases heal, or galleys build,
Or some inspired minstrel who with song
The guests might charm; for these o’er the wide world
Are at all feasts made welcome. None the hand
Of this good fellowship to one so like
To eat him out of house and home would give!
But, above all that here as suitors sit,
Thou ever to Ulysses’ household stern
And harsh thyself approvest; and to me
This in excess. But none account hereof
Make I at all while Queen Penelope
And noble-soul’d Telemachus these halls
Shall dwell in as their own."

To which, in turn,

Telemachus:—"Remain thou mute;—nor thus
In many words rejoin: Antinous
In carping speech is ever wont to strive
And others prompts to follow him." He spoke,  
And to Antinoüs turning thus in haste  
These words appealing cast:—"Antinoüs!  
Ev'n as a father would his son's, so thou  
My welfare guardest!—who from this my home  
Would'st urge me, in these harshest terms of speech  
A stranger to expel. Ne'er may the god  
This act accomplish'd see! Take of those meats  
And on the man bestow it. No demur  
Make I, forsooth! For, 'twas my own command.  
Nor is such dole my mother's will, nor that  
Of any that in all the household serve  
Of noble-soul'd Ulysses. As to thee,—  
No impulse thus to give in all thy heart  
Finds place; for thou far rather would'st thyself  
Those viands gorge, than aught for others spare."

Antinoüs, in retort:—"Telemachus!  
Braggart in speech,—in temper uncontroll'd!  
What words have pass'd thy lips? If ev'ry one  
Among us suitors number'd to this man  
The like should give, thine house for full three months  
Might well suffice to keep him in his home!"  
Thus having spoken he a footstool seiz'd  
Which underneath the table where he sate  
Till now had lain, and, while the feast should last,  
On this he rested his anointed feet.  
All other suitors from their portions gave,  
And on Ulysses' wallet bread and meat  
In turn bestow'd; and he, as now again  
The threshold he approach'd, on these the gifts  
Of Grecian men's compassion to regale,
His station near Antinoüs chose, and thus
That chief harangu'd:—"Friend! give thou in thy turn:
Thou seem'st not, in mine eyes, the meanest grade
Among these Greeks to fill,—but over all
Pre-eminence to hold, who, as it were,
A princely state maintainest: for which cause
It well would thee become some richer dole
Than thy comppeers have given to bestow;—
Not bread alone:—And o'er the wide terrene
We live on I'd extol thee: for, in truth,
I, too, in times bygone, of ample means
Possess'd, a goodly home enjoy'd whose wealth
'Mid fellow-men was flourishing; and aid
On roaming strangers, of whatever rank,
And whatsoever their wants might be, bestow'd.
And crowds, too, I maintain'd of serving men,
And much had I of all which in this life
A prosp'rous lot maintains, and by mankind
Is affluence call'd. But, Jupiter himself,
The son of Saturn, (such was the caprice
Of his high will) my wealth's destruction wrought,
Who on a lengthsome voyage, which my death
Untimely compass'd, with a roving band
Of pirates sent me forth, th' Egyptian coast
To land upon: and in Egyptus' stream
Our galleys did I moor. And by this fleet
My comrades charg'd I to abide, and hale
Each keel to shore. Injunction, too, I gave
On ev'ry jutting point a watch to set.
But, they by wanton lawlessness impell'd,
And their own will asserting, with all speed
The fairest pastures of th' Egyptians' lands
Began to spoil; their wives and infant babes
They captive took and slaughter'd, till the cry
Of panic with all speed the city fill'd,
And in the early morn, while yet the shouts
Were in their ears, in thickly must'ring troops
The burghers onward came until the plain
With hosts of infantry and horse (whose brass
Shone dazzling bright) on ev'ry side was throng'd.
But, Jove, who in the thunder-crash delights,
A sudden fright among my comrades spread,
And not a man dared face his foe: the doom
Of their impending ruin hemm'd them in;
And on that spot did the Egyptian arm
With its keen sword kill many: Some, indeed,
That with me companied they captive took
And living spar'd, who with forc'd labour might
Henceforth in Egypt toil. Myself, howe'er,
They to a casual stranger yielded up—
Demetas, son of Iasus, who rule
O'er Cyprus held; and unto Cyprus' shore
Would thence transport me. From which isle, at length,
After sharp suff'ring am I hither come."

Still, on retort intent, Antinoüs thus:—
"Now! Which of all the gods this plague hath sent!
This kill-joy,—to our feast? Thy station, then,
Take thou in yonder centre,—from the board
Where now I sit far distant; lest betimes
Upon an Egypt as replete with harm
And Cyprus, too, thou haply should'st alight:
Some bold and barefac'd mendicant art thou!
To all thou mak'st approach, and without thought
On thee they waste their bounty; for, no check
Nor thought consid’rate weighs where from the goods
Of others all are giving, while each man
So much has to enjoy!”

But, to this speech
Ulysses, ever ready in reply,
As he withdrew, thus answer’d:—“Sad, indeed,
Appeareth this, that with thy graceful shape
Thou hast no feelings! For, from thine own house,
Thou would’st not on a suppliant at thy feet
The merest grain of salt bestow; ev’n thou
Who, at this moment, at the gen’rous board
Thus sitting of another, mercy none
Could’st in thy bosom feel of yonder bread
To take and give me; while before thy face
So great abundance lieth!”

Thus spoke he:
Whereat Antinoüs with fiercer ire
Began to chafe, and as a savage glance
He cast at him, in these wing’d accents spoke:
“Now, to a certainty opine I not
That thou from hence wilt safely make thy way,
Who such revilings dar’st to fling!”

And now,
The footstool seizing, on Ulysses’ back
’Neath the right shoulder he a blow let fall:
But, rock-like, all unmov’d, the Chieftain stood,
Nor ev’n to make him stagger did the stroke
Thus by Antinoüs hurl’d at him avail.
Ulysses, mute continuing, shook his head,
As in his inmost soul the day of fate
He brooded on; and, to the threshold stone
Returning, he his seat resum’d, and there
His now well-loaded wallet placed, and thus
To all the suitors spoke:—

“All ye who here
The suitors are of the most noble queen,
Your audience grant while I to ev’ry thought
My heart is prompting shall my utt’rance give:—
No heaviness of spirit, nor regret
Should that man feel who, to defend his own,
On conflict rushes and a wound receives,
For his fat oxen fighting or white sheep:
But, this Antinoüs my shoulder hit
My stomach’s claims resenting,—, that fell cause
Of mortal bane! that mischief-working plague
Which many a disaster upon men
Is known to bring! But, if there gods should be
Or dread avenging Powers which the cause
Of hapless Need befriended, may Death his course
Before his nuptial day untimely close!”
To this Antinoüs, Eupithes’ son,
Rejoin’d:—“O Stranger! eat thou, and be still!
And keep thou there thy seat, or from this hall
Betake thyself, lest, railler as thou art,
Our youngsters either by thy feet or hands
Should in a moment draw thee through the house
And scrape thy skin from off thee!”

Here paus’d he—
But, all that crowd with anger vehement
Took to themselves the shame; and, of the youths
One cried aloud:—"Antinoüs! that blow
But ill became thee which thou wand'ring wretch 805
From thee receiv'd,—doom'd as thou art for this,
If any god in heav'n there be—to die.
For that the gods, like strangers from some land
Remote appearing, and in many a form
By men beheld, throughout their cities walk,
Th' impiety or virtues of our race
With scrutiny contemplating."

Such words
Ev'n from the suitors issued;—though regard
Antinoüs paid none. But, anguish keen
Felt young Telemachus for him who thus 815
A blow had to abide: No tear to earth
Did he, that moment, from his eyelids shed,
But mute remain'd and shook his head,—as deep
In thought the scheme of vengeance he revolv'd.

Now, when Penelope the tidings learn'd
Of him who this fell outrage in her halls
Had but just brook'd, she to her maidens cried:—
"Ev'n thus may he, the god who from his bow
Such glory wins, Apollo, smite thyself!"
To whom Eurynome, who o'er that house 825
Had oversight, this answer promptly made:—
"Ev'n so! And were the boon, for which our pray'rs
Continual plead, but granted, not a man
Of all these suitors would the dawning see
Of golden-thronèd morn!"
Penelope
Thus further spake:—"Nurse! Odious are they all—
For, baneful are their plots and wiles; but, he,
Antinoüs, above them all the guise
Of Fate's dark agent bears. Some wretched one,
A stranger, through the palace haply roams,
And, by his need compell'd, a bounty asks:
The gen'r'al crowd his wallet well supplied
And of their portions gave; but, with a stool
This fellow smote his shoulder!"

Thus spake she
Amid the handmaids in her chamber thron'd.
Meanwhile Ulysses on his ample store
Was left to feast: but, having to her side
The swineherd called, Penelope these words
In brief address'd:—"Hence, good Eumæus! speed
And bid that stranger hither come, that I
Myself may here some commune with him hold,
And question ask if of Ulysses aught
He tidings may have heard, or with his eyes
Upon him look'd: for, he the aspect wears
Of one who much in hapless plight hath roam'd."

But, thus, Eumæus! didst thou answer make:—
"Lady! if these assembled Greeks were hush'd,
The tale he could relate would, of a truth,
Thy bosom cheer: for, I, myself, three nights
This stranger lodg'd; and three days in my hut
Besought him to abide; since he the first
My home approach'd when from the ship his flight
He had effected: but, not even yet
Hath he the narrative of all the ills
He hath encounter'd close: And, as when one
A minstrel eyes who, gifted of the gods,
That lay attunes which men delight to hear,
And they would fain in one incessant song
To his sweet singing listen,—so, in truth,
Did he, as near me in my cot he sate,
My senses woo. And this his story is—
That he in times bygone the father's friend
Of thine Ulysses was, and that in Crete
(Cradle of Minos' race) he us'd to dwell:
From thence is he come hither, by distress
Much harass'd and from shore to shore his course
Mid rough repulses urging. And this tale
He holds to, that report to him was made
Of thine Ulysses being yet alive
And with a wealthy people domicil'd,
From the Thesprotian nation not remote:
Moreover, that much wealth he homeward brings."

To him, in turn, Penelope:—"Attend!
And to my presence summon him; that he
Himself may speak before me. As for these,
The suitors, at the portals let them sit,
Or in the halls dispos'd; if thus to mirth
Their hearts incline. In their own homes, forsooth,
Undamag'd rests their substance;—all their bread
And wine withal: stores which their serving men
As their support consume; while these, their lords,
Day after day this our palatial home
Their sole resort regarding, all our beeves
And sheep and fatten'd goats in sacrifice
Cease not to slaughter, but continual feast 890
Regale in, and our purple streaming wine
With reckless waste are quaffing, while a store
Immense of household treasure melts away:
For, no such man, forsooth, among us stands
As was Ulysses, from this princely house 895
Such outrage to avert: But, should he come
And on this land that gave him birth set foot,
A speedy vengeance would he with his son
On all these injuries wreak!"

She ended thus,

And, at this moment, young Telemachus 900
Sneeze'd boisterously,—that all the palace through
The echoes rang resounding; and the queen
Laugh'd at the noise, outright; and with wing'd words
Eumæus thus address'd:—"Come, Swineherd, now—
That stranger bring before me. See'st thou not
How to each utter'd word of mine my son
Hath just now sneez'd? As sure as this hath happ'd
No death-blow its accomplishment shall want
That on those suitors falls: not one shall death
And the Fates' doom evade. But, more I'll say— 910
And mark it well! If I, in all he saith
Shall truth discern, a mantle on his limbs
Will I bestow,—a tunic, too; such garb
As shall be beauteous deem'd."

She ceas'd to speak,

And, at her bidding, forth the swineherd sped, 915
And at Ulysses' side thus quickly spoke,—
"Fatherly stranger! Queen Penelope,
The mother of Telemachus, this call
On thee hath made. The workings of her mind,
Ev'n in her sorrow, urge her thus to seek

Some tidings which her husband's fate may tell:
And should she in thy speech the tale of truth
Hereby discern, thy body with a cloak
And tunic will she clothe; whereof thy need
At present is extreme: and then for bread

Among the people suppliant, with food
Thou wilt thy stomach fill, and ev'ry one
Whose mind inclines will of his bounty give."

But, patient-soul'd Ulysses thus replied:—
"Enmæus! at no distant day will I
The whole true tale to sage Penelope,
The child of Icarus, relate: for, much
Do I of her Ulysses know, who once
The self-same heavy perils with him shar'd.
But, of that throng of suitors whose fell pride
And savage outrages at Heav'n itself
Defiance cast, I own my fear. Ev'n now
That wretch who struck me, as along the hall,
An unoffending man, I took my way,
Hath giv'n me pain, which nor Telemachus'
Nor any other's arm avail'd t' avert.
Entreat thou, then, Penelope, howe'er
These thoughts may press, that she till set of sun
Within the palace rest; and in that hour
Let her these questions ask of me who then
Of her lov'd husband's voyage home may speak;
And to the kindled embers on her hearth
May she enjoin me nigher to approach;
For, sorry raiment have I worn, as thou
Thyself can't testify, from the first hour
In which thy suppliant I became.”

He spoke,
And, thus address'd, the swineherd through the hall
Mov'd onward; but, as on the threshold stone
His foot he placed, Penelope these words
Enquiring spoke:—"Eumæus! would'st thou not
The stranger hither lead? What thoughts are these
Which he, poor wand'rer, cherishes? Doth dread
Of any one discourage him? or from aught
Within our palace shrinks he? He whose life
Is but a vagrant's his own foe becomes
When to false shame succumbing."

To which words
Eumæus! thou responsive spak'st:—"Herein
With judgment hath he spoken, as, indeed,
The thought would be of others,—fleeing thus
From the rude scoffs of overbearing Man.
He prays thee till the set of sun forbear.
And for thyself, O lady, wouldst thou best
Herein consult, discourse with him to hold,
All else withdrawn; and his recital hear."

Penelope hereto replied:—"This man,
Whoe'er he be, no thoughtless one appears:
For, in none other spot of Earth are men
Who thus like these run riot, and in acts
Of such mad outrage revel."

Thus spake she,
And as in that presumptuous throng again
Eumæus mingled, these few rapid words
He in the ear of young Telemachus,
That none might overhear, close whisp'ring breath'd:—
"Friend! I shall now depart,—the swine to heed,
And other cares,—which thy possessions are
And my life's means supply. But, in this home
Claim thou the gen'ral oversight: thyself
'Bove all take heed to: think thou—and beware
That thou no wrong encounter; for, these Greeks,
Too many, only, are on mischief bent,
Whom, ere we suffer wrong, may Jove confound!"

To whom Telemachus:—"O father mine!
This will I do: and thou, too, when the meal
Of parting day is eaten, go thy ways,
And with the morn choice sacrifices bring;
For, to all these, the rites prescrib'd, will I
With the Immortals' heed, in season, give."

Thus spoke Eumæus, and upon a couch
By polish burnish'd bright his seat resum'd,
Whence, when on proffer'd meat and drink withal
He had regal'd, he to the home-stall sped,
And the wide courts and the palatial hall
(Now throng'd with feasters) left;—for they, the crowd
Of suitors, in the dance and song their sport,
As eventide drew nigh, rejoic'd to take.

END OF THE SEVENTEENTH BOOK.
NOW to that hall of feasting, came there one—
A common mendicant—, who through the streets
Of Ithaca's fair city ask'd for alms;
But, in his gluttony all beggars else,
Eating and drinking ever, far outdid.
Nor thews, nor sinews had he of man's strength,
But, to the eye a huge and heavy bulk
Of stature he display'd. The name he bore,
Arnæus, from his birth his mother gave;
But Irus, only, all th' Ithacian youths
Were wont to call him; for, that at command
The messages of any he would bear.

Upon the spot arriv'd, from his own halls
This mendicant would have Ulysses driv'n;
And with rebuke abusive thus began:—
"Away! old man! and from this porch retreat,
Ere by the foot thou hence be dragg'd along:
Seest thou not that all around are signs
To me, this moment, making, and their wish
Convey that I should hale thee forth? But, shame
As yet deters me. Come! arise, and go—
Lest hand to hand encounter should ere long
Between us hap." But, with fierce, angry glance
The shrewd Ulysses eyeing him, thus spoke:—
"Fellow! No injury by deed or word
Am I on thee inflicting; nor the gifts
Of others' bounty envy I, which thou
Abundant tak'st. This threshold ample space
For both of us affords; and shame it were
That thou with thy invicious soul shouldst grasp
At that which is another's to receive!
But, thou a vagrant's life appear'st to lead,
As, indeed, is my lot; for that the gods
Panse long ere they the gift of wealth bestow.
But, in this manual conflict to engage
Provoke me not too urgently,—lest rage
Thou shouldst excite, and it may chance that I,
Old as I am, that chest of thine and lips
May here with blood disfigure; and more peace
To-morrow would be mine! For, to these halls
Of Prince Ulysses, aged Laertes' son,
I cannot think thou ever wouldst return."

Hereto the vagrant Irus, in high wrath,
Rejoinder made:—"Ye gods! how trippingly
This greedy beggar, here, holds forth! so like
To some old crone that in the furnace works—
But, to his hurt I'll something try:—A blow
From these two hands of mine would all his teeth
From either jaw upon the earth disperse,
As though a swine's they were, that in the field
On stubble feeds. Now, then, thy belt secure!—
That all here sitting may our conflict view,
'Gainst one another match'd: Yet, how canst thou
With me, thy junior, fight?'

To such fierce strife
Incited both, they on that threshold stood
Which in the front of the high portals shone,
And to the struggle did Antinoüs
Urge either on, as, with a joyous laugh,
He on the suitors call'd:—"My friends! such feat
As this hath never yet been here achiev'd!
Oh! what a merry pastime hath some god
For this fair house provided! To such strife
Are this strange mendicant and Írus rous'd
As with their fists to battle; and at once
We man to man will place them." As he spoke,
All, laughing loud, uprose, as round the twain
Of ill-cloth'd mendicants they circling throng'd:
And then Antinoüs, Eupithes' son,
The crowd address'd:—"Most noble suitors! Hear!
While I some preface make: kids' paunches here
Are on the embers lying, which, with fat
And blood for supper stuff'd, are set apart:
Now—whichsoever of these two shall win,
The better man thus proving,—from his place
Let him step forth, and from those condiments
His free selection make: and from henceforth
In our good company that man shall feast,
Nor will we other mendicants permit
These halls to enter and our bounty claim."
Antinoüs ended, and right well his speech
The list'ning throng contented; but, just then
Ulysses—ever in all counsel prompt
And with shrewd thought consulting, briefly spoke:—
"Good men! 'tis an unequal match which he
Who with old age is stricken, and his strength
In suffering has exhausted, undertakes,
When with a junior he contends: but, Want,
The craving need of victual, goads me on
And to hard knocks oft subjects me. Come! then,
Pronounce ye, all here present, solemn vow
That none around me, for this Irus' sake,
Will with the hand of violence myself
While fighting smite, and with o'erpow'ring force
Crush me and give him vict'ry."

Thus spake he—
And they, as he besought, an oath pronounce'd
Such act abjuring. And, when all had sworn
And their oath ratified, Telemachus
Ulysses thus address'd:—"If with thy strength
And thy bold spirit, stranger, thou prevail
To thrust him out,—fear not one Grecian here!
For, whoso'er on thee should lay his hand
With a whole multitude must look to cope:
I at this feast preside: Eurymachus,
Antinoüs, too,—both lords of regal rank,
My feelings share." He ended, and assent
The general mind express'd; and hereupon
Ulysses with his mean and ragged garb
His waist engirding, fair, stout thighs display'd,
And then, too, did his shoulders broad and chest
And vig'rous arms their might declare, as now
Minerva, to his side drawn near, the limbs
Of this staunch chieftain of his race enlarg'd.
The suitors, one and all, in wonder gaz'd;—
And one, with glances on his neighbour bent,
These jesting words enounc'd:—"No long time hence 115
This carrier of our errands on himself
Miscarryage direful will have brought! Such thighs
From underneath his tatters this aged man
Hath brought to view!" Such comments they exchang'd.
But Irus' spirit with a dire alarm 120
Was miserably scar'd; though, in his plight
Of terror the retainers in that hall
For the encounter girding him, by force
The beggar drew along, as all his frame
In panic shook. But, with reproaches stern 125
Antinous thus upbraided him:—"Now! mark!
Thou gross, pretentious braggart! May thy days
At once be ended, and career cut short,
If thus thou tak'st to quaking, and in awe
So terrible this aged man wouldst dread,
Worn as he is with suff'ring, which his days
Of trouble brought upon him. But, in phrase
Distinct I speak to thee, and this my speech
Shall be fulfill'd,—If he the battle win
And thou inferior prove,—in some dark ship 130
I to Epirus will transport thee hence,
And to its king consign thee—Echetus—
All men's Destroyer call'd, who, with the knife
Relentless will thy nose and ears cut off,
And on thy very groin his hounds let loose
And bid them fill their maw." Thus stern he spoke;
Whereat still greater tremor Irus' frame
Began to shake; but, to a central spot
They led him out, until the two their fists
In air upheld: And now th' heroic prince,
Ulysses, doubtful paus'd,—such blow to strike
As should upon the spot—where down he'd fall—
The wretch's life determine,—or, a stroke
Less heavy aim, and fell him to the ground.
And better counsel seem'd it, as he thus
Reflecting mus'd, with gentler force to hit—
That not a Grecian there his proper self
Might recognise. Both combatants their hands
Before them raising.—Irus, first, a blow
On the right shoulder of Ulysses dealt;
Whereat, the Chief his neck below the ear
Struck quick, and all the bony structure broke.
That instant, from his mouth the dark blood rush'd,
And prostrate on the ground he moaning lay,
And ground his teeth, and with his sprawling heels
The pavement beat. But ev'ry lordly prince
That suitor crowd among, as high in air
Their hands they rais'd, with laughter wellnigh died,
As now Ulysses, having by the foot
Fall'n Irus seiz'd, straight through the vestibule
His body drew, until the court thereof
And doors he reach'd, and there, at length, his bulk
Deposited, and, 'gainst th' enclosing wall
Dispos'd him all aslant, as in his hand
His staff he placed, and in brief accents spoke:—
"Here take thou up thy station, and the hounds
And hogs beat off; nor, poltroon as thou art,
The lord and master henceforth claim to be
Of strangers and of mendicants; lest ill,
Perchance, more grievous still, should thee befall!"
He ended, and his wallet poor and mean,
And all in rags, about his shoulders flung,—
A plaited band sustaining it. And thus,
The threshold-stone regaining, he sate down.
The suitors all, with jocund laugh, in words
Of courteous speech saluting him: “May Jove
And all the gods, O stranger, thy heart’s wish
And all thy mind would most desire, fulfil!
Thou! that this wretch, whom nought could satisfy,
Hast from the people among whom he begg’d
Just driven out for ever! For we soon
Will to Epirus send him, and its prince
King Echatus—the common bane of men.”

Thus spoke they: and in these portentous signs
The great and noble-soul’d Ulysses joy’d:
And now Antinous beside his seat
A kid’s paunch placed, with fat and blood well fill’d;
And, after him, Amphinomus, two loaves
From out his basket lifting, rang’d them near,
And from a golden cup this pledge pronounc’d:—
“Fatherly stranger! health to thee! May fate,
In time to come, befriend thee! though as yet
Thou be with evil hamper’d.”

To which speech
Ulysses thus replied: “Amphinomus!
A judgment most discreet, methinks, thou hast:
And wise, too, was thy father, of whose fame
Report hath reach’d me: I of Nisus speak,
Who in Dulichium’s isle is valiant deem’d
And wealthy. Thou his son accounted wast,
And willing seem'st to be, and able, too,
On converse thus to enter: for which cause
I thus incline t' address thee: and may'st thou
My words perpend and heed. Of all that lives
And moves on Earth, nought feeble it sustains
Than Man himself, who, while th' immortal gods
With prowess gift him, and he all his strength
In supple knees can exercise, from bane
In years to come believes himself exempt:
But, let the same blest deities his lot
With sorrow sadden,—all his spirit grieves,
And with reluctance sullenly submits.
For, by the existence self which Jove the sire
Of men and gods accords, the mind of Man
Is ever form'd! The day hath been, when I
In this world flourish'd; blindly foolish acts
At times committing;—and while on my sire
And brothers I relied, to might and strength
Abandon'd wholly. No: to wickedness
Let no man yield; but with a quiet soul
The bounty of the gods (whate'er may be
Their gifts) enjoy. To what outrageous wrongs
Have I here been a witness! by this crowd
Of suitors schem'd, who in such ruthless waste
The substance are consuming, and the wife
Insulting, of a man who, as me seems,
Will not much longer from all those he loves
And from his home be absent, but to both
Prove very near! But, to thine home (by eyes
Unseen) may some god guide thee, when that prince
To his lov'd native country shall return!
For, not without bloodshedding will that throng
Of suitors and Ulysses part, when he
Beneath this roof his presence shall declare.”

Ulysses ended;—and Autonymus,
Libation having to the gods outpour’d,
The rich wine drank, and in the Stranger’s hand
(The chieftain of the people!) placed the cup.
But, through those princely halls the suitor paced
Like one in spirit drooping, as his head
From time to time he shook, and at his heart,
E’en now, misgivings felt: but, not to him
’Twas giv’n his doom to shun;—Minerva’s self
Decreeing, that the hand and wielded spear
Of young Telemachus in bold assault
His life should take. And on the thronéd seat
By him so recent fill’d, Autonymus
His place resum’d.

Now Pallas, in that hour,
The mind of Icarus’ fair daughter mov’d
Her presence to the whole assembled band
Of suitors to display: their inmost heart
To open and to test, while kindly grace
And reverence from her consort and her son,
Exceeding all past fondness, she should win.
With a forced laugh her mind was thus reveal’d:
“Eurynome! My humour ’tis (howe’er
Herefrom, as yet, I shrunk) this suitor train—
Ungenial to my soul, as they all are,
To stand before: but, to my son a word
In season spoken, would I fain address—
That with less cordial fellowship this crowd
Of suitors he should greet;—a haughty crew
Whose speeches are so fair, and whose designs
With foulest purpose follow."

To which words
Eurynome, who o'er the household train
Had oversight, thus answer'd:—"In good sooth,
My child, hast thou all this discreetly urg'd:
Go,—and thy son exhort, and nought withhold—
But, thine ablutions make,—thy cheeks anoint—
As now thou art appear thou not! thy face
By weeping marr'd: So real an ill is it
In endless grief to fret. Thy son those years
Can number now which that,—a bearded man—
He might attain, thou on his natal morn
With passionate entreaty didst the gods
Immortal supplicate." To whom, in turn,
The queen rejoinder made:—"Eurynome!
All zealous as on my behalf thou speak'st,
This counsel, prithee, tender not,—that I
These limbs should lave,—this skin with oil anoint,—
For those immortal deities who thrones
In high Olympus fill have all the charms
Of beauty taken from me since my lord
In his broad ships departed:—but, bid thou
Antinoë attend, and at her side
Hippodamia,—that beside me they
Their station in the palace-hall may fill:
For, 'midst that crowd, alone, 'tis not for me
(Who well may shrink) my presence to accord."

She spoke, and the aged woman through the courts
Of that palatial house obedient sped,
With the queen’s mandate to the maidens charg’d,
And their return commanding. Then anew
Did Pallas, goddess of the gleaming eye,
Her thought employ, and o'er Penelope
A gentle sleep diffus'd,—wherein reclin’d
Awhile she slumber'd, as along the couch
In perfect ease resolv'd her body lay;
The goddess, meantime, those celestial gifts
Bestowing which the Greeks' enraptur'd gaze
Would instant fix. Her lovely features first
With that ambrosial unction she bedew’d
Wherewith anointed bright-zon'd Venus shines
When the love wak'ning choral train she joins
Of all the Graces. To her stature height—
To all her shape she fulness gave, for eye
To rest on; and sawn ivory less white
Than her fair skin had shone. The goddess now
(Her gracious will accomplish’d) disappear'd,—
And from the palace, as in fluent talk
They onward hasten’d, the two handmaids came:
And at that moment her soft soothing sleep
The slumb'ring queen forsook, and with both hands
Her lineaments she smooth'd, as thus she spake:—
"The gentlest of all slumber hath but now,
E'en while in sadness steep'd, my senses wrapt!
Oh! that the chaste Diana would at once
Like mild dismissal of my spirit grant,
That I, no longer sorrowing in heart,
My day of life should thus consume,—the gifts
So numberless of a lov'd consort's worth
Deploring ever;—in such high esteem
Throughout all Greece he shone!" She ceas'd to speak,
And from the beauteous upper chamber stepp'd,
Not unattended, for in her descent
Two handmaids follow'd close. And, as the throng
Of suitors they approach'd, Penelope
Her station at the bearing-pillar took
Of the firm massive roof, and to her face,
(While on each hand a modest damsel stood,)
A veil of texture exquisite upheld.
Each suitor at that sight throughout his frame
A tremor felt; and by love's witchery
Were they beguil'd! Whereat more keen and fierce
The passion raged that beauteous one to win!

Then to Telemachus appealing thus
The queenly mother spoke:—"Telemachus!
No longer is thy spirit resolute—
Nor stable thy designs: Ev'n when a child
For thine advantage didst thou better think.
But, now—to thy full stature grown, and thus
The flow'r approaching of young man's estate,
(And would not any stranger, as thy form
And comeliness he gaz'd on, in thee hail
The son of one most blest!)—thy bent of thought
And purpose ill become thee: What an act
Is this within our palace perpetrate,
That thou so vile an outrage to sustain
A stranger hast permitted? How is't now?
If any stranger, that in these our halls
A seat should fill, such usage is to brook
As from that seat would drag him, on thyself
At th' hand of ev'ry man would fall the shame
And censure most degrading."
In reply
Telemachus thus spoke:—"O mother mine!
My spirit chafes not at thy wrath. What'er
May here transpire,—good may it be or worse—
I mark, and in my inmost thoughts revolve.
In days bygone I a mere childling was;
But, the best counsels ever to think out
I find not: for, this throng that side by side
Continual sit and baneful schemes concoct
My sense confound; and helpers have I none.
But, nowise at the bidding of these lords
(Thy suitors) did the stranger mendicant
With Irus fight. The stranger's strength by far
More sturdy prov'd! O father Jove! and ye
Minerva and Apollo, I invoke—
Grant that in this our palace overthrown,—
Some in the vestibule, some in the house,—
These suitors may at length their heads, too, shake,
And each with limbs unnerv'd be prostrate laid
As in the court gate-entry, at this hour,
Yon Irus, like one drunk, from side to side
His head lets drop,—unbearable on his feet
To stand or homeward to return,—if home,
Forsooth! he have: but, shattered there he lies."

Such converse held they: but, Eurymachus
Penelope thus greeted:—"Daughter fair
Of Icarus,—discreet Penelope!
If all th' Iasian Argive Greeks on thee
Their gaze might bend, a train more numerous
Of suitors would with each returning morn
In this thy home be feasting found; for, all
Of womankind, in loveliness and shape,  
As in all gifts of mind, dost thou surpass."

To whom Penelope:—"Eurymachus!  
The gods of all my merits, all my grace  
And beauty reft me when the Grecian force  
For Troy on shipboard sail'd, among whose host  
Went forth my spouse Ulysses. Were he now  
Upon his home to enter, and, the charge  
At once assuming, all this household rule,  
My good report might haply into realms  
More distant spread, and ampler homage win:  
But, sad is now my destiny; such woes  
Have the gods thrust upon me! When from hence  
My consort went, and his lov'd fatherland  
Prepar'd to quit, my right hand by the wrist  
He took, and thus exhorted me:—'My Queen!  
That all the well-greav'd Grecians should from Troy  
Unscath'd return I cannot hope:—Report  
The Trojan people names as men of war,  
Spearmen and archers, horsemen that on steeds  
Swift-footed fight; who in brief space of time  
The mighty conflict of a gen'r'ral war  
Would to its issues bring: and for this cause  
Within my knowledge falls it not to say  
That God to this my home a safe return  
Will deign to grant, or that before Troy wall  
I be not captive taken. But, the charge  
Of all around thee here on thee I lay:—  
For both my parents that within these walls  
Palatial dwell, take thought; with that same love  
Protecting them which guards them now,—nay, more
(When I shall absent be) of care impend. 420
And, for our son,—when thou upon his chin
A beard shalt see,—the consort to thyself
Take thou whom thou may’st choose; and of our house
Telemachus leave inmate.’

“All these words
Were by my husband spoken; and th’ events 425
Are come to pass. But, dark will be that gloom
Which upon nuptials whence my soul recoils—
Lost as I am!—would fall; and all my wealth
Has Jove now wrested from me. And the sense
Of this rude wrong affects me:—Ne’er, as now
It hath befall’n, did suitors woo whose aim
A worthy bride, the child of some rich chief,
It was to win, and who in rivalry
Would ever vie. They oxen and fat sheep
Were wont to send for the young virgin’s friends 435
A feast to make; and splendid gifts they gave;
But, not upon the substance did they prey
Of others, and at others’ cost make waste.”
Thus spake she; and Ulysses’ noble soul
Exulted as of presents from that crew
She thus laid hold, and with such glozing speech
Their hearts entrapp’d; but he in other schemes
From these remote, to these unlike, was wrapt.

Antinoüs, Eupithe’s son, in turn
Thus briefly spake:—“Penelope! fair child 445
Of Icarus! whichever of us Greeks
Shall presents bring to thee, accept them all:
For graceless is refusal of a gift.
But, we to occupation none will turn
Nor elsewhere lodge, till thou of the best man
'Mid all the Greeks that woo thee, shalt be bride.'

Thus spoke Antinoüs, and with his words
All seem'd well-pleas'd;—and each a herald sent
The gifts to bring: and to Antinoüs first
A broad and gorgeous robe, with many a hue
Embroider'd, came: Twelve golden clasps in all
Were in it work'd, and with well-twisted hooks
Throughout fast clos'd. And to Eurymachus
Without delay a necklace came of gold
In amber set, resplendent as the sun,
And by inventive art superbly wrought,
And by two servants to Eurydamas
Were ear-rings brought with three bright brilliants strung
Of handiwork most exquisite, whence rays
Of beauty sparkled. To Pisander, prince
Of regal rank, Polyctor's son, his train
Attendant a rich collar brought;—a gift
In all its features splendid: gifts diverse,
And all most costly, from the several Greeks
Thus flowing in. And now to where on high
Her chambers lay the noble queen return'd,
And at her side the handmaids of her train
The splendid gifts for dowry offer'd bore.
Meanwhile, her suitors, to the dance and song
Delightsome all devoted, until eve
Their feast prolong'd; and the dark shades of night
Upon their sport descended. Then did they
Within those halls three frames for burning brands
Above the pavement raise, which light might yield,
And near wood all around them heap'd, long since
Of moisture freed, and in extremest state
Of dryness cut, and with sharp metal cleft.
And torches of the pine herewith they blent:
And these the maidens in Ulysses' halls
Were left by turns to kindle: but that Chief
In mind so noble, in design so prompt,
Thus to the damsels spake:—"Ye handmaids all
Of Prince Ulysses' house!—(that Chief from home
So long estrang'd!—) the palace-chambers seek
Where sits your honour'd queen; and at her side
The spindles turn, and while beneath that roof
Ye serve, for her contentment working sit
And thus her spirit recreate,—the wool
Meantime with your hands carding. I myself
For these below the fire-light will maintain;
And if till break of golden-thronèd morn
Their humour be to revel, not ev'n thus
Shall they my spirit weary:—Strength have I
Excessive toil to cope with."

Thus spake he,

But with a mocking laugh that female group
His speech contemn'd, and at each other stared.
Fair-faced Melantho with a shameless jeer
Insulted him: She Dolius' daughter was,
But, by Penelope from childhood rear'd,
And, while with toys her fancy she amus'd,
As her own offspring cherish'd: but, no pang
Of sorrow did Melantho know, when grief
Penelope a mourner made: Her love
She to Eurymachus unhallow'd gave,
But with insulting tongue Ulysses spurn'd:—

"Thou miserable stranger! all whose wits
Are palsied, and who neither in some forge
Nor in the beggars' haunt thy sleep would'st snatch,
Here hast thou to a crowd with saucy speech
Been holding forth, and nothing seem'st to fear!
'Tis wine that hath thy senses seiz'd, or thus
On gossip is thy very nature bent.
In empty boasting, then, would'st thou, as one
Beside himself with joyfulness—indulge,
For that the wand'ring Iris thou hast crush'd! Take thou good heed, then, that no abler man
Than Iris soon appear, whose sturdy hands
Thy head belab'ring shall from out the house
With streaming blood disfigur'd drive thee forth."

To whom Ulysses, grimly frowning, thus:—

"Go forth from hence, and quickly, too, I will—
Thou shameless one! and to Telemachus
Thy speech rehearse, that, not long hence, his sword
May limb by limb thy carcase cut and hew!"

Thus speaking, all that female crew he scared—
And through the palace with all haste they sped,
Their knees in terror shaking; for, at heart
Felt they how surely all might come to pass!

But, there the Chieftain stood; his glance on all
Around him casting, as from those hot hearths
The flick'r'ring light he scatter'd, while his thoughts
On deeds were musing which not unfulfill'd
The future was to leave. But, in those taunts
Which well the heart might wound did Pallas yet
The suitors leave 't indulge, as though anew
By sufferings Ulysses' soul to try:
And thus Eurymachus, with scornful gibes
At great Ulysses flung, a mocking laugh
From ev'ry suitors forc'd:—"Now, mark my words,
All ye who here to this majestic queen
Your court are paying,—while to ev'ry thought
My mind conceives I utterance shall give:—
Not without guidance, seems it, of some god
Cometh this stranger to Ulysses' house;
But, as to me appears, that torch-like flame
Is from himself,—from his own head diffus'd:
For hair thereon none, not a lock, hath he!"
Then at that Chieftain, who in overthrow
Had many a city whelm'd,—this scoff he threw:—
"Stranger! would'st thou to work consent, were I
In some far-distant corner of the land
To place thee, (and good wages should'st thou take)
Where thou might'st stones for building walls pick up
And tall trees set in earth? A year entire
Would I with victual feed thee, and thy limbs
With raiment clothe; aye, and beneath those feet
Would sandals fit. But, no:—since thou the trade
Of vice hast learn'd, with no good-will would'st thou
Thy work incline to finish: All thy wish
Is thus among the populace to beg,
Till thou that rav'nous maw of thine canst fill!"

To whom Ulysses thus:—"If, in Spring time,
Eurymachus! when days more lengthsome are,
We might as rivals in the meadow work,
And well to hand the grassy herbage lay,
And I a well-curved sickle had, and thou
The like wert handling, that an ample proof
We of our labour might thus make, till dark
Both fasting;—or, again, if beeves there were
Which we might have to guide,—prime of their kind,
Fat, bulky, and with hay well fed, in age
Alike, and the same weight inured to bear,
And no weak points betraying in their strength;
And, if a field, four acres in its breadth,
Before us lay, the clods whereof, when ploughd,
Would to the coulter yield,—then would thine eyes
Their witness bear, as furrows I would cleave
On furrows following:—or, if, again,
Jove, on this very day, in any spot
To mortal strife should call me, and a shield,
Two jav'lin's, and a helmet,—brass entire—
About my brows I had, myself should'st thou
Among the foremost in the front ranks see,
And on my craving stomach cease to jest.
Thou grossly hast revil'd me; for, thine heart
A bad one is: a high and mighty lord
Thou deem'st thyself, for that a very few
(And those, too, far from good,) thy comrades are;
But, should Ulysses homeward come, and this
His native soil attain, yon palace-gates,
However wide, too strait for thee would prove,
When through the vestibule, in panic flight,
Thou should'st beyond the doors essay to run!"
He finish'd: but Eurymachus in wrath
More rabid still, and with a savage glance,
Thus instantly retorted:—"Ah! thou wretch!
Some hurt, be thou assur'd, and not long hence
Will I engage to do thee, who hast thus
In this assembly such audacious speech
Presum'd to use; and with no sense of fear
Thy mind declar'st. The wine thou hast imbib'd
Thy wits hath craz'd, or from thy birth, forsooth,
Thou vapid babbler! this thy way hath been.
Of this, then, would'st thou make thine empty boast,
That thou the vagrant Irus hast subdued?"

With these words ending, he a footstool seiz'd;
But by Dulichian Amphinomus,
Close to his knees, Ulysses lay,—in dread
Of what might from Eurymachus befal—
And the Cup-bearer, when that stool was hurl'd,
On his right hand was smitten, and the bowl,
Down dash'd upon the pavement, loudly rang:
But, with a moan the bearer of that cup
Fell prostrate: and an uproar from the throng
Of suitors in the darken'd hall arose;
And one, as he his neighbour eyed, thus spake:—
"Would that this vagrant stranger in some spot
From here remote had died the death, ere here
He had arriv'd; for, such a strife as this
He then had ne'er provok'd: But, here are we
About a mendicant disputing, all.
And further relish of a noble feast
Shall we know none; for, all that is most vile
Is the ascendant gaining."

Then, at length,
Telemachus—that prince most excellent—
Thus speaking interpos'd:—"Sirs! Ye in this
Like madmen bear yourselves! No more can ye
Your wild excess in meat and drink disguise:
Some god, may be, hath rous'd ye! Now, as all
Have well regal'd, let each man to his home
At once repair, and, as the will may prompt,
Upon your couches throw yourselves: yet, none
Would I from hence unwilling send."

He ceas'd,
And they, as in their smother'd rage their lips
Were biting, on Telemachus with looks
Of wonder gaz'd; for that with such free speech
He thus his mind declar'd. But, in reply,
Amphinomus, king Nisus' son, whose sire
Aretias was, these words emphatic spake:—
"My friends! No man among you who in terms
Of wrangling hath an onset made, can well
At that which in right reason hath been urg'd
Indignant feel. No longer with affronts
This stranger vex, nor any others here
That in the noble-soul'd Ulysses' house
Attendance give. Come! let the cup-bearer
The primal off'ring with the goblets make,
That, all libations made, we in our homes
Repose may seek; and in these princely halls
Let us the stranger to Telemachus
And to his care, as his own guest, commend;
For, at a liberal home is he arriv'd."
He spake, and with these words which to the mind
Of all were welcome deem'd, his counsel clos'd.
And Melius,—a herald in the isle
Dulychium train'd, Amphinomus to serve,
A bowl of blended wine for all prepar'd,
And unto each in order bore the cup,
Till ev'ry one, to the immortal gods
Libations having pour'd, rich liquor quaff'd:
But, when again they had drink-off'ring's made
And of that wine to full contentment drunk,
Each to his home return'd, and sank to rest.

END OF THE EIGHTEENTH BOOK.
MEANWHILE, in his own princely palace left,  
Ulysses with Minerva on that doom  
Which on the suitors was ere long to light  
Grave counsel took. And to Telemachus,  
No longer pausing, he thus promptly spoke:—  
“All martial weapons thou, at once, my son,  
Within must hide: The suitors, when, perchance,  
For these our arms they ask, with gentle speech  
Thou wilt beguile, and say:—‘From smoke secure  
Have I at length dispos’d them; for that now  
No semblance to that panoply they bear,  
Which, when to Troy he sail’d, Ulysses left:  
Ev’n as the reck of fire hath on them pass’d,  
So are they now begrim’d: and reason still  
More grave, hereto impelling me, have I—  
Ev’n from on high thus counsel’d—lest, may be,  
Yourselves by wine incited, and in strife  
Vindicative raging, should each other wound;  
And on our banquets and the suit you urge,  
Dishonour bring; for the steel blade itself  
Lures men to blood.’”

He ended, and herewith  
Telemachus compliant to the Nurse
Aged Euryclea call'd and order gave:—
"Nurse! heed me well: within the chambers close
All females here confine; while I those arms
In brightness once so splendid (my dear sire's)
Shall in some chamber store; all which by smoke
Defil'd have been, while from his home remote
Ulysses hath been ling'ring, and no care
His armour hath protected. I, indeed,
But a mere infant was: but my desire
Would now in some sure shelter place them all,
Where the hot air might enter not."

Hereto

His fond nurse Euryclea thus rejoin'd:—
"Ah! would that thou, dear child, due thought would'st take,
Thyself discreetly care for, and this home
Protect, and of thine own the guardian prove!
Yet, stay!—Who at thy side a light shall bear?
For, those, the handmaids, who the kindled torch
Before thee would have borne, thine interdict
Forbids me summon."

To her question, thus
Telemachus replied:—"This stranger's hands
The lights shall bear: for, thus unoccupied
Will I no longer leave the man who bread
Of mine has eaten, though from far he come."

He spoke; and in her mind his word deep sank:
And all the gates of that palatial house
She duly clos'd. And now with eager haste
Ulysses and his noble son the helms
And central-bossèd shields and sharpen'd spears
In deep recesses stor'd:—Minerva's self
A golden lamp from which soft beauteous light
Before them glisten'd carrying: Whereupon
Telemachus, all eager, spoke:—"Mine eyes,
O Father! upon this stupendous sight
Are wond'ring fixt:—The palace-walls around,
The panell'd bays, the pine-wood beams, the shafts
Of the tall pillars all at once in light
As from some ardent flame before me shine!
Most surely, some divinity, some one
Of those who in the boundless skies above
Eternal reign, is here!"

But, to these words
Ulysses thus:—"Remain thou mute:— thy thoughts
Awhile control; nor question of me ask.
This is the priv'lege by the gods enjoy'd
Who in Olympus reign. But, go thou hence,
And on thy couch seek slumber. Here will I
My station hold, that curious in th' extreme
I may thy Mother render, and the train
That on her presence wait: for, from my lips
Will she, in sadness, all my hist'ry ask."

Thus spake the prince; and through the palace halls
Telemachus withdrew;—that place of rest
Where, when in gentle slumbers sunk, his wont
Had been to lie; and here the heav'nly morn
Awaiting he reclined. Below, meanwhile,
Ulysses with Minerva, on that doom
Which on the suitors was ere long to ligh
Deep consultation held. And in this hour,
(Diana's self, or golden Venus, like)
Forth from her chambers came Penelope:
Her throne-like seat with ivory adorn'd,
And silver, which Icmaius' art had wrought,
Was by the glowing embers on the hearth
In order rang'd; that footstool for her feet
Surmounting which the craftsman's skill thereto
So deftly had conjoin'd: and on the stool
Was stretch'd a noble fleece. Hereon she sate.
Then from the palace white-arm'd handmaids came;
And bread abundant, and the banquet-boards,
With all the cups in which that lawless crew
So recent had been revelling, remov'd.
The fire from out the glowing brands they threw,
And on the ashes ample store of wood
Began to cast, a light to give, and heat
Around diffuse: and now again her scoffs
Melantho at Ulysses cast:—"What! still,
O Stranger! would'st thou all our house annoy,
Thus in the night through these palatial courts
Intent on roving? At us women all
Art thou thus come to stare? Beyond the gates
Betake thyself, thou wretch! and eat thy food;
Or, soon, and with a torch belabour'd, too,
Shalt thou out-doors be driven."

But, hereto,

With darkling frowns beholding her, reply
Ulysses made:—"Thou wretch! why thus on me
With that malignant heart of thine launch forth?
Is't that I am but lean, and on my limbs
Poor raiment wear, and of the people beg?
Need lays its burdens on me; and the lot
Of wanderers and mendicants I share;
But, I, in times bygone, (of ample means
Possess'd,) a goodly home enjoy'd, whose wealth
'Mid fellow-men was flourishing; and aid
On roaming strangers, of whatever rank
And whatsoever their wants might be, bestow'd;
And crowds, too, I maintain'd of serving-men,
And much had I of all which in this life
A prosp'rous lot maintains, and by mankind
Is affluence deem'd: but, Jupiter himself,
The son of Saturn,—such was the caprice
Of his high will—my wealth's destruction wrought.
Take thou good heed, then, Woman! lest those charms
Wherewith, 'mid all these handmaids, thou art deck'd,
Thou cease to wear: for, peril may there be
That or thy mistress, bearing thee some grudge,
Her anger make thee feel,—or, that his home
Ulysses' self regain: for, of such hope
A portion yet remains. But, if to death
He have ere this succumb'd, and no such pow'r
Thus to return be his, by Phoebus' grace
A son (and what a son he is thou know'st!)
Telemachus, he hath; and women none
Of all that in this palace with high hand
Have sinning liv'd, his scrutiny shall 'scape;
For, he no more a stripling will be found."

He ended; and Penelope, his words
O'erhearing, on her handmaid cast rebuke,
And, menacing, thus spoke:—"Presumptuous thou
And impudent! Thou shalt my judgment feel—
An act audacious rushing on, for which
Thou with thy head shalt answer! Well thou know’st
Ev’n by myself appriz’d, that from the lips
Of this same stranger who within our walls
Is hither come, I, sorrowing as I am,
Would tidings of my absent husband ask.”

She ended, and to her who o’er that house
And all its stores had oversight, these words
Address’d:—“Euronyme! a seat bring thou
And o’er it spread a fleece, that, at my side
Here placed, the stranger may his tale recount,
And to my own words listen; so great wish
Have I to question him.”

Thus spake the queen,
And with all speed Euronyme a seat
With brilliant polish shining duly brought,
And o’er it stretch’d a fleece, whereon at length
That long-enduring, noble-minded man
Ulysses sate: and thus Penelope
Upon that converse enter’d:—“Stranger guest!
I, for my part, must this first query make—
Who art thou? Of what race? Thy city, where?
Thy parents, who?”

But, thoughtful and astute,
Ulysses in these words responsive spoke:—
“O Lady! None that o’er th’ interminous Earth
As mortal men exist could thee impeach!
Thy good report to Heavn itself ascend’s!
Ev’n as the glory of some king whose name
Lives irreproachable,—who, like some god,  
O'er multitudinous and valiant tribes  
Dominion holds, and law and truth maintains.  
For him the dark rich loam of Earth its crops  
Of wheat and barley bears; and trees with fruit  
Abundant bend, and pastures thriving flocks  
Of sheep send forth—while, to his righteous sway  
Its homage paying, Ocean yields its fish.  
Beneath that monarch's rule the public mind  
To goodness leans. While, then, within these walls  
Thy presence I behold, of all things else  
Bid me here speak; but, of the line I boast,  
And of my native soil inquiry none,  
I pray thee, make; lest, as the sadd'ning past  
To mem'ry I recal, thou with fresh grief  
This heart afflict. In many a heavy sigh  
My sorrow speaks; but, in a stranger's home  
On this account to groan and melt in tears  
Would ill become me; for, with endlessplaints  
To cherish thus one's mis'ry doth itself  
A sadder ill become; and fear there is  
That from among thine household some reproach  
Might on me fall,—nay, Lady, thou thyself  
Might'st comment make injurious, and affirm  
That with excess of wine alone depress'd  
I thus gave way, and over-swam with tears!"

But the discreet Penelope these words  
In answer spake: "O stranger! of a truth  
The gods of all my merits, all my grace,  
And beauty reft me when the Grecian force  
For Troy on shipboard sail'd, among whose host
Went forth my spouse Ulysses. Were he now
Upon his home to enter, and, the charge
At once assuming, all this household rule,
My good report might haply into realms
More distant spread, and ampler homage win:
But, sad is now my destiny;—such woes
Have the gods thrust upon me! For, those chiefs
That o'er Dulychium and Samos' isles
As sov'reigns sway, and in the sylvan realm
Wield power of Zacynthus, and these lords
That here in Western Ithaca hold rule,
Are one and all with courtship to my will
Most adverse urging me, and all the wealth
Of this my home consuming: For which cause
No heed take I of strangers, or of those
Who here resort as fugitives; nor aught
Regard I any heralds who their posts
Among the people fill: for, all my heart
For my Ulysses yearns and melts away.
But, these my nuptials fain would force; and I,
Like one that into clews her wool would wind,
Beguiling feints spin out; Some god at first
Into my mind the thought instill'd,—as here
I in my palace sate,—a robe to work
Of breadth exceeding; and a web whose threads
Were of the finest (being, itself, immense)
I then erected, and began to weave;
And hereupon my wooers thus address'd:—
'Young men! who seek my hand—since that great Chief,
So like a god, Ulysses, is no more—
Forbear to press my nuptials till this veil
I shall have finish'd; that the threads I use
May not with purpose unfulfill'd be spoilt.
A shroud is it, for that heroic chief
Laertes, when that fearful doom is nigh
Which shall arrest and lay him out at length;
Lest any one among the dames of Greece
Upbraidings should upon me heap, if he,
Who liv'd in affluence, entomb'd should lie
Without such covering.'

These were my words,
And their proud spirits for the time complied.
But, hereupon, throughout the day, my work
I plied of weaving upon that vast web,
And when the night drew on, with torches placed
Beside me, ev'ry thread did I unloose!
Thus through three years did I my work conceal,
And o'er those Greeks by stratagem prevail'd,
But, as the hours sped on, and this fourth year
At length was come, the months expiring fast
And all the number of the days summ'd up,
They all the feint detected; on my work
With sudden onset rushing:—to this act
By certain of our shameless handmaids led
Who to keep watch no longer cared,—and then
They with upbraidings bitter loaded me.
Thus did I, most unwilling, and by force
Of sheer constraint, that web at last complete.
But from these nuptials I no rescue see—
Alternative, expedient,—none appears!
My parents eagerly such marriage urge,
My son the utter loss of all his means
With indignation views;—for, all their
By him is noted,—now, as a man grown
And of great Jove himself to honour rais'd,
Right competent his own to hold and rule.
Nathless thine origin reveal—; the stock
From whence thou sprang'ist—for, neither from an oak
Of ancient story could'st thou trace thy birth,
Nor from a stony rock!"

To which appeal
Astute Ulysses thus:—"O thou! who wife
Most honour'd of Ulysses art—, the son
Of aged Laertes—would'lst thou not forbear
From question of my lineage?—Then, will I
Hereon begin to speak; though sadder still
Wilt thou my sorrow render than till now
It yet hath prov'd. And this must ever hap
When from his native land so long estrang'd
A man hath liv'd,—as I am, still—, whose lot
A wanderer hath made me, and through homes
Unnumber'd of Earth's citizens have roam'd
Distressful woes enduring: but, though thus
My destiny declares itself, the tale
Thou at my hand art seeking I will tell;—
Thy questions I will answer:—

In the midst
Of the dark ocean is a certain isle
Beauteous in aspect, fertile in its soil,
(Of Crete I speak) by water compass'd round,
And with vast numbers peopled, whose amount,
O'er ninety cities spread, unknown remains.
'Mid habitants of race diverse thus fus'd
Tongues as diverse prevail: Achaians there
And Eteoreans, men of noble minds,
Commingle dwell,—Cydonians and that race
Of Doriens whom men the 'triple tribe'
Are wont to call, and the Pelasgian stock
Of noblest generation. 'Mid all these
Stands a vast city, Cnossus, where of old
Reign'd Minos who at each revolving term
Of nine years with the mighty Jove himself
Was commune said to hold;—the father he
Of my own sire Deucalion the Great.

Deucalion two sons begot—; myself
And king Idomeneus who, in those ships
That with curved prows the waters cleav'd, to Troy
With Atreus' sons the expedition join'd.
My name, and not un honour'd, Æthon is,
And I the junior am: my brother, first
By birth, was, also, in repute the best.
In Crete I saw Ulysses, on whom gifts
Which hosts to guests should offer I bestow'd.
The storms had thither driv'n him, as his ship
To Ilion he was steering, and his course
From off the Maleans tow'reds Amnisus shap'd—
A port most perilous, where from the gale
He scarce a rescue found. Here stands the grot
Of Ilytheia. And, without delay
To Cnossus hast'ning, for Idomeneus
He search began, as one to him endear'd
And as a guest much honour'd:—but, for Troy
Ten or eleven days before, this friend
In his good ship had sail'd. Then, I myself,
To my own home conducting him, with zeal

N 2
Ulysses greeted, and from ample means
Which by me lay a cordial welcome gave:
Wheat-meal in our great city's streets procur'd;
Before him and his comrades, too, I placed,
And, (by some means procuring it,) supply
Of purple wine, and oxen for a feast,
That full contentment they might feel, I brought.
Twelve days these noble Grecians here remain'd:
A Northern blast of mighty force their ships
From shore was ever driving, nor aground
Permitted them to run; (some adverse god
Was in the gale) but, on the thirteenth morn
The wind was hush'd, and they their anchor weigh'd."

He paus'd;—a tale of fictions most like truths
Having thus far narrated; and her tears,
As pale and paler she became, fast flow'd:
And as on some high mountain peaks the snow
Which, on the breeze of ev'ning borne, had fall'n,
Thaws and disperses in the early morn,
And river-torrents from the melting mass
Increase of flood derive;—e'en thus her cheeks,
So lovely, seem'd with ev'ry falling tear
In sorrow to resolve themselves,—while plaints
Regretful she was pouring forth for him
Her husband, who, that moment at her side
Was seated close! And the heart's tender pulse
Of pity felt Ulysses for the wife
Thus grievously lamenting; but, like horn
Or steel his eyes were set,—nor in their lids
Was tremor seen; for, by a feint the tears
From starting he restrain'd. But, to the fill
Her flooding sorrow having thus indulg'd,
Penelope this answer made:—

"Thy truth,
O Stranger! may I, as it seemeth, test:
If this be certain, as thy words affirm,
That thou my husband and his chosen friends
Hast in thy dwelling welcom'd,—tell me, then,
In what apparel were his limbs array'd?
Himself describe: What aspect as a man
Presented he? And those associates
That with him companied?—These, too, pourtray,"

Ulysses, ever-ready, thus replied:—
"O Lady! this to tell thee, after time
So long since past not easy is; for now
The twentieth year revolving is since hence
Ulysses went, and from my country sail'd:
But, as to my remembrance all thou ask'st
May now recur, the same will I relate.
High soul'd Ulysses in a double cloak
Of purple wool was habited: a brooch
Of gold thereto was fitted, in two sheaths:
But, all the top was in Mosaic wrought,
Wherein a dog was seen, with his fore-feet
A speckled fawn fast holding, and his gaze
Upon its struggles fixing. Wrought with gold,
The work was deem'd a wonder: One, the hound,
The young deer throttling, seem'd therein to joy:
The gasping captive, striving to get free,
Its feet awkward to use. This splendid garb
About
Bich like the rind
Of some dried succulent bulb it seem'd t' invest;
In texture all so delicate,—in hues
As radiant as the sun: and many a dame
In admiration eyed it. But, of this
Would I remind thee,—and for this, indeed,
Thou thought must take.—Unknown is it to me
Whether with this apparel here, at home,
Ulysses had his form array'd,—or, all
That thus he wore, from one of his comates
When in the fleet embarking for the war,
Or from some stranger, as a gift, receiv'd:
For, lov'd was he by many; and in Greece
His fellow rarely could be found. Myself
A brazen sword bestow'd on him,—a cloak
Of purple hue, most fair to look upon,
And doubling in its folds; a tunic, too,
Which to his feet descend'd: and with marks
Of rev'rence, in a well-appointed ship
I from the port despatch'd him. In his train
There walked a certain herald, one whose years
His own somewhat outnumber'd; and of him
And of his aspect can I speak: for, round
His shoulders seem'd, and dingy was his skin,
And thick and curling was his shock of hair:
The name Eurybates he bore, and best
Among the band that his associates form'd
Ulysses this man deem'd; for he it was
Whose ev'ry thought accorded with his own."

He pause'd awhile, and in her sorrowing heart
Still sadder griefs awaken'd as she thus
The tokens by Ulysses with such truth
Recorded, well discern’d. But, now, her fill
Of weeping having ta’en, again she spoke:—
“From this time forth, O Stranger! though, in truth,
When thou in this my palace first appear’dst,
My sympathy was with thee—thou most dear
To me must ever prove, and in regard
Most highly held;—for, I, with these my hands,
The raiment to Ulysses gave, whereof
Thy tale hath mention made: from th’ inner room,
Where they were folded, bringing them: that brooch
So brilliant, to adorn him, I affix’d!
But, never more to his lov’d native land
Restor’d shall I regain him: a dire fate
Was that which my Ulysses in his ship
To Ilion sent,—that city of all ills!
Which I abhor to name.”

Whereeto the Chief,
In counsels so well vers’d:—“O thou, the wife
Most honour’d, of Ulysses! with this grief
On thy lov’d lord’s behalf no longer mar
The beauty of thy countenance; nor waste
The powers of thy mind: not that reproof
Of mine, indeed, could’st thou herein incur—
For, any matron of that consort reft
Whom marriage rite had duly made her own,
To whom her love she gave, and children bore,
(Though with Ulysses he might never vie,
Whom to a god the common voice compares)
Must for that lost one grieve: but, from this time
Forbear thou all lament;—and mark my words,—
For, of a truth will I declare, and this
From thee withhold not,—that but now
A brief time only since, I tidings learn'd
That to th' Ithacian shore, his native land,
Ulysses was returning; that to live
He still was spar'd, and with a wealthy race
Neighbours to the Thesprotians domicil'd;
That treasure in abundance and most rare
He homeward was conveying,—gifts indeed,
From divers tribes solicited: but those,
His well-lov'd comrades in his journeyings,
Their ship, too, as from the Trinacrian isle
Their course they were pursuing, he had lost.
Jove and Apollo with indignant ire
Against him rag'd; for, his comates had slain
The oxen of the Sun. Their fate they met
Beneath the swelling waves of the great deep:
But on the keel of the wreck'd bark to shore
A mighty billow drove him, and the land
Of that Phaeacian people who to gods
Have been by mortals liken'd, he thus reach'd.
Such homage here he met as to some god
Was rather due: their gifts they heap'd on him,
And escort offer'd which to Ithaca
His course should speed, unscath'd: and long ago
Here had Ulysses landed, but the thought
His mind was swaying, over wide expanse
Of foreign realms to roam, and store of wealth
To gather in: for, of all men that live,
Ulysses best the source of profit knew!
Nor with him would another think to cope,
As Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians,
When in his palace a drink-offering
He had out-pour'd, assur'd me,—and with oath
Declar'd that for Ulysses a fit ship
Had to the beach been drawn, and all its crew
To start prepar'd, who should his escort be
To this his native shore. But, in advance
The monarch sent me;—a Thespitian bark,
Being to that Dulichium bound where wheat
In richest crops is garner'd. And the king
Those treasures, which Ulysses had amass'd,
Display'd before me;—substance which might well
To the tenth generation of his line
Another man maintain: so great amount
Of wealth, Ulysses' own, in this king's house
Was there preserv'd. His guest, the monarch said,
Was to Dodona gone, advice divine
From the high soaring oak-top of great Jove
In that inquiry to obtain, whereby,
When on his native shore he should have stepp'd,
(Though now so many years therefrom estrang'd)
The mode of his return he best might shape;
In sight of all, or in concealment close.

"Therefore, in safety he survives; and nigh
Is fast approaching, never more so long.
No, nor so far from friends and fatherland
Hereafter to be sever'd. But a pledge
Will I here tender,—and may mighty Jove
In goodness as in pow'r above all gods
Supreme,—the hearth, too, of Ulysses' home
(That chieftain irreproachable!) whereto
I have drawn nigh—the oath I swear, attest—
All that I have recounted shall forthwith
Most surely, as I told thee, be fulfill'd:
Ulysses in the twelvemonth that now is—
This actual month concluded, and the next
In its due course succeeding,—will arrive."

Penelope thus answer'd:—"Would that all
Thou hast announc'd might surely come to pass!
Thy friend thou soon should'st find me;—at my hand
Such num'rous gifts receiving as, when seen,
Would many a greeting on thy fortunes prompt:
But, this alone is on my thoughts impress'd
Which, only, is to happen:—To this home
Ulysses comes no more! And from this place
No conduct must thou look for: None there are
Who in this palace can commandment give
As once Ulysses did, (but will no more)
The parting guest to speed, or welcome give
To strangers, worthiest of all regard.

"But, handmaids mine! This stranger's bath prepare—
A place of rest,—couch, cloaks, and coverlets
Of glossy brightness strew for him,—that warmth
Through night, till golden-thronèd morn the day
Bring on, may cherish him. But, at the dawn
At his ablutions tend him, and with oils
His limbs anoint, that near Telemachus
In these our chambers seated, he (my son)
May for his meal take thought. And woe to him
Amid the inmates all who shall this man
Annoying grieve! No longer on this home
Shall such offender thrive, be his affront
Or choler, what it may! For, how should'st thou,
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Stranger! this excellence above my sex
In mind and thoughtfulness at all discern
If in a guise so wretched,—in a garb
So vile, thou should'st within my palace walls
Sit here and eat? Man's life is brief, indeed—!
He who, himself, is hard, and to the deed
Of harshness is consenting, is the one
On whom, while living, all his fellow-men
Will execrations heap; and at his death
The contemptuously of scorn contemptuous fling:
While he who is, himself, without reproach,
And of offence his conscience void would keep,
In this esteem is held,—that through the world
Will strangers witness to his goodness bear,
And multitudes shall of his merits speak."

But, to these words Ulysses, in his mind
Full many a thought revolving, thus replied:—
"O honour'd consort of Ulysses,—son
Of aged Laertes! cloaks and coverlets
Of sumptuous fabric have in my regards
A mere encumbrance seem'd, since in my bark
By long oars over ocean depths impell'd,
The snow-topp'd mountain range of Crete I left.
No: fain would I, as through long waking nights
I used to lie, still rest: for, in a bed
Most pitiful to view for many a night,
The beauteous morn awaiting, have I slept.

"The baths in which ablution for my feet
Thou offerest, to me no solace are:
None of the females who in this thy home
Attendant serve, my feet, to lave, shall touch:
Save that some agèd one there be whose mind
Full well her duty knows, and, like myself,
Hath many a burd'ning care ere now endur'd.
That such a one as this my feet should wash
Demur would I make none.”

Penelope

Thus answ'ring spake:—“Dear stranger! (dear, I say—)
For, not until this moment to our house
Hath stranger from afar with such a mind
As thine drawn near,—in all its thoughts discreet;
Nor such a welcome hath receiv'd;—such tact
Thy fluent speech in all that's just displays.
An agèd matron have I here at hand—
Prudence itself is she,—who in the days
Of infancy his faithful nurse became
And rear'd him—poor unhappy child! with hands
Which from his mother in the natal hour
The prince Ulysses newly born receiv'd.
She, though but feeble now, thy feet shall lave.
‘Come, then,—, my trusty Euryclea! rise,
And in the foot-bath wash the feet of one
Who with thy master equal years may count:
For, haply, may Ulysses' self in feet
And hands be now his counterpart: so quick
In its approaches is old age when men
In suff'ring or in years are doom'd to grow.’”

She ended: and the agèd one, her brows
With either hand concealing, the warm tears
Of sadness shed, as, with lamenting voice
She thus exclaim'd:—“Ah! woe is me, poor child!”
On thy behalf so pow'less, so perplex'd!
Jove, of a truth, above all mortals born
With grudge must have pursued thee, though thy mind
Was ever godlike: For, no living man
Hath ever to that thunder-loving Jove
So many thigh-bone sacrifices burnt,
And hecatombs select on altars laid,
As thou to him hast offer'd, with the pray'r
That into age advanc'd thou for thyself
Thy son in peace and quietude might'st rear;
And, lo! he hath the day of thy return
Thus utterly denied thee! And with jeers
Full many a woman, haply, dares to mock,
(Ev'n as these shameless handmaids have on thee
Their insults flung, O Stranger!) when in homes
Of foreign hosts he, as a guest, is lodg'd.
From their gross outrages and endless scoffs
Thou art withdrawing, nor consent would'st yield
That any hands of theirs thy limbs should lave:
But, lo! the daughter of fam'd Icarus,
Penelope,—that prudent queen,—on me,
Thereunto nothing loth, this charge hath laid,
And, therefore, will I, both for her lov'd sake
And for thine own, thy feet, O Stranger! lave:
Not but that all my inmost thoughts the while
Perturb'd are with many an anxious doubt;
For, mark thou well my words—; Full many a guest
Long before now in sorry plight hath come,
But, never have I, as methinks, on one
These eyes of mine yet fix'd who, both in form,
In tone of voice, in shape of feet,—so like
To great Ulysses seem'd!"

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To which the Chief,  
In answer ever ready, thus replied:—  
"Woman! in age well stricken as thou art!  
What thou hast now affirm'd hath been by all  
That on Ulysses and myself have look'd  
Alike asserted;—that resemblance strong  
Between us both is manifest;—as thou  
Not without judgment hast, thyself, declar'd."

He finish'd speaking, as the aged one  
A shining caldron took, which for a bath  
His feet to wash should serve; and copious streams  
Of cold and tepid water mix'd, while yet  
Ulysses at the hearth his station held;  
But, on the sudden, to a dark recess  
He, in all haste, withdrew,—quick as the thought  
Across his mind was passing, that the Nurse  
When she upon his scar her eye should fix  
Himself at once might hereby recognise,  
And all his plans and purpos'd deeds make known.  
She, to her princely master drawing nigh,  
His feet began to wash, and, at a glance  
The scar descried. Now, this a wound reveal'd  
Which, in a time long past, with its white tusk  
A boar had made, as in Parnassus' woods  
He with Autolycus and his two sons  
To hunt was speeding. This the noted sire  
Of his own mother was; one who his race  
In knavery outdid and idle oaths,  
By the god Mercury himself inspir'd,  
Upon whose altars he the welcome thighs  
Of lambs and kids had offer'd: but, the chace
Ulysses with this prince, all joy! pursued.
Autolycus, of erst, among the homes
Of Ithaca's most wealthy lords arriv'd,
The new-born son of his lov'd daughter found,
And when of supper he an end had made
This Euryclea on his parent knees
The infant placed, and thus appealing spoke:—
"Autolycus! thine be the choice a name
To this dear child, thy daughter's son, to give,
In many a pray'r long ask'd for!" Whereunto
Autolycus:—"Do ye, my son-in-law,
My daughter, too—the name whereof I now
Shall uttr'ance make bestow on him; for, here
Am I at length arriv'd, by many a man
And woman on this many-feeding Earth
At heart detested; for which cause the name
'Odysseus' let him bear; and, when a man
Upgrown, he to his great maternal house
Here in Parnassus where my treasures lie
Shall one day come, and hence a gift shall take,
And homeward shall with merry heart return."

Mindful hereof, Ulysses, that his host
Might richly gift him, to Parnassus went.
Autolycus himself and all his sons
With outstretch'd hands and words of blandest speech
Their welcome gave: but, Amphithea,—she
Who his own mother's parent was, her arms
Around Ulysses throwing, on his brow
And both his radiant eyes a kiss impress'd:
And then Autolycus on his brave sons
Commandment laid a banquet to prepare;
And to his urgent voice they, as they heard,
Obedience instant yielded; and a beev
Of five years' age,—all promptitude—led in,
And skin'n'd and dress'd and into quarters baw'd,
With aptest handling sev'ring it; the flesh
On spits to fix, and skilfully to roast;
And all the parts they portion'd; at which feast
From morn till eve they sate: nor, could desire
More equally divided banquet crave.
But, when the sun declin'd, and the thick gloom
Of night upon them fell, to rest they hied
And slumber's gift enjoy'd. The rosetate morn,
Daughter of dawn returning—for the chase
They started all; Autolycus' two sons
And dogs withal, and in their hunt conjoin'd
Ulysses; and Parnassus' soaring slopes
With forests clad they reach'd, and at quick speed
The breezy summit gain'd,—the solar rays
From the soft fluent swelling ocean depth
Ev'n at that instant rising, on the face
Of Earth to strike: and now into the glen
The huntsmen sped, their dogs, in front, the track
Of wild boars seeking; in their rear, the sons
Of old Autolycus close following;—
And, hast'n'ing tow'rds the dogs, Ulysses' self
A long spear wielding which upon his path
Its shadow cast. Within a copse, hard by,
With shrubs impervious, a huge boar lay.
The currents of the winds with moisture charg'd
Through that dark jungle never blew: the Sun
With his bright beams in vain essay'd to pierce:
No falling rains could soak through there: so dense
Appear'd the brake, the wild boar's lair, where nought 720
But strew'd s ear leaves in heaps stupendous lay.

But, now, around was heard th' approaching tread
Of hunters and of hounds, as with a rush
They onward forced their way; and in their front
Out of the forest brake the monster rose,
His bristly mane erecting, and with eyes
That flashing seem'd with fire! Before all else
Ulysses foremost sprang, with sturdy hand
His long spear wielding,—all intent to strike
And wound; but, with a stroke, which all his speed 730
Outsped, the boar his knee attack'd, and flesh
In a broad gash ripp'd up, as all oblique
His tusk he drove; though, bone he fail'd to touch.
But, on the monster, with a thrust direct
Through his right shoulder piercing, did the spear 735
Of great Ulysses lunge, till the bright point
Transverse projected, and with shrieking groan
The wild boar sank in dust; and life so fled.

Then with all zeal did those true-hearted youths
The wound of great Ulysses tend; their skill 740
Expertly binding it, and the dark blood
By incantation staunching,—till with speed
Their father's house was reach'd. Autolyceus
And his brave sons a perfect cure perform'd,
With sumptuous gifts enrich'd him; and, elate 745
With joy, Ulysses on that journey sped
Which to lov'd Ithaca a happy man
Restor'd him, and with glad exulting hearts
Question on question asking,—how the scar
Inflicted was,—what anguish he endur'd:
And faithful was his narrative, which told
How at Parnassus, with Autolycus
And his two sons, arriv'd, the chase he join'd,
And how the white-tusk'd boar assailant smote.

But aged Eurylea, as the limb
She on her hand laid flat and would have wip'd,
The scar descried, well knowing it; and loose
From her hands' grasp let fall the foot;—his leg
Into the caldron falling, which aside
That instant roll'd; and from the hollow brass
Went forth a resonant clang, as o'er the ground
The outpour'd water rush'd. Delight and pain
In the same moment the aged matron's mind
O'ercoming quite;—her eyes with tears suffus'd,
Her voice by thick and frequent sob's suppress'd,
As on Ulysses' beard her hand she laid,
And thus exclaim'd:—"My child! my precious one!
Thou of a very truth Ulysses art!
Though, not till I had thus around my lord
These hands so freely thrown, the certain truth
Did I attain to." Such were her glad words,
And to Penelope her eyes she turn'd,
All eager to apprise her that e'en there
Her consort, in the house, before her stood.
But, neither on the matron, face to face,
To gaze, nor ev'n her presence there to note,
Was it that moment to Penelope
Accorded, all whose thoughts Minerva's self
Was present to direct: but, as his arm
Ulysses stretch’d, the matron by her throat
He with his right hand seiz’d; and with the left
His body tow’rds her shifted, and these words
In tremor spoke: — “Nurse! Why would’st thou a doom
Destructive bring upon me? Thou it was
Who in thy bosom cherish’d me: Behold!
How, after endless suff’rings, I am thus,
Ev’n in the twentieth year of exile, come,
And on my native country’s soil I stand:
But, now,—that with thy recognising glance
Thou hast discern’d me,—and ’tis God himself
That this perception gave thee,—be thou mute!
Lest, haply, in this palace other ears
Hereof should knowledge gain; for, this to thee
I here announce,—and it shall come to pass—
If God shall under my avenging hand
These vaunting suitors crush,—[and thou prove false]
Ev’n though my nurse thou wast, I will not then
Thyself from death exempt, when, in that hour
The guilty women of this house I slay.”

Whereeto the prudent Euryclea thus:—
“What utterance of thine is this, my child?
Well knowest thou my stedfastness: my mind
No weakness knows, for, like the stubborn rock,
Or steel itself, will I reserve maintain.
More will I tell thee, and my speech mark thou—
If God these vaunting suitors at thy feet
Vouchsafe to prostrate, then will I the tale
By numbers give thee of that female crew
That in thy palace serve; of those whose acts
Thyself insult, and those who guiltless live.”
To whom Ulysses:—"Nurse! why thus on thee
Should it devolve th' offenders to declare?
The need of this exists not: well can I
Myself these women designate, and each
Amid the numbers know: do thou, meantime,
From speech hereon, in all reserve, refrain;
And to th' immortals all our cause refer."

He ended; and from that palatial hall
The aged Euryclea went her way
A second bath to bring,—for, from the first
All water had escap'd: and when he now
Had this ablution made, and she the oil
Anointing had applied, once more his seat
Ulysses to the hearth, for warmth, drew nigh,
But, with his tatter'd garb the scar conceal'd:
And then Penelope discourse renew'd:—
"Stranger! For yet a little longer space
Would I of thee ask question, though the hour
Approacheth fast for slumber and repose
For all on whom, ev'n in the depth of woe,
Delightsome sleep may fall; but, on myself
The deity hath countless sorrows heap'd,
And, through the day, this my resource hath been,
To sigh and moan, and of my chosen tasks
And my handmaidens' work take oversight,
Till, at approach of night, when slumber's couch
To all lies open, I upon my bed
In turn recline where ceaseless, poignant cares
My heart still fret, and make life one lament!
As when the nightingale, (the daughter nam'd
Of Pandarus) that from some thicket green
In early Spring her charming song outpours—
'Mid the dense boughs high perch'd,—and changeful notes
With her far-sounding voice incessant trills,—
A dirge for her lov'd Itylus, whom, of old,
(A royal progeny,—King Zethus' son)
With brasen weapon she unconscious slew ;—
So, by two thoughts at variance,—first to this,
Then to that counsel leaning, is my mind
Disturb'd and harass'd: whether with my son
Here to abide and with determined sway
All that is mine, my wealth, my household train,
And this vast lofty palace duly guard,
And reverence to all my nuptial vows
And to the voices of my people pay;
Or, with that best of all the Greeks consort
Who here within my own palatial halls
His suit is urging, and with countless gifts
For bridal meet enriches me. While yet
My son a child and thoughtless was, a bar
To marriage stood oppos'd; for, in the house
Of him who had my husband been, that child
Was not to lodge alone: but, now, adult
And into man's estate upgrown, his pray'r
Implores me from this palace to depart,
Indignant as he is when to that wealth
A thought he gives, which, to his utter loss,
These Greeks are daily wasting. But,—attend!
This dream for me interpret, and with ears
Attentive list:—In this my house a score
Of geese from water-troughs were eating wheat;
And I, as I beheld them, felt delight,
Till a large curve-beak'd eagle, at one swoop
From some high mount descending, broke their necks 875
And kill'd them all; and in the palace court
Were they all left in heaps; but he aloft
Rose soaring into air. Though in a dream,
In tears was I suffus'd, and cried aloud;
And the fair-hair'd Greek women in a group 880
Around me gather'd with lamentings loud
For that this eagle had my geese destroy'd;
When, to the spot returning, on that beam
Which our roof cornice form'd, the slayer sate,
And, from his station, with the voice of man
Detain'd me, thus exclaiming:—

'Cheer thy heart!

Thou daughter of the far-fam'd Icarus!
This no illusion, but all real, is:
All which shall be fulfill'd to thee: The geese
Thy suitors are, and I who, heretofore,
An eagle was, am now, thy husband, come,
Who upon all these suitors will a doom
Most ignominious bring.' These words he spake,
And I awoke; and, glancing round, the geese
Their wheat-grains eating in the self-same spot
Again beside the water-trough I saw!"

To which Ulysses thus replying spoke:—
"Lady! Interpretation of thy dream
Beside this can be none! for, how its truth
Will be fulfill'd, Ulysses hath, himself,
To thee announc'd: and all these suitors' doom
Is manifest become, nor will a man
That destin'd death elude."
But, now, in turn
Rejoin'd Penelope:—“And, yet, do dreams
O Stranger! all solution oft defy,
And mere confusion prove; nor, unto men,
Comes ev'rything to pass: For, all these dreams,
So evanescent, through two portals pass:—
One gate of horn, and one of ivory:
Whatever dreams through that sawn ivory come
Delusive are, and such announcements make
As ever come to nought; but, those, again,
Which through the polish'd horn come forth, the truth
Will to the mortal who has seen them prove.
Yet, from this gate the fearful dream I saw
I cannot think hath issued: of a truth,
Most welcome to myself and to my son
Were its fulfilment. But, this more, besides,
Will I disclose to thee: perpend it well—
This is the morning—hateful to hear nam'd—
Which from Ulysses' home must me remove;
For, as a trial of contending skill
Will I those battle-axes forward bring
Which, twelve in number, like some vessel's ribs,
His wont it was in these palatial courts
In set array to fix; through all of which
He, at wide distance station'd, would with ease
His arrow send. Now, to these suitors all
Will I this challenge offer:—Whose'er
With greatest ease Ulysses' bow shall bend
And through the same twelve axes shoot the dart,
Shall bid me follow him, and I this home
Will leave, where, as a maiden, rich in
Of beauty and of wealth, I entrance m
Event, which, haply, as I think, may still
To mem'ry even in a dream recur.”

And hereto shrewd Ulysses: “Honour’d wife
Of Prince Ulysses! Let no more delays
This contest in thy house defer; for he,
Ulysses, in all counsels vers’d, will here
His entry make ere they this shining bow
In their hands clutching shall its string outstretch,
And through those iron rings the arrow drive.”

And thus the queen replied:—“If ’twere thy will,
O Stranger! at my side, these walls within,
Thus seated to continue, sleep this night
Mine eyelids would not close: but, slumberless
And waking ever, not a man could live:
Th’ immortal gods to ev’ry mortal man
Throughout this teeming Earth a certain lot
And order have assign’d: but, for my part,
Within the upper chamber on that couch
Shall I recline which, water’d with my tears,
A bed of sorrow hath become to me
Ev’n from that hour when for unhappy Troy
(A name to be abhor’d!) Ulysses sail’d.
There, there, shall I recline: but, in our home
Take thou thy rest; upon the floor itself
A sleeping place contriving, or let some
A couch for thee arrange.”

These parting words
She utter’d, and towards the couch on high,
In her fair chamber, hasten’d; not alone
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But, by her handmaids companied; and there,
While they around her in attendance stood,
She for Ulysses her lov'd consort wept,— 965
Till, on her eyelids, as she mourning lay,
Blue-eyed Minerva a sweet slumber shed. 967

END OF THE NINETEENTH BOOK.
IN his own vestibule Ulysses slept,
   Where on the ground an ox's hide untann'd
He for a couch had spread, with many a fleece
From sheep supplied, which, for their lavish feasts
The Grecian guests had sacrific'd. O'er these,
As he recumbent lay, Eurynome
A mantle threw; and thus with sleepless lids
Awhile he mus'd, as on th' avenging doom
Which now, at length, o'er all those suitors hung,
His thoughts were deeply pond'ring. And the throng
Of those vile handmaids who in revel loose
With the Greek guests consorted oft, were now
Forth from the palace trooping, in free sport
And jocund laugh elate: Whereat enrag'd
Ulysses the resolve, a moment, weigh'd
Whether upon that crew to rush, and death
To all and each deal out, or, for once more
And the last time, their converse with the crowd
Of suitors to endure; his very heart
Growling, as 'twere, within him: and as when
The dogs among their whelps at strangers snarl,
Ready to fly upon them,—even thus
Did great Ulysses' spirit, murmuring, groan,—
By this effront'ry stagger'd; and his breast
Indignant beating, he the heart within

In these sad words rebuk'd:—“Bear up, my soul!
The time hath been when outrage worse than this
Thou hadst to undergo, upon that day
When Cyclops, irresistible in strength,
Thy comrades brave devour'd: To this awhile
Wast thou constrain'd to yield, till from his cave,
When to thy thoughts Death certain seem'd, by craft
Thou wast deliver'd.” With such reprimand
His spirit he restrain'd, and that brave heart
At anchor rode, and Patience held it fast:

But, ev'n as when a man at some fierce fire
A savoury paunch with fat and blood replete
From side to side turns oft, intent with speed
Most prompt to roast it;—so, from right to left
Ulysses swaying lay, as he his plans
Revolv'd how, single against numbers, he
That daring band of suitors might arrest.

And, now, from Heav'n descending, to his side
Minerva's self drew near,—a female form
Presenting, as above his head she stood,
And in these words appealing spake:—“Why thus
A sleepless watcher liest thou, whose fate
'Bove all men's seemeth hardest! This same house
Where thou art lodg'd is thine; and in this home
Is thy wife living; and thy son, too,—one
Whom any man would joy to call his own.”

To whom Ulysses, upon counsels grave
Continually intent, replied:—“With truth,
O goddess! hast thou spoken; but, my thoughts
On this, incessant, dwell—how, I—all lone,
My grasp on this bold daring crowd may lay:
They in one mass are ever must'ring here.
And, what yet more would all my care engross,
Should I, by Jove's own counsels and thine own,
These suitors slay, how would my secret flight
Thereafter be secur'd? For this, I pray,
O goddess, counsel take.”

But, Pallas thus
In turn replied:—“Distrustful one! Man's faith
Would even on his fellow-man rely,
A mortal—, one inferior, far—nor vers'd
In counsels and expedients infinite:
But, I, a deity, before thee stand,
In all thy trials guarding thee: and this
In phrase express I here to thee declare,
Though fifty bands of mortals that in speech
Articulate use their tongues around us rose
In conflict fierce to kill us both intent,
Still should'st thou prove the man that all those beheves
And fatten'd flocks should to thy homestead drive.
But, now let Sleep prevail on thee—; a grief
Is it throughout the livelong night to watch.
From all thy sorrows shalt thou soon be freed.”

The goddess ceas'd, and o'er Ulysses' eyes
Sound sleep induc'd, as to th' Olympian height
She upward soar'd; and slumber all his frame
At once possess'd; and every carking care
Was in that sleep resolv'd, and ev'ry limb
Relax'd; but, one there was who sleepless watch'd—
That wife who all her duties knew, and now
On her soft couch sate weeping, till, at length,
With sorrow sated, the high-minded queen
Thus to Diana pray'd:—"O Dian! child
Of Jove! thou goddess evermore rever'd!
Would that an arrow in my troubled heart
This moment thrusting, thou with sudden wound
My life would'st end, or that some thunderstorm
Tearing me hence would with impetuous rush
This body through the dim, dark road of Death
Transport, and to the refulgent ocean's floods
At once consign me: As when, of old time,
The whirlwinds Pandaruss' daughters snatch'd away,
(The gods both parents slaying) in their home
All orphans left, whose nourishment to aid
Celestial Venus cheese and honey sent
And luscious wine; and Juno, as her gift,
Excelling loveliness and wisdom gave
'Bove all their sex transcendant. Dian chaste
Hereto tall stature added; and all skill
In Works of Art Minerva's grace conferr'd.
But, when celestial Venus to the heights
Ascended of Olympus, there to sue
In these young orphans' cause for that assent
Which should the contract of their nuptials seal,
Of Jove himself, who in the thunder-crash
On high exults, the suppliant she became—
Jove, who men's prosp'rous destinies discerns
And all their adverse, too; but, while she thus
On high was pleading, each of these fair maids
Was by the spoiler Harpies borne away,
Who to the Furies (those detested three)  
As ministrants consign'd them:—Thus, ev'n thus,  
May those immortals, who th' Olympian homes  
On high inhabit, my existence close;  
Or, may fair-hair'd Diana's dart destroy,  
If even in the nether realms of Earth  
By all abhor'd, on my Ulysses' form  
I might but bend these eyes; and no worse mind  
Than his survive to gladden. What! though Man  
With heavy heart throughout the livelong day  
The tear of sorrow shed,—this is a doom  
Which, if through night he sleep, he will endure:  
For, when his eyelids are in slumber clos'd,  
Oblivious lieth he of all,—of good  
Or ill: But on my senses hath some god  
Ugenial visions forced; for, in this night  
Methought that one who his resemblance bore  
Beside me lay,—the counterpart of him  
Who for the Grecian camp this palace left:  
And gladness fill'd my heart, for, I no dream,  
Methought, was seeing, but a sight most real!  

She ceas'd to speak, but, as the golden morn  
That instant rose, the voice of her lament  
The ear of great Ulysses reach'd, and doubt  
His mind awhile perplex'd, for, near his head  
And recognising him she seem'd to stand.  
But, from his place of rest the cloak and fleece  
Upraising, which through night beneath him lay,  
Upon a throne that in the palace stood  
He ranged them; but the ox's hide without  
Before the portals laid, and with his hands
To Jove uplift, in supplication pray'd:
"O Father Jove! and you, ye gods! whose will
Benignant over the dry land and sea
To mine own home hath brought me,—for, that ye
With many a grief have tried me,—Grant that one
'Mid those who on this spot may waking be
May with a voice of portent from within
Now speak to me; and, from the court without
Let some sure sign divine from Jove appear!"

Thus spoke he, suppliant, and the all-wise Jove
His invocation heard, and from the heights
Resplendent of Olympus, amid clouds
That instant thunder'd; and Ulysses' heart
Thereat rejoic'd:—And from the house itself
A female slave that near him stood, and corn
At his own mills was grinding,—a good word
Of presage spoke. Twelve females in these mills
Incessant labour'd, as the flour they made
Of barley and of wheat ("Man's marrow" term'd).
All, save herself, their wheat-grain having ground,
In slumber lay: she, only, of their band
The most infirm, to toil had not yet ceas'd;
But, the mill stopping, pray'd—, and in her words
An omen to her lord unconscious spoke:—
"O Father Jove! who over gods and men
Dominion hold'st, thou from the starry heav'n
With heavy peals hast thunder'd, yet, no cloud
In all the sky above apparent is:
This as a portent to some man vouchsaf'd
Hast thou display'd: fulfil, now, to myself
Unhappy being that I am, this boon
Which of thy grace I ask: Upon this day
May all the suitors of Penelope
For the last time from now for evermore
A meal to make them joyful in these halls
Of great Ulysses eat,—the self same they
Who with this painful labour have my knees
(While I their grain stood grinding here), relax'd:
Aye,—at a final banquet may they feast!"

So spoke the woman; her presaging voice
And Jove's loud thunder, in Ulysses' heart
Great joy awaking,—for, believ'd he now
That vengeance on th' offenders must descend.
Then woke the other handmaids, in that home
So ornate and superb; and on the hearth
A fire, which none might soon extinguish, lit.
And, from his couch Telemachus upris'n
His raiment donn'd, and a keen-bladed sword
Around his shoulder slung,—(neath his smooth feet
Most beauteous sandals binding,) and a spear
Of stubborn strength with sharp brass tipp'd assum'd.
The threshold having reach'd, he paus'd, and thus
Agèd Euryclea question'd:—"Say, dear nurse!
Whether thou in our palace hast a couch
And fit refreshment for this stranger found?
Hath he, where best he could, uncared-for lain?
For, even thus, all thoughtful as she is,
Might my lov'd mother act! Two men here came,
With the same faculty of mortal speech
Alike endow'd; but, of these twain, the worst
She with distinction gratifies,—and hence,
Not without slight, the best she hath dismiss'd!"
But, in rejoinder—Euryclea:—"Child!
The irreproachable reproach thou not:
For, seated here, for just so long a space
As his own humour pleas’d, the wine he quaff’d;
And, as to bread—(one ask’d him)—he thereof
No more desir’d: but, now when she herself
For night’s repose and sleep was taking thought,
Thy mother to her handmaids gave command
A couch to spread for him: but, he like one
By weariness quite vanquish’d, and by fate
Most adverse bow’d, desire none express’d
On bed or coverlet his sleep t’ enjoy,
But, on a bull’s hide all untann’d and skins
Of sheep set up his rest; and o’er his limbs
A mantle we then threw."

Such were her words,
And from the palace, spear in hand, forth went
Telemachus,—his fleet hounds following:
The well-greav’d Greeks he in the Forum join’d,
And, as the courts he trode, aged Euryclea,
Daughter of Ops, Pisenor’s son, the throng
Of handmaids thus instructed: "Hither now
In numbers come! Use speed! These pavements sweep
And sprinkle: upon all these high-wrought thrones
Rich purple cov’rings spread: and in their turn
Let others of you with the moisten’d sponge
Those tables wipe all round; each goblet cleanse
And all the double cups with high wrought art
Ornate: Let others from the fountain side
With haste the water bring: for, from these halls
Brief will the suitors’ absence be; so soon
Is their return appointed, and the feast
A gen’ral banquet is to be for all.”
Thus spoke the matron, and with ready ears
Her words they noted. Twenty to the fount,
That in the shade rose darkling, instant sped;
And others in the palace their set tasks
With all expertness plied. Then, following close,
Came all the servants of the Greeks, by whom
The wood with sure and dextrous axe was cleft,
As now the women from the spring return’d;
And, leading in three fatten’d swine, the prime
Of all the styces, the swineherd next arriv’d.
These in the beauteous courts to graze awhile
Eumæus left, and then, in tones subdued,
Ulysses question’d:—“Stranger! do these Greeks
With show of more respect observe thee now,
Or, as at first, within these walls, their scorn
Upon thee fling? To whom Ulysses thus:—
“Eumæus! Would that vengeance from the gods
Might on that bold presumptuous pride alight
Wherewith, in wanton outrage, ev’ry scheme
Of infamy in this palatial house.
(No home of theirs!) they cease not to design,
And shame’s restraints repudiate.” In these words
Thus briefly commun’d they: But, hereupon
Drew nigh Melantius, a flock of goats
Conducting, which, of all that graz’d at field,
Were finest deem’d, yet for the suitors’ feast
Were now to serve. Two hinds that with him came
Beneath the echoing corridor these goats
Awhile bound fast: and then with sneering taunts
Melantius Ulysses thus assail’d:
"What! Stranger! wilt thou still this house infest, At each man's hand a mendicant? Out-doors Wilt thou not bide? Now, ne'er shall we, methinks, Our matter end ere with these hands of ours We fight it out. All decency defied, Here art thou begging! Other feasts than this Are there by Grecians given!" Thus rail'd he:
Ulysses answer made not, but his head In silence shook, as in his inmost heart
The schemes he fram'd of vengeance. After this, A heifer leading in and fatten'd goats,
All for the suitors' feast, Philætius came;
One who might well a leader be. But, these
The ferry-men had carried o'er, whose boat Might any others, whosoever would,
Across the stream convey: And all the herd Within the echoing corridor he bound,
And of Eumæus next inquir'd, who nigh
Beside him stood:—"What stranger may this be, O Swineherd! who so lately in our homes
Hath his appearance made? Of what descent
Doth he declare himself? Where is his race?
And where his fatherland? Ill fated man!
Yet, in his aspect princely! But, the gods
In many a sorrow will those mortals plunge
Who roam and ramble oft; when ev'n on kings
They toil impose and trouble." Ending thus,
Ulysses he approach'd, and, with the hand
Of fellowship out-stretch'd, thus eager spake:—

"Fatherly stranger! hail! Though many a grief
Lie heavy on thee now; in years to come
May'st thou all happiness enjoy!  O Jove!
None of the gods more hurtful ills than thou
Inflicteth ever:  Sympathy with man
Even with mortals thine own offspring deem'd,
Thou testifiest none;  but, in distress
And bitter sorrows blendest all alike.
In ev'ry pore the shock I felt, when first
On thee I look'd, O Stranger!  and mine eyes
With tears began to stream, when at that sight
Ulysses I to mind recall'd;  for, thus,
Methought, he in such sorry raiment cloth'd
May, at this very moment, among men
A wand'rer be,—if he, on any spot
The breath of life be breathing, and the light
Of Heaven's sun beholding:  but, if gone,
And in the home of Pluto with the dead
An inmate be,—alas!  for that just man
Ulysses!  who, when I a stripling was,
Amid the Cephalenians, in charge
Of all his oxen placed me;  and those herds
One hardly now could count;  nor could increase
Of such broad fronted beeves in like extent
To any other man accrue.  Yet, this
The flock I lead, mere strangers bid me bring
That they themselves may feed thereon;  nor thought
Take they for that dear son who in these halls
Palatial dwells;  nor vengeance from on high
Seem they to dread, all eager as they are
The wealth to seize of the long exil'd prince.
Oft have my thoughts thus ponder'd:  'Twere most vile
While yet the son is living, that the shores
Of some strange nation I, with all these herds,
Should strive to reach, and into alien hands
My charge consign: But, this more painful is,
My station here to hold and o'er the beeves
That others are,—not mine—a watch maintain,
And grief like this encounter. Long ago
Had I gone hence, and as a fugitive
Some other potent ruler's homestead reach'd,
(For, wrongs like mine can be no more endur'd)
But that the thought still weigh'd with me, that he,
That most ill-fated man, might from some realm
At length arrive, and a wide scatt'ring make
Of all those suitors to their sev'ral homes."

But, hereto answer great Ulysses made:—
"Herdsman! for that thou neither of the vile
Nor of the foolish any semblance bear'st,
And I assurance feel that all thy thoughts
Are by right judgment rul'd,—I'll speak to thee,
And to my speech this sacred oath will add,—
And may great Jove, o'er all the gods supreme,
That oath attest,—and th' hospitable board
And th' irreproachable Ulysses' hearth,
Whereto I came a stranger, witness bear—
Ulysses, of a certain truth, his home
Will reach whilst here thou art, and, if thou wilt,
With thine own eyes shalt thou the destin'd death
Of all the suitors that here rule behold."

Whereto the herdsman, guardian of those beeves,
These words in turn address'd:—"Oh! that the son
Of Saturn might these words of thine fulfil!
Soon should'st thou learn, O Stranger! what my strength
And hands avail to do!" And with like pray'r
Eumæus all th' immortal gods invok'd
That to his own Ulysses might return.

Such commune held they; while the suitors' plot
The doom and death of young Telemachus
Again was compassing: but, on their left
Flew a high-soaring eagle, in its clutch
A trembling dove retaining: at which sight
Amphinomus the suitors in these words
Emphatic warn'd:—"My friends! the plot we schemed—
The taking off of young Telemachus—
Will in our hands but fail. The feast, alone,
Be now our care." Thus spake Amphinomus,
And they assenting heard; and now, at length,
Ulysses' mansion ent'ring, on each couch
And throne the cloaks they spread, and full-grown sheep
And prime sleek goats they slaughter'd: fatten'd swine
And a young grass-fed cow they sacrific'd,
Whereof the roasted entrails in due shares
They portions offer'd; but, in mixing-bowls
The wine they blended, and the cups to each
The Swineherd bore; and then in baskets rich
Philætius bread distributed; and wine
Melantius stood out-pouring, while all hands
Were on the viands which before them lay
In that high festival outstretch'd. And now
Telemachus, on shrewd expedient bent,
Up to the threshold entrance of the hall
His father led, and near him a mean stool
And paltry table placed, whereon a share
Of th' inner-meat was serv'd; and as the wine
Into a golden cup he pour'd, these words
Therewith prono'mc'd:—"Retain thou here this seat,
And when men drink, drink thou; for, I, myself,
The insults and the hands from thee will ward
Of ev'ry suitor here; for that this house
For gen'ral concourse serves not: this the home
Of Prince Ulysses is, and for myself
Did he, the owner, hold it:—And from word
Or deed that may give pain (to you I speak,
Ye Suitors!) see that ye refrain; lest wrath
And conflict sharp should follow on't!"

He ceas'd,

And they, as each his teeth indignant ground,
Such fearless speech with wonder heard,—till one,
Antinous, Eupithes' son, thus spoke:—
"Grecians! however hard it be to bear,
Let us the menace of Telemachus
In good part take: He this address has made
And no light threat appended. Jove himself,
The son of Saturn, our designs forbade,
Or in these halls, loud speaker as he is,
Should we have hush'd his talking!"

In such phrase

Antinous spake; but, heed to any word
Telemachus gave none. And now in pomp
Of sanctity the heralds through the streets
A hecatomb to the immortal gods
Were bringing onward, and the long hair'd Greeks
Within far-shooting Phaebus' shadowy groves
In thronging numbers round that off'ren met.
But, when, within the palace, those who serv'd  
The outer-parts had roast, and, drawing forth,  
To ev'ry guest his portion had assign'd,  
A glorious banquet was in order set.  
And manceples before Ulysses' seat  
A portion placed as ample as their own,  
In shares assign'd,—and the strict charge herein  
Of his lov'd son Telemachus obey'd.

And yet, exemption total from all jeers  
Which, from the mocking suitors, in that hour,  
His heart might sting, Minerva granted not;  
That sadness still might with this access try  
Laertes' son, Ulysses. In that throng  
Of suitors sate there one, in wickedness  
Long vers'd, Ctesippus nam'd, whose native home  
In Samos lay, and who, in his sire's wealth  
All confident, the wife presum'd to woo  
Of long-estrang'd Ulysses; and he thus  
That band of insolents address'd:—"Your ears,  
Ye lordly suitors! give me, while a word  
I at this time would offer: Equal share  
With all, as of old custom,—so it seems—  
This stranger, here, must needs enjoy: for, gloom  
To cast upon the spirits of such guests  
As to the mansion of Telemachus  
May chance to come, nor gracious were nor right:  
But, look you,—I a hospitable boon  
Will on this man bestow, that he in turn  
May either to the keeper of the baths,  
Or to some other of the menial train  
That in the house of great Ulysses serve,
Gratuity may offer!" As he ceas'd,
With his coarse hand an ox's foot, which near
Had chanc'd to lie, he from the basket drew,
And hurl'd it from him; but, with slight incline
Ulysses' head the missile shunn'd, as he
In bitterness a grin sardonic smil'd;
But, only on the firm compacted wall
Did that ox-foot alight: Whereat this speech
Telemachus at vile Ctesippus cast:—
"Ctesippus! hadst thou known it, 'twas thy gain
That thou the stranger fail'dst to hit: The blow
He deftly scap'd; and, but for that, my spear
Right through thy body would these hands have thrust; 465
And then for thine interment would thy sire
Have here been sometime busied;—not on rites
Of marriage all intent! This understood—
Let no one in this house of mine, henceforth,
Vile outrage offer me! A child, indeed,
I for a time continued; but, with all
Am I now conversant: with good and ill
Am I familiar. With forbearance long
Have we refrain'd, when this our eyes beheld—
Our fatlings slaughter'd, our wine drunk, our bread
Alike consum'd: So hard is it for one
The might to stem of many! But, beware!
In this malignant spirit further wrong
Attempt not to inflict on me: though this
I here announce,—if with the sword itself
Thou fain my life would'st take, this, even this,
My own desire would be! and better far
Were Death itself, than upon acts so vile
Unceasingly to look; on strangers thus
With outrage gross insulted, and on men
That through these walls the women-servants hale,
In revelry most shameless.”

With these words
He finish’d speaking, and in silence all
As hearers sate, till Agelaus thus
(Damastor’s son) began:—

“My friends! with speech
On justice bas’d no suitor here, whose words
That carp at and condemn it, should be wroth.
No further insults on this stranger cast,
Nor servant outrage that in this the house
Of great Ulysses works. Yet, one mild word
Would I to young Telemachus but speak
And to his Mother,—, if with their goodwill
That word might meet: So long as all our hopes
On shrewd Ulysses’ coming home relied,
Without reproach, indeed, might she her days
In this her mansion spend, and on the crowd
Of suitors that surround her law enforce:
More seemly this, if, to his native land
Restor’d, Ulysses this his home should reach:
But, this must now apparent be to all,
That here he comes no more!—Telemachus!
Thy station at thy Mother's side go, take!
And this injunction lay on her,—, the man
She shall prefer,—with gifts the most profuse—
At once to wed; that thou with merry heart
Th’ estate of thine inheritance may hold,
And banquet keep and wassail; she, the while,
On the domain of others entering.”
But, in reply, Telemachus:—"Not so—
O Agelaus! By great Jove himself,
And by my father's wrongs, I swear,—(whose death
May but too certain prove, or, who in realms
From Ithaca remote may, at this hour,
A wand'rer be—) no interpos'd dissent
Of mine my Mother's marriage has delay'd.
My exhortation was, that one to wed
On whom her choice might fall, and from whose hand
Most costly gifts were lavish'd: But, from hence,—
My palace—'gainst her wish! and with the speech
Of harshness to extrude her! Shame forbids—
And ne'er may God permit it!"

Thus spake he,
But, now it was that in th' assembled crowd
Of all those suitors, Pallas a wild laugh
Of ecstasy awak'd, and all their minds
Into confusion plung'd. Unnatural
And forc'd was all that mirth. Crude meat they ate
With blood, as 'twere, defil'd; and ev'ry eye
With tears began to fill, and each man's mind
Began to bode some evil. Then it was
That thus spake Theoclymenus:—"Poor fools!
What plague is now upon you? All your heads,
Features, and knees beneath, are in dark gloom
Alike involv'd! An outbreak of distress
Is here! and cheeks with overflow of tears
Are moisten'd all! The walls and panels, too,
'Twixt columns fram'd, so beaueteous! are with gouts
Of blood besprinkled! Ev'n the portico—
The hall, itself—with shapes is throng'd, that seem
The gloom to enter of the nether world!
The Sun itself from out the heav’n above
Is perishing,—and a thick gath’ring mist,
As though in judgment sent, around us hangs!”

He ended; but, they all with laugh jocose
His words receiv’d, as, turning to the crowd,
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,
This comment made:—“This stranger, who so late
From unknown quarters is among us cast,
Is weak become in intellect! Young men!
With all dispatch do ye through yonder door
Into the Forum speed him! since this scene
He is with Night comparing!”

But, hereto
In answer Theoclymenus rejoin’d:—
“Eurymachus! on no account from thee
Would I such guides request: for eyes have I
And ears and my two feet;—a mind withal
By no means pitiful,—by aid whereof
Will I through yonder portals pass, who see
The evil which before you lies, the doom
So nigh at hand, and by no suitor here
Of all your number to be shunn’d, who now
While many a man in great Ulysses’ hall
You mock and outrage, are for evil deeds
Inventive counsels taking.”

With which words
The noble pile he quitted, and at once
Piræus sought, who with a cheerful heart
His welcome gave. The suitors all, meantime,
As on the other each his glances bent,
And at the guests of young Telemachus
(The strangers) jeer'd,—his spirit rous'd to wrath,
When one rash youth thus arrogantly spake:
"Telemachus! No man that guests receives
Has viler than thine own: a mendicant
And vagrant hast thou here,—his need of bread
And wine declaring,—in all handicraft
Most ignorant, in strength contemptible,—
A mere dead weight on Earth! The other, too,
Must needs begin to utter prophecies!
But, would'st thou only on my counsel act,
This would, indeed, our interest best serve,
If both these strangers in a roomy bark
We hence could ship, to some Sicilian mart
Consigning them, where we might sell them well!"

Thus spoke in turn the suitors: But their speech
Telemachus contemptuous heard, as mute
His eyes he now upon his Father fix'd,
The moment waiting when on that vile crew
He should avenging hand begin to lay.
Meantime, upon a beauteous seat enthron'd,
Which all th' assembly fronted, the fair child
Of Icarus, Penelope, the words
Of each that spoke o'erheard. But, they, all glee,
For their high banquet now prepar'd, whose sweet
And heart-delighting relish gave to all
Contentment full: for, sacrifices vast
Had for the viands in that feast been slain:
Yet more ungenial meal wherewith a man
His day should end there could not be than that
Which the celestial Goddess and the prince,
So noble-soul'd, were, in a little while,
About to place before these very guests
Who, long before, in machinations vile,
Their joint exploits in shameless sin had plann'd!

END OF THE TWENTIETH BOOK.
BOOK XXI.

BUT now in Queen Penelope's pure mind
Minerva, goddess of the gleaming eye,
This counsel prompted, that the bow itself
And pale steel-pointed arrows which, reserv'd,
In Prince Ulysses' palace still had lain,
She should before the throng of suitors bring,—
The guerdon of a contest first to prove;
Precursor, next, of carnage! And for these
The steep stair mounting of that princely house,
A well-wrought, beauteous, brazen key she took,
And in her own fair rounded hand its ring
Of ivory held. Herewith, as all her train
Of handmaids on her waited, she in haste
The furthest chamber sought where lay upstor'd
The prince's treasures—, brass and gold and steel
Of work elaborate: and 'mid the heap
Repos'd his unbent bow;—the quiver, too,
Receptacle of shafts, wherein secur'd
Was many a dart which groans of agony
Might well awake;—gifts, which in times bygone
One Iphitus, the son of Eurytus,
A stranger, but with god-like mind endow'd,
In Lacedæmon meeting him, bestow'd.
Their earliest greetings on Messene's soil
They interchange'd, when with Orsilochus
(A warlike host) located. At this spot
A debt to claim, of the whole people ow'd,
Ulysses had arriv'd.—Messenian men
Three hundred sheep and those who of the flock
Had oversight, in vessels over sea
From Ithaca had snatch'd, and for all these
(As on a mission in the public cause)
By his own sire and other chiefs dispatch'd,
Ulysses, a mere youth, had made demand.

But Iphitus in search of his lost steeds
Was thither come:—twelve mares and, under them,
Hard drudging mules which at no distant day
His doom and death entail'd on him: his guest
First to the mansion leading him of one
Who in exploits of mightiest eminence
No rival knew,—the hero Hercules—
That high-soul'd son of Jupiter himself;
Who, though unto his hearth this Iphitus
He had a welcome giv'n, slew the man:
Hard-hearted one! who neither wrath divine
Consider'd, nor the hospitable board
Which he before him spread; but in his house
Those hard-hoof'd steeds of Iphitus detain'd.
A day arriv'd when he, with his own hand,
To death consign'd himself. But Iphitus,
While on his mares intent, Ulysses met
And this bow gave him which great Eurytus
Of old had wielded, but, who in his home,
(A lofty mansion,) dying, to his son
As a bequest transferr'd; and in his turn
Ulysses to this stranger a sharp sword
And a stout lance presented,—the first pledge
Of kindness which might close alliance bind:
Yet did they never at such mutual board
Thereafter sit, for, Hercules the blow
That life destroy'd, ere that could be, had struck.
This bow, then, at the hand of Iphitus
Ulysses gain'd, but in that dark-ribb'd ship
Which was to bear him to the scene of war
He took it not. In these palatial halls
A kindly stranger's mem'ry to revere
It ever lay, though, ere his home he left,
O'er his own lands that bow Ulysses bore.
But, when the noble queen her chamber reach'd
Its oaken threshold crossing which of old
A craftsman had with dext'rous art made bright
And by the standard squar'd—(In this erect
Stood bearing pillars and 'mid these were doors
Of entry interspers'd, that brilliant shone)
She in all haste the thong o' the ring releas'd,
And, with a hurrying hand the key t' insert,
The door bolts backward drove, as straightest aim
At either she directed: and a sound
Re-echoed which the lowing of some bull
Grazing in verdant mead might emulate;
So loudly resonant rung those ornate doors
As each by keys was stricken, and at once
They open stood before her. Here arriv'd,
The topmost floor she sought where in array
The coffers stood, and in them many a vest
With richest perfume fragrant. And from hence
With outstretched hand detaching it, the bow
From its suspending wall-hook she releas'd
And the bright sheath which cas'd it. Then, awhile,
Down sitting there, Penelope the sheath
Upon her knees sustain'd, and with loud cry
To plaintive sadness yielded. But, the bow
From out its covering at length she drew,
And having now her fill of sorrow's tears
In weeping ta'en, the palace and its hall
Of banquet she re-enter'd, and the throng
Of noble suitors sought,—the bow unstrung
And its full quiver bearing, in whose sheath,
With death-groans fraught, so many arrows lay.
A coffer, too, the handmaids with her brought,
Wherein lay steel, in ample store, and brass,
The treasure of the prince. But, now, at length,
Into the presence of her suitors brought,
Penelope her station near the shaft
Of a roof-bearing pillar chose, a veil
Of finest tissue 'round her features drawn,
And a discreet handmaiden on each side
Her royal presence tending; and these words
To all the throng there gather'd she address'd:—

"Hear me! ye princely suitors! who to feast
Continual of viands and of wines
Within these walls resort, and on our home
Oppressive burdens lay while so long time
My consort absent lingers, and no ground
Can for your trespass herein urge, but hopes
Of nuptial contract making; and myself
The bride to be! Attend to me, whom thus
The prize of competition you have made—
This mighty bow, Ulysses' own, I here
Before you all produce; and whosoe'er
This self-same bow, as here he handles it,
With greatest ease shall stretch, and through the rings
Of all twelve axes shall an arrow shoot,
The man will be whom I shall follow hence,
This palace quitting which, while yet a girl,
I enter'd, rich in beauty, rich in wealth
Life's maintenance providing; all of which
Long hence shall I in memory retain,
Aye, ev'n in dreams recalling!"

Thus spake she,
And on the noble-minded Herd command
Immediate laid the bow and weapons bright
To place in view of all. With flooding eyes
Eumeus from her hands the bow receiv'd
And put it forth. The herdsman, too, whose glance
From a remoter spot beheld, his tears
Restrain'd not when his master's bow he kenn'd:
But, in rebuke, Antinoüs challeng'd both:—
"Ye senseless clowns! who thus upon the things
That for the passing day alone suffice
Such thought can take, and such concern evince!
Ye poor, faint-hearted couple! wherefore thus
Have ye your tears let flow, and the queen's heart
Within her sadden'd, whose afflicted soul
Since she her much lov'd consort lost, enough
Of grief has had to bear with;—Sit ye mute,

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At this our feast, or, out of doors remov'd,
Go, snivel there! but, leave us here the bow
A contest to originate which must
Ambition leave insatiate: for, methinks,
No suitor here will this bright shining bow
With ease succeed in bending. No such man,
'Mid all our number, as Ulysses lives!
These eyes of mine have look'd on him: My mind
Recalls him still,—but I a mere child was."

He ended: but a hope he had at heart
That he the string would stretch, and through each axe
An arrow shoot: howbeit, this same lord
The first was fated of an arrow's point
To taste directed by Ulysses' hand,
His, whom in his own palace, as he sate,
He with contempt had mock'd, and all the throng
Of suitors rous'd against him. But, at length,
Telemachus thus spoke:—'Now, of a truth,
Hath Jove, the son of Saturn, o'er my brain
The sense induc'd of craziness! So sound
In judgment as she is, my mother, here
To all declares that from this home withdrawn
She a new spouse will follow! I must laugh—
And in my silly mind feel all elate!
But, look you! All you suitors! Forasmuch
As for a prize this contest is to be,
There is not, at this moment, in all Greece,
In holy Pylos, or in Argos be 't,
Nor in Mycenæ, nor in Ithaca
Itself, or dark Epirus, woman born
That with my mother can compare; and this
Ye, of yourselves, well know: Why should I, then,
My mother thus extol! But, come you, now,
By no excuses parry this, nor pause
Evasive longer make in these attempts
To bend your bow; that we with our own eyes
May see you all: nay, I myself the feat
Would now essay; but, if herein I won
And through the axes should an arrow shoot,
My honour'd mother, with another join'd
Should ne'er behind her leave me in this home
To grieve all sorrowful,—let be what might
My pow'r my father's noble prize to gain."

He ended, and upon his feet erect
His purple cloak from off his shoulders threw
And his keen sword, too, disengag'd; and first
The battle axes he set up;—a trench
In one long line then digging and by rule
Its straightness testing; and around each axe
The earth he gather'd close, down stamping it,
While wonder all beholders seiz'd who mark'd
With what adjustment nice the axes all
(Before that moment never seen) he rang'd,
And, on the threshold stepping, there he stood
And tried the bow, and thrice he felt it bend,
All eager as he was to draw it home,
But, thrice his pow'r he check'd, not without hope
That he the string would stretch, and through the rings
An arrow shoot: And, now, at the fourth turn,
With force upon it brought to bear, his thought
Was to have bent it fully, but a nod
From great Ulysses stay'd him all intent
To bend and shoot. Whereat Telemachus
These words to all address'd:—"Fie on't! In times
That yet must come I shall a poltroon prove,
Or puny, or, maybe, my youth it is!
And in these hands reliance place I not
A man, who first should urge me, to repel.
But, onward come! ye others, who in strength
My masters are; Try you, and let us end!"

Thus speaking, on its end the bow he placed,
'Gainst the bright panels slanted of the wall,
And on its beauteous tip the weapon left.
This done, the seat just quitted, he resum'd:
And then Antinoüs, Eupithes' son,
These words suggestive spake:—"Now, to the right
Rise all of you;—from that spot starting whence
The pourer of the wine his range begins."
Antinoüs thus:—And all assent express'd.
Leiodes, son of Oenops, from his seat
First rose: The suitors' priest he was, who slew
And offer'd victims. Near the golden vase
And in the furthest corner he his place
Habitual fill'd—; a man whose mind on pride
And sin alone was bent; and with a grudge
Eyed ev'ry suitor present. With his hand
The bow he clutch'd; the arrows, too, he eyed,—
And to the threshold stepping he the bow
Essay'd to bend, but stretch'd it not; for, soon,
His hands in archery untried and soft,
He 'gan to tire; and thus the crowd address'd:—
"My friends! I cannot bend it: to the hand
I yield it of another:—for, this bow
From many a chief among you will his life
And spirit take; and better were such death
Than to live on and onward, but to fail
Of that for which, as day to day succeeds,
We must here! Ev'n in this very hour
Some one a hope is nursing, some one thinks
He shall Penelope, Ulysses' wife,
In marriage win: but, when this bow his eyes
Have well examin'd and his hands have tried,
Let him some other woman 'mid the throng
Of Grecian maids, so beauteous in attire,
With courtship and rich bridal presents woo:
And let Penelope that suitor choose
Of dowry-gifts most lavish, and who comes
As though predestin'd for her."

Thus spoke he,
And set aside the bow where, deftly join'd,
The bright-faced folding-doors their panels show'd,
And on its beauteous tip the weapon left,
Aslant to rest, as his vacated seat
He hasten'd to resume. But, with rebuke
Antimōus his soothsayer thus met:—
"Leiodes! what ungenial, scaring words
Are these that thou hast utter'd! With disgust
I hear thee say that since no pow'r of thine
That bow can bend, it shall of life and soul
Rid many a suitor here! For archery
Thou wast not born: To draw the bow and shoot
Into this world thy mother brought thee not:
But, lordly suitors many here there are
Who speedily that bow shall bend."
And to Melantius the goat-herd thus
Commandment gave:—"Now! with all speed a fire
Within these walls enkindle, and, close by,
A long bench place, and skins upon it spread,
And some stiff fat from th' offices within
Forthwith produce; that we who younger are
May o'er the embers hold the bow, which, warm'd,
We will with fat besmear and supple make,
Then try to shoot, and all this contest close."

He ended; and Melantius the fire
Which with a flame unwearied burn'd soon lit,
And, a bench thereto bringing, near the flame
He placed it, and a skin upon it spread:
Then brought he from within the stiffen'd fat
Wherewith the bow, now warm'd, the youths around
Anointed; and the bow again they tried
And bend't they could not; for, in needful strength
Far short they fell. But, for a time, aloof
Antinoüs and brave Eurymachus,
In all the suitor-train pre-eminent,
From further trial stood. And, now, the herd
And swineherd of Ulysses from that hall
Together went: Ulysses on their steps
Quick following: The gates and courtyards past,
Ulysses then in gentle tones these words
To both address'd:—"O herdsman! and to thee
O swineherd! too, I speak: Shall I at once
This revelation utter, or withhold?
Yet are my feelings urging me to speak:
If from some quarter, and most suddenly,
Ulysses now should come: or, if some god
Should hither lead him,—what would be your minds,
What men would ye, his person to defend,
Approve yourselves? Would ye these suitors here
Abet and aid? Say, to whose cause your hearts
And minds would lean?"

The herdsman of the beees
First spake:—"O father Jove! would'st thou but grant
The wish that this same man might come, some god
To this spot guiding him! thou then should'st learn
What these two hands and strength of mine could do!"

Even thus, also, to the gods on high
Eumæus pray'd that, to his home restor'd,
The thoughtful, shrewd Ulysses might appear.
And now, (their inmost feelings full well learn'd,) He thus at once address'd them:—"Know ye, then, That on this spot I, even I myself,
By countless suff'ring's tried, before you stand!
In this, the twentieth, year upon the soil
That gave me birth am I arriv'd, and well
I know that of my household I from you Glad welcome shall receive; though not a wish Have I in any other's pray'r o'erheard
That to this home I ever might return!
To you my real intents, then, and the wish
I fain would see fulfill'd will I disclose:—
If God these lordly suitors by my hand Shall overthrow, on both of you fit wives
Will I bestow, and substance give and homes Near to mine own erected; and thenceforth
The comrades and the brothers shall ye be
Of my Telemachus: and simple proof
Will I, moreover, grant you, (that myself
Ye may most surely recognise, and test
Most certain use, that credence to confirm)—
The scar—which erst, at date remote, a boar
With its white tusk inflicted when the chace
I with the sons of prince Autolycus
Had in Parnassus followed.” With these words
His tatter’d garb from off that wound he rais’d,
And they the scar beholding and right well
Of all the truth herein assur’d,—both wept,
Their arms around him throwing, and his form
In their embraces folding, as his head
And shoulders, too, they kiss’d; and he, in turn,
Upon their heads and hands his kiss impress’d:
And on that joyful weeping would the sun
At length have set had not Ulysses thus
The twain repress’d, and, timely speaking, sooth’d:—
“To tears and sighs give way no more; lest sight
Hereof some comer from the palace gain,
And this our meeting speak of. To that hall
Return we not together: one by one,—
I first; and you next following; and be this
The secret of our plan:—That crowd, forsooth,
Of haughty suitors will to you refuse
The bow and quiver in my hands to place:
Do thou, Enmæus, through the palace courts
Thyself that weapon bring, and in my hands
Deposit; and on all the female train
Injunction lay to lock the palace doors,
(All which close fitted are) and if, perchance,
Of all that in our courts attendance give 360
There should be one who meanings overhear
And tumult in the palace,—from the doors
Let none step forth, but, at their own set tasks
In silence bide. Philectius! to thee
This charge I give that ev'ry entry-gate, 365
The courts within, thou with a key secure
And o'er each lock its fast'ning promptly throw."

Thus having spoken, he the goodly pile
Re-enter'd, and the seat he vacant left
Resum'd: and next the herd and swineherd came:
Meanwhile, as in his grasp Eurymachus
The bow still held, and either side in turn
By the bright flame made warm, yet, even then,
In vain essay'd to bend it, his proud heart,
Ambition's prizes seeking, deeply griev'd,— 375
And in vexation thus he spake:—"Shame on't!
Pain,—pain which not myself, alone, but all
Cannot but goad! 'Tis not the chance thus lost
Of marriage with the queen that I deplore,
Griev'd as, at heart, I am;—for, many a dame
In Greece is there,—e'en here in Ithaca,
And other cities, too: but, that in strength
So far inferior to this high-soul'd man
Ulysses we should prove that ev'n his bow
To bend we all have fail'd: discredit gross!
For ev'n remote posterity to learn!"

But, thus Antinous, Eupites's son,
Hereto replied:—"Eurymachus! not thus
Is it to be; and thou, thyself, the truth
Cannot but know; for, at this present hour,
The people, here, a sacred festival
To their great god are holding. Who, then, now
That bow should bend? In quiet for a while
Let us the weapon leave: the axes all
We, likewise, may permit to stand; for, none,
Methinks, this palace ent'ring will approach
To move them hence. And, come! let him who here
The wine outpours drink-off'rings with the cups
Prepare to make, that, these libations o'er,
We may the bow deposit: and, at dawn,
Melantius the goat-herd do thou bid
That kids, the best of all the flock, he bring,
The thigh's whereof to Phæbus off'ring up
(That Archer so pre-eminent!) again
The bow we'll try and all this contest end.”

Thus spoke Antinoüs, and with them all
His words a welcome found. Upon their hands
The heralds water pour'd; each vase with wine
The young men crown'd, and when from ev'ry cup
First off'rings were outpour'd, their shares to all
They portion'd out. And now, libations made,
And wine to full contentment drunk, a feint
The shrewd Ulysses schem'd, and in these words
The crowd address'd:—“Hear me! ye lords who here
Your suit to this most noble lady urge,
While to my thoughts I thus would ut't'rance give.
And, herein, to Eurymachus in chief
And great Antinoüs,—for that his speech
Sound judgment marks,—I chiefly would appeal:
Let no one, for the present, for that bow
Take further thought: To the immortal gods
Commended be it! With returning morn
The god will strength upon that man bestow
To whom his will inclines. But, hand me now
That shining bow, that I in hand and strength
May with you try to cope; if that, indeed,
I still the nerve retain which in these limbs
Now so relax'd I once could boast; unless
My roaming life and want of tending care
Have of all prowess rest me."

With these words

Ulysses ceas'd; but indignation fierce
In all th' assembly rag'd, as though in fear
That he the shining bow might haply bend;
And in stern reprimand Antinous
These words address'd:—"Thou wretch of all who thus
As strangers come! Not ev'n a particle
Of sense hast thou. What! is it not enough
That thou may'st here among us puissant lords
This feast partake! that without slightest stint
The banquet thou hast shar'd, and all our talk
And speeches listen'd to;—no stranger guest
Or mendicant, save thou thyself, a word
Of all we said o'erhearing! Wine so rich
Brings thee to harm, which others, also, hurts
Who'er they be that to excess will swill,
And decent measure heed not. Wine it was
That that notorious Centaur of old time
Serv'd to distract,—Eurytion—when, as guest
Of great Pirithoüs, the Lapithae
He had t' encounter, and his brain with drink
He had confounded. Deeds of dreadful note
In his host’s house he, like a maniac, wrought;
And when indignant fury the whole crowd
Of those illustrious injur’d heroes seiz’d,
They on Eurytion and all his crew
Vindictive rushing haled them through the porch,
And in the open air their ears cut off
And nostrils with the sword. He from thenceforth
In ev’ry feeling outrag’d, trod his course,
With endless suff’ring, frantic; and ’twixt man
And Centaur was there evermore fell hate:
But, all this direful ill upon himself
Eurytion, through excess in wine, drew down.
Thus do I to thyself most fearful ill
Announce if thou that bow shall bend; for aid
In any home of ours none thou’lt find,
But, in some galley, to king Echatus,
‘All men’s destroyer’ call’d, we’ll send thee straight;
And thence is no deliv’rance. Without stir
Thy wine drink down, and with far younger men
Attempt not thus to vie.”

But, in her turn
Penelope thus spake:—“Antinoïs!
It neither gracious is, nor rightful seems
The guests of my Telemachus, whoe’er
They chance to be, thus gibing to insult.
Think’st thou that if this stranger, in his hands
And single prowess trusting, should yon bow—
The great bow of Ulysses—bend, he to his home
Would think to lead me, and his consort make?
That hope hath never in his breast found place.
Neither let any of yourselves that here
At this our banquet sit this thought conceive
And fret therewith; for, most unworthy 't is."

Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,
In turn rejoin'd:—"O just Penelope!
Daughter of Icarus! None here opine
That he will homeward lead thee: That, indeed,
Improbable all deem! But, we with shame
The vague reports reflect on which both men
And women scatter: lest, in days to come,
Some Greeks of low degree should thus exclaim:—
'A paltry band are these who have the wife
Of a renown'd and faultless chieftain woed!
For none of them his polish'd bow could bend:
A wand'ring mendicant at length appear'd,
With great ease bent the bow, and through each axe
The arrow shot:—'Now, this would they put forth,
And our fair fame revile!"

Penelope
Thus answer'd:—"O Eurymachus! fair fame
Can never in the people's mind be theirs
Who a good man's possessions eat to waste,
And, without ceasing, injure him! Why thus
Upon yourselves such inculpations bring?
This stranger is of lofty height; well built,
And, in extraction, hath himself declar'd
The offspring of a noble. Come! To him
That shining bow hand over, that our eyes
May witness bear; for this I here announce,
And this, too, in performance shall not fail:
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If he should bend it, and Apollo grace
Around him shed and honour,—I myself
Will with a cloak and tunic, beauteous garb,
This man array, and a sharp lance will add,
All dogs and hostile men to keep at bay;
A double edged sword, too, shall be his;
And sandals for his feet; and to such home
As thought and wish may urge him to regain
I will at once dispatch him."

To which speech

Telemachus in turn:—"Of all these Greeks,
O mother! none here present can that bow
Concede to any, or refuse,—but as
My will assents: be they the lords that rule
In this our rugged Ithaca, or sway
In the rich pastur'd isles of Elis hold.
Now, of these princes none shall my designs
Presume to thwart, should my own choice decide
Upon this stranger to bestow the bow
And make it his, to take it to his home.
Now, hie thee to thy chamber,—ply thy task,
The web and distaff, and thy handmaids charge
That they with speed their sev'ral biddings do.
But, for the bow,—man's province 'tis due thought
To take for it; though this my special care
Must now become,—in that within these walls
The sole controll as lord I exercise."

Much wond'ring as he spake, Penelope
At once withdrew; her son's judicious words
Deeply revolving: but, when with her maids
The upper chamber she regain'd, the tears
For her Ulysses flow'd, and there she mourn'd
The husband so well lov'd, till sweetest sleep
Upon her lids the blue-eyed Pallas shed.
Meanwhile Eumæus, having on the bow
His hands just laid, was bearing it, when all,
From ev'ry side of that presumptuous crowd
That throng'd the palace hall, in fierce reproach
The swineherd's passage stay'd; and one vain youth
Thus shouted:—"Whither, now, unhappy wretch!
Thou mad-brain'd swineherd! art thou that curv'd bow
From hence conveying? Some of those fleet hounds
Thou hast among thy swine been feeding up,
Of all men else, shall make an end of thee,
And that, too, soon enough, if that the god
Apollo and th' immortal deities
Will but our cause befriend."

Thus clamour'd they;
Whereat Eumæus handling bow and shafts
In fear replaced them all; the outcries fierce
Of that great crowd impelling him; and then
With menace loud from where, oppos'd, he stood,
Telemachus thus cried:—"Now, then, old friend!
Hie onward with that bow!—(Small gain to thee
Who would'st obey us all alike!) lest I,
The youngest, should up country speed thy way
With many a stone pursuing thee, whose strength
Is more than match'd by mine:—And in such might
How fain would I all this assembled crowd
Of suitors that this palace throng excel!
Soon would I from this home of mine some man

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From out their number in most fearful plight
Upon his journey send: for what but ill
Are they for ever plotting!"

In such words
Spoke out Telemachus, but with loud laugh
The speech they met, and all their bitter rage
As though in mirth compress'd. Eumæus then,
As through the banquet-hall his way he made,
At length approach'd Ulysses, and the bow
Into his hands deliver'd: then, aside,
To Euryclea he these words address'd:
"Most thoughtful Euryclea! this command
Telemachus enjoins thee: that all doors,
Close fitting as they are, this mansion through,
Thou straightway lock: and, if, these courts within,
Our household should the sound of heavy means
Or tumult overhear, let none abroad
Step forth, but their own work in silence ply."

Such warning word he spoke, and in her mind
Unwing'd it settled down. And ev'ry door
In that well peopled mansion-house she lock'd.
Philætius, meantime, with silent tread
From out the house into the open air
A leap effected, and the gates he clos'd
Of the well guarded court. Now, 'neath the porch
There chang'd to lie a ship-robe from the plant
Papyrus twisted, with which band each gate
Philætius made fast, and then went in.
Here did he once again the seat resume
Not long before left vacant, and his eyes
Upon Ulysses fix'd, who now his bow
Was in his hands upraising,—ev'ry part
In turn inspecting; on this side and that
With scrutiny most nice all through its length
The weapon eyeing, in the dread of worms
That might, while he the sovereign prince in lands
Remote had liv'd, the horn have eaten through.
And one by-stander, as his neighbour's glance
He chanc'd to fix, thus spoke: "This man, forsooth,
Is an admirer of all bows, or oft,
Maybe, purloins them, or at his own home
Hath such another, or his wish it is
The like to fabricate: so earnestly
Doth he, mere vagrant as he is, and apt
At all iniquity, that bow turn round,
And this and that part handle." Next in turn
A haughty youth thus shouted: "So much gain
May this man reap as, at some distant date,
Is his to be when he the bow shall bend."

Thus talk'd by turns the suitors; but that chief—
In counsels shrewd and numberless long vers'd—
Ulysses, when the mighty bow in hand
He freely held, and on all sides survey'd,
(Like one who, both in harp and song adept,
With ease a string to a new peg adapts,
The sheep-gut at both ends well fastening)
Bent with all ease that pond'rous bow, whose string
With his right hand he seiz'd and, stretching, tried;
And with euphonious note it instant twang'd
Which might a swallow's emulate: whereat
Dire consternation o'er the suitors fell,
And pallid grew each countenance, as Jove,
His portent granting, thunder’d loud on high:
And then did that high-soul’d one,—by such toils
Unnumber’d tried, Ulysses, joy in heart,
The omen marking which on his behalf
The son of wily Saturn thus vouchsaf’d;
And at this moment he an arrow seiz’d
Which, out of sheath, was lying nigh; the rest
Within the quiver stor’d, as but too soon
Those Grecians were to learn. And when this shaft
Across the centre piece between the horns
Of that great bow was laid, the string he drew
And the notch, thereto fitted, of the dart;
Yet, from his seat uprose not, but with aim
At the mark straight before him levell’d, shot:
Nor, in that line of axes, from the ring
That first stood open miss’d he one: the dart
Brass-pointed through and through the distant door
Its point had driv’n: and now Telemachus
He thus address’d:—“Telemachus! the man
Who as a stranger in thy palace sits
Hath no discredit done thee; for the mark
I have in nowise miss’d, nor space of time
Consum’d I in attempts to bend that bow:
My powers are unshaken. On this point
These suitors who their insults on me fling
No longer can impeach me! But, tis time
That, while the daylight serves, these Greeks a meal
To close the day should spread; and in the song
And harp, which fitly crown a feast, rejoice."

He ended thus, and with uplifted brows
To his lov'd son Telemachus a sign
That moment gave, who his keen bladed sword
About him girded, and upon his spear
Laid a firm hold; and, thus, in shining brass
His station at his Father's side he took.

END OF THE TWENTY-FIRST BOOK.
BOOK XXII.

AND now Ulysses, of his beggar's guise
Th' encumb'ring tatters having cast aside,
On to the broad and spacious threshold leap'd,
The bow and the full quiver in his hands
Fast holding, till, outpour'd before his feet
The arrows on the pavement lay; and thus
The suitors he address'd:—"At length, the end
Of all this contest is attain'd, and none
Can overturn it: but, I now must learn
Whether with like success another mark
I may but hit, which not a man as yet
Hath ever touch'd: but may Apollo's self
My pray'r's entreaty hear!" And, as he ceas'd,
The deadly arrow at Antinoüs
Ulysses pointed, as a beauteous cup
Two handled, all of gold, he with both hands
Was at that moment lifting, on a draught
Of wine intent: but, of th' impending stroke
Of gory death no dread surmise felt he!
For, who that at a feast 'mid countless guests
A place should fill, could for the deed take thought
That one there was who, by a thronging crowd
Surrounded, would, alone, however strong
And in vast might confiding, such a doom
Of fearful death and overwhelming fate
Upon his head bring down! But, at his throat
Ulysses aiming sent the shaft direct,
And through that flesh so delicate the point,
His neck transfixing, pierc'd; and, backward fall'n,
The wounded wretch turn'd over, as the cup
Fell from his hand, and through his nostrils' tubes
Man's life-blood gush'd. The table by his foot
Was forward thrust; the meats that lay thereon
Were o'er the pavement scatter'd;—bread and flesh,
For that feast roast, in foul disorder mixt,
At once were spoilt. But, when the prostrate lord
Was by his fellow suitors seen, a din
Of loudest clamour through the mansion rose:
They bounded, each man from his seat: in fright
On all sides they the building eyed,—their gaze
Upon the strong compacted walls they fix'd,
But, not a shield, nor good strong spear was there
That hand might clutch, as they with raging wrath
Their fierce reproaches on Ulysses cast:—
"Stranger! accurs'd is thine aim which thus
An arrow shoots at men! From this day forth
Hast thou with contests done: a death condign,
Aye, and most certain, waits thee, who the youth
Hast but this moment kill'd, of all the prime
Of Ithaca the noblest: and for this
Shall vultures in this spot thy flesh devour."

Each in his mind his thoughts hereon revolv'd:
For this surmis'd they all, that with design
Ulysses had not kill'd. Insensate they!
Who felt not in that hour that one and all
Upon the verge of their own ruin stood!
But, with a grim regard, Ulysses thus
Indignant cried:—“Ye hounds! Your thought it was
That never more should I, to home restor'd,
From Troy return: And therefore all my means
Of Life's subsistence have ye here laid waste—
The handmaids of my household with rude force
Your wont hath been to outrage, and, while I
Myself a living man on earth surviv'd,
Ye have as suitors my espous'd wife
In marriage sought; the anger of the gods
That rule on high despising,—and the thought
Of that revenge which, at some future day,
Should overtake you from the hands of men.
A ruin that shall overwhelm you all
Is now at hand: 'tis here!” He ceas'd to speak,
And panic, that all faces blanch'd, the crowd
That instant seiz'd; and each his eager eyes
Around him cast and refuge sought, to 'scape
The horrid fate impending. One, alone,
Eurymachus, a speech essay'd:—“If thou,
Ulysses of this Isle of Ithaca,
Art really hither come, thou hast with truth
Of what hath past been speaking,—aye, of all
The Grecians here have done;—the acts of sin
Within the palace and in lands beyond
Foully committed: But, now lies he there
Who all this set on foot, Antinoüs!
He, he it was, who brought these deeds to pass;
And this without fond wish or craving need
That should a marriage long for, but with thought
On object most diverse, which Jove the son
Of Saturn hath denied him—ev'n that he
Antinous himself should o'er this realm
Of pop'lous Ithaca as sov'reign rule:
And fain would he thy son, in ambush caught,
Have done to death. But, now is he at length
By a most righteous retribution slain.
Spare us who thine own lieges are, and we
Among ourselves, as with the common voice
Of a whole people, will the sun make up
Of all that in thy palace hath been drunk
Or eaten: each of us our sev'ral debts
Herein discharging;—ev'ry man his score
Of beeves contributing and brass and gold
To thy heart's full contentment; though till now
None might thine indignation's wrath condemn."

But, hereupon with frowns of bitter scorn
Ulysses thus retorted:—"Not if all
That thou wast heir to, O Eurymachus!
All thy possessions, in the hour that is,
Thou would'st to me surrender,—with the gift
Of all that thou from any source on Earth
Could'st to that fortune add, would I my hands
From this their bloody work of death withhold
Till ev'ry wanton outrage and foul wrong
By this crew perpetrate I had aveng'd:
Now shall you all election make,—in fight
Here hand to hand to brave me, or to flee—
So many as from death and fate condign
Can their deliv'rance gain!  But, not a man
Believe I will his deadly doom evade."

Thus cried Ulysses, as their trembling knees
Shook under them, and ev'ry heart gave way:
And to the crowd appealing yet once more
Eurymachus was heard:—"O comrades mine!
On you I call,—for, his resistless hands
This man will never stay:—That bow he holds
And quiver, too; and from his standing-place
On that bright threshold will he arrows shoot
Till all of us lie low.  Let the stern joy
Of Battle now be uppermost!  Your swords
From out their scabbards draw ye, and, for shields,
'Gainst those quick-slaying darts the tables lift,
And then let all in one compacted mass
Make head against him, if from where he stands,—
Ev'n from that threshold and the door beyond—
We can but drive him forth: Then, street by street,
Let us the city scour, and, with all speed
That man can use, be loud alarums rais'd:
Then not long ling'ring will that moment be
When his last shaft on Earth this man shall shoot!"

Thus speaking he his brazen falchion drew
Two edg'd and keenly trenchant, arm'd with which
As he a fearful howl sent forth, a spring
He on Ulysses made, who, as he leap'd,
An arrow shot which, near the nipple driv'n,
Pierc'd through the breast till in the liver's lobe
The flying shaft stuck fast.  Eurymachus
His brandish'd sword flung down, and with a rush
The table's end to reach, down, reeling, fell,
And, in that fall, from off the festal board
Were with him swept the viands and round cup;
And heavily did his brow the pavement strike,
In the heart's anguish writhing, while the throne,
His empty seat, now rock'd at ev'ry blow
From both his feet in death's convulsions given,
Till darkness dimm'd his eyes. Then, with a bound
Upon Ulysses rush'd Amphinomus;
And his keen blade he drew, as by the door
A passage, haply, to enforce;—but this
Telemachus foresaw, and with his spear,
Brass-pointed, from behind, Amphinomus
Between the shoulders smote, till, through his chest
The weapon pierced, and with resounding clash
He forward fell and with his front entire
The floor beneath him struck: yet from that spot
Telemachus with haste withdrew; the spear
In the slain man thus leaving, as the thought
With no light terror sway'd him, that some Greek
While he from out the body that long lance
Would fain be drawing, might upon him fall,
And with a sword transfix him, or with stroke
In front deliver'd, wound. Thus, with a run,
His post he shifted, and in earnest haste
His father soon rejoin'd, and at his side
These hurried words pronounce'd:—'O father mine!
A shield will I now bring thee and two spears,
A brazen casque, too, which thy brows may fit;
And I, myself, with haste a suit will fetch
For this encounter apt, wherein my limbs
I may invest: the like, too, shall be found
Both for Eumæus' and the herd's defence:
For well 'twill be 'gainst this affray to arm."

To whom Ulysses:—"Run! and with thee bring
The arms thou nam'st, while I have shafts still left
That may defend me; lest,—my single might
Alone oppos'd—they move me from this door."

He spoke; and, on his father's words intent,
Telemachus that upper chamber sought
Where lay his noble weapons. From that store
Four shields, eight lances, and four brazen helms
With horse-hair plumes thick crested, he drew forth
And with the burden to his father sped;
But, first did he on his own limbs the brass
Defensive gird; and, in like panoply
Refulgent arm'd, the twain retainers true
Their station took, and round Ulysses stood.
He, while the store of arrows serv'd the foe
To keep at bay, transfix'd them, one by one;
As at each suitor he the weapon aim'd,
And side by side they fell. But, when; at length,
Th' exhausted heap the sov'reign prince's bow
No more could arm, he 'gainst a column's shaft,
Which by the walls of that fair palace rose,
The weapon left to stand; and now did he
A shield of four ox-hides around him brace;
A helm with plume of horse-hair, which in shape
Of crest most formidable shook on high,
He to his head secured, and two great spears
With brazen points surmounted took withal.
Now in that well-compacted palace-wall
A lofty door there stood by stairs approach'd,
And, (nigh the threshold which remotest lay,)
The passage to a narrow lane would lead;
But, this with doors of nicest work was clos'd:
And here Ulysses bade the swineherd watch,
His station taking near; for, through this pass
Alone could access be attain'd; and this
From Agelaus an appealing speech
To all the suitors drew:—"O comrades mine!
Will none amongst us to that door aloft
His way essay to force, and rouse the town?
With instant speed should we th' alarum spread,
And then, may be, this man for the last time
An arrow will have shot."

But, to this cry
Melantius the goat-herd answer'd thus:—
"O Agelaus! who from Jove himself
Thy race derivest! none could this effect:
The noble gates of this palatial hall
Are very high;—the head of that strait lane
Most arduous is to enter; and one man
If of a gallant spirit might alone
Repel us all; but, look you, I, myself,
Will from the armoury fit weapons fetch
Wherewith to fence you; for, therein, methinks,
And there, alone, Ulysses and his son,
So noble deem'd, the arms we need have stow'd."

Thus speaking to the chamber-loft he sped,
Through the strait corridors of that vast house
His passage making, and from thence twelve shields,  
And spears and brazen helmets twelve with plumes  
Of horse-hair thickly crested he drew forth,  
And with dispatch most prompt he re-appear'd  
His burdens bearing, and among the throng  
The weapons soon divided: at which sight  
Ulysses' knees beneath him 'gan to shake,  
And his bold heart gave way, to see them thus  
With his own weapons arming, and his spears  
In hostile hands thus brandish'd. This, he thought,  
A fearful ending threaten'd, and these words  
In hurried accents to Telemachus  
He now address'd:—"Telemachus! this fight  
With evil fraught hath by some female slave  
That in the palace works been forced on us,  
Or by Melantius' self."

But, in reply,  
Telemachus: "O father! I, myself,  
This oversight confess; and no one else  
The cause hath prov'd. That chamber door, which close  
Is in its structure fitted, I but now  
Left open; and their watcher with more thought  
His bidding did: But, good Eumæus! haste  
And close that door, and learn thou if this act  
Be of our women's doing, or of his,  
Melantius, the son of Dolius,  
Whom strongly I suspect." Thus commun'd they,  
As, for the second time, Melantius  
Was to the chamber hast'ning, fresh supply  
Of those bright arms to bring. But, note hereof  
Had the shrewd swineherd taken, and these words
To great Ulysses, by whose side he stood,
In haste address'd:—"Ulysses! thou shrewd son
Of old Laertes! to that armoury
In th' upper chamber, is that very man
Whom we suspect, pernicious as he is,
Again about t' ascend:—Speak thou but once—
Whether, if I the better of the twain
In strength should prove,—my hand should slay him there,
Or hale him here to thee, that countless acts
Flagitious in this house of thine by him
Committed, thou may'st thus avenge." Whereeto
Ulysses thus:—"I and Telemachus
Will these illustrious suitors that are here
Within the palace thronging, let their rage
Fume as it may, withstand: but, go ye two,
And when above his head both feet and hands
Ye shall have backward bent, into that room
Melantius cast and that same chamber's doors
Behind you make secure:—around his waist
A twisted cord bind fast, and up the shaft
Of some tall pillar hoist him, till his head
The ceiling well nigh touch, that while as yet
The life is in him he, for a long spell,
May in this torment linger."

Thus spake he:
They heard; and, all obedience, went on high
Melantius' glance evading, who within
For arms was searching in that chamber's store,
While these two near the pillars took their stand.
At length, across the threshold came he forth,
In one hand bearing a most beauteous casque,
And in the other a broad buckler, old,
High dried and worthless, which, in years bygone,
Laertes own'd, and as a youth had borne,
But, now apart was thrown; and ev'ry thread
That bound the belts was broken. With a rush
These twain upon the wretch Melantius fell,
And by his hair into the chamber dragg'd
To cast him on the floor, while he his fate
In dolorous plight was rueing. Hands and feet
With such a fetter as his heart, indeed,
Might bring to grief, they bound; that backward turn
Observing well to give them which, in charge
Most strict Ulysses had enjoin'd: and then,
A cord around him winding, with a hoist
They to a lofty pillar drew him up,
And near the ceiling rafters left him slung.

And thus, O swineherd! with a bitter scoff
Did'st thou deride him:—"Now Melantius!
Throughout the night thou shalt thy vigil keep
On a soft couch reclining, as thyself
Might well become: nor, when from Ocean's flood
The daughter of the dawn, the golden-thron'd,
Shall visit Earth will she thy ken evade
While for the suitors thou towards this house
The goats shalt drive,—provision for a feast!"

Thus was Melantius left, in doleful chains
To hang upon the stretch. His foes, the while,
Their armour having donn'd, and the bright door
Behind them closing, to Ulysses sped:
And there again they stood, the very breath
Of valour's self exhaling! They whose feet
The threshold made their station, four alone!
The band that in the palace hall stood mass'd,
Large numbers counting still, and still unawed.

But, now, behold! The daughter of great Jove,
Minerva's self drew nigh, in Mentor's form
And voice disguis'd; and greatly did the heart
Of bold Ulysses joy when thus his eyes
On Pallas fell:—"O Mentor! in this scene
Of conflict be our shield! In me recall
The comrade dear to thee, who in my time
Good service render'd thee; and we in years
Of life are equal."

In such phrase he spoke,
In full belief that Pallas he address'd,
Who stirs the minds of nations. But, with threats
Were all the suitors raging, who their front
Opposing held; and, first, Damastor's son—
Young Ageus, in rebuke exclaim'd:—
"Mentor! Let not Ulysses with that tongue
Cajole thee 'gainst the suitors to take part,
And him to screen and succour! For, herein
Will our intents, as I conceive, be met:—
When we these twain, both sire and son, have kill'd,
Thou wilt, thyself, in turn,—who with such thoughts
Would in this palace work thy will—be slain,
And here beside them lie; with thine own life
For all their acts atoning. When thy might
We shall with stroke of sword have thus laid low,
All that thou hast of treasure, in thy house

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Or in thy lands, we with Ulysses' wealth
Will blend in common, nor a son of thine
Or daughter will we tolerate in homes
Of thine to live; no, nor thy cherish'd wife
Within the city of this Isle to dwell."

He ended: but, Minerva's outrag'd soul
Was more and more exasp'rate, and, in speech
Indignant, at Ulysses this reproach
The goddess cast:—"Thy prowess fails thee now,
Ulysses! Valour hast thou none, as when,
In white-arm'd, noble father'd Helen's cause,
Through nine years warring with the hosts of Troy
Thou foughtest, and no intermission knew'st.
How many did'st thou in that fearful strife
In death lay low! The wide-way'd citadel
Of Priam by thine own shrewd counsels fell.
Why, therefore, now—to home and wealth restor'd,
In thine own house an inmate, hast thou thus,
Among these suitors thrown, in spirit quail'd?
But, draw thou nigh, my weakling! At my side
Thy station take,—and an exploit attest,
That thou may'st learn how, when a foe assails,
Mentor Alcimedes can good repay."

Thus spoke Minerva; but, triumphant might
Which should th' antagonist at once subdue
She to Ulysses gave not; all the strength
And all the valour both of sire and son
(That youth upon a warrior's fame intent)
She tested still, and to the vaulted roof
Of that resplendent palace soaring high,—
The semblance of a swallow having ta'en—
A station she assum'd. Damastor's son,
Young Agelaus, with exciting shout
The suitor crowd inspiriting, as did
Eurynomus and bold Amphimedon,
With Demoptolemus, Pisenor (son
Of fam'd Polyctor,) and brave Polybus:
For, these in courage all their peers outshone—
So many as, indeed, yet liv'd! and still
For life were battling desp'rate: for, the bow
And its swift flying arrows had the rest
In death laid low; and Agelaus thus
His comrades urg'd:—"My friends! that man will now
The arm we deem'd resistless cease to wield:
For, even Mentor, after those vain boasts
On his behalf, has quitted him: Our foes
At the first gate their station hold, alone,—
Now, therefore, hurl not all at once your spears,
But, onward come—six first—in the advance,
If Jove on high will but the boon concede
That this Ulysses may here wounded drop,
And we the honour reap: for th' other three,
When he lies low, no thought have we to take.
Thus urg'd he them, and, as the word he gave,
They in all furiousness their lances hurl'd;
But, so Minerva rul'd, they useless flew:
One struck a column of the princely hall—
Another the compactly fitted door—
An ashen spear, brass-loaded, in the wall
Its point infix'd:—and, now, when ev'ry lance
Ulysses had evaded by the arms
Of those proud suitors hurl'd, he on his son

s 2
And the two herdsman, his retainers, call'd:—
“Now, dear ones! would I say—’Tis now for us
Our spears to fling into this hostile band
Who, upon wrongs already done, this wrong
Would further heap that they our blood would shed!”

He spoke; and right ahead their javelins flew:—
Ulysses Demoptolemus struck down:
Telemachus,—Euryades:—and next
Fell, by Eumæus’ weapon, Elatus.

The herdsman’s spear Pisander prostrate laid.
All these the spacious pavement with their teeth,
Down smitten, bit: The still surviving band
To the far corner of the hall gave way;
Whereat Ulysses and his three a rush
Upon the slaughter’d made, and from each corpse
The javelin drew, as, with an impulse wild,
Spear upon spear, again, the suitors hurl’d:
But, so Minerva rul’d, they useless flew—
One struck a column of the princely hall—
Another, the compactly fitted door—
An ashen spear, brass loaded, in the wall
Its point infixe’d, when now Amphimedon
The hand of young Telemachus just graz’d,
As o’er his wrist the brazen weapon pass’d,
The first skin slightly wounding. His long lance
Ctesippus at the herd Eumæus aim’d—
Above his shield a lightly scratching wound
Upon the shoulder leaving; for, beyond
The weapon flew, and on the pavement dropp’d.

Fresh onset then Ulysses’ little band
Upon the suitors made,—their piercing spears
Into the masses thrusting; and that chief
Ulysses who in direst overthrow
So many citadels had raz'd, Eurydamas
Now with a spear laid lifeless, as his son
Telemachus Amphimedon struck down,—
And the staunch swineherd, Polybus. The herd
In charge of whom Ulysses' oxen graz'd,
Ctesippus wounded on the chest, and thus
Above him cried exulting:—"Now, O son
Of Polythresses! who so fond of jeers
Hast ever been,—to this thy fool's caprice
Give way no more! nor in great swelling words
Presume to speak. All matter for the tongue
Defer thou to the gods, whose pow'r herein
Transcendeth thine indeed! A good return
Am I now making thee for all the use
Thou gavest to Ulysses of thy foot,
Upon a day when as a mendicant
This his own house he paced." The herd, whose wont
'Mid crook-horn'd beeves it was to toil, these words
Upbraiding spoke, while, hand to hand, in fight,
Ulysses, with a lance, Damastor's son
Assailant smote; and young Telemachus
Evenor's son, Leiocritus, with wound
Continuous through the midriff pierc'd,—the point
Right through transfixing him; and on his face
He fell, and all the space his eyes between
Upon the pavement press'd.

And now it was

That from on high, the lofty roof beneath,
Pallas her man-destroying aegis held,
And ev'ry suitor of them, all, the fright
Of panic felt, as through the princely halls
In flight they rush'd: as when in vernal prime
When daylight lingers long, a herd of beeses,
In grassy meadow grazing, all at once
Are by some roving gad-fly driven wild—
And as those crooked talon'd, hook-beak'd birds—
The vultures—from some mountain heights to earth
Down flying, on those little feather'd ones
Unpitying fall, which o'er the plain, in dread
Of bird-nets, cowering creep,—and with a swoop
Kill ev'ry one,—and nought is there at hand
That could protect, or their escape secure—
(But, men in prey thus captur'd ev'n exult!)
Thus did Ulysses and his three a rush
Upon those suitors make,—on ev'ry side
Down hewing till a bellow most uncouth
From smitten men arose, upon whose sculls
The death stroke fell; and all the pavement round
Was with the carnage reeking. Then it was
That at Ulysses' feet a suppliant prone
Leiodes knelt; and, as his knees he grasp'd,
In hurried accents spake:—"I prostrate fall,
Beseeching thee, Ulysses! Heed my pray'r
And mercy grant;—for, to no woman here
That in thy palace serves have I in word
Or deed done wrong;—nay, when the suitors all
Were upon evil bent 'twas even I
That would have stay'd them; but, to my restraint
Obedience none they yielded which from acts
Flagitious had deterr'd them. Thus, through sin,
Through their own vices, this degrading doom
Have they drawn down upon them; while I now
Who have in nought transgress’d, and who to them
A priest have been and soothsayer, must needs
Lie down and die: so void of all reward
For righteous deeds the future ever proves.”

But, with indignant frown, Ulysses thus
Leiodes answer’d:—“If these men among
Thou hast an Angur call’d thyself, thou oft
Must in this palace have thy pray’r uplift
That such an ending as my safe return
Might ne’er be mine to meet; that my lov’d wife
Might, also, in thy train a bride walk forth,
And offspring bear to thee: And, for all this,
The death that to a hard cold bed thy limbs
At once consigns, thou wilt not now evade.”

Thus having spoken, with his sturdy hand
A sword Ulysses clench’d which, as he fell,
Young Agelaus to the ground had dash’d:
Herewith, as through the middle of his neck
The weapon drove, he slew him; and his head,
With a loud shriek, was mingled with the dust.

But, Phemius, the son of Terpius,
The bard who at the suitors’ feasts his songs
Had only by compulsion sung, this doom
Was not to share. He, near the highest gate
His station kept, and his melodious harp
Was holding still, as in his inmost thoughts
Two counsels he revolv’d—, these halls to quit
And at the altar of Herecean Jove
To hold his seat, where in burnt sacrifice
Laertes and Ulysses many a thigh
Of oxen had consum’d,—or, rushing forth,
Ulysses’ knees embrace, and with the pray’r
Of suppliants make appeal: At length, his harp
Upon the pavement resting, ’twixt the cup
And silver-studded throne, Ulysses’ knees
He rush’d upon, and, holding there, these words
In hurried ut’t’rance spake:—“With earnest suit,
Ulysses! I implore thee: With respect
Thy suppliant look upon, and pity show!
In sorrow only at some future day
Would it recoil on thee, if thou in death
Should’st at this present lay me low,—a bard
Who to the gods above and men on Earth
Am wont to tune my lay: Self-taught am I—
And God it is who with all strains of song
Alone my mind inspir’d: and to thyself,
As to some god, am I not bound to sing?
Oh! take not thou my head from me: That son
Whom thou well lov’st, Telemachus, to this
Would witness bear, how neither with good-will
Nor with desire have I to these thy halls
At any time drawn nigh, among the crowd
Of suitors that here feasting sate, to sing.
By men in numbers banded,—men in strength
My own o’erpow’ring, was I, by mere force,
To this thy palace brought.”

So pray’d the bard,

And just Telemachus his words o’erheard,
And promptly thus his father, standing nigh,
Exhorted:—"Stay thine hand! On no account
This unoffending man with sword of thine
Think thou to wound:—The herald Medon, too,
Will we preserve, who, in this very home,
When but a child I was, with constant care
Was wont to tend me; if Philætius
Or the good swineherd, in this slaught'ring fray
Have not already kill'd him; or, with thee
Thyself in wrath he met when in the hall
Thou wast on conflict rushing." This he spake——
And Medon, a shrewd thinker, heard it all;
For, 'neath a throne-like seat he cowering lay,
And, such a dismal ending to elude,
A bullock's hide around him, newly flay'd,
He there had wrapp'd; and from beneath the seat
He instant rose, and promptly from his limbs
The hide detaching, to Telemachus
He forward rush'd, and, as his knees he held,
Thus suppliant and in trem'lous ut'trance spake:——
"O friend of mine! here, surely, am I still——
But, calm thyself—and to thy father speak,
That, all tremendous as in might he is,
He with the sword make not an end of me,
In this the height of his indignant wrath
Raging against those suitors who his wealth
Have in this princely home been squandering.—
Fools! that to thee no court, no honour paid!"

But, as he smil'd on him, Ulysses thus
The herald cheer'd: "Be of good courage, then,
For that Telemachus hath set thee free,
Aye, and from death preserv'd;—that hereupon
Thou may'st reflect, and 'midst thy fellows urge, 600
   How wiser far good conduct ever proves
Than bad. But, quit thou now these inner halls—
   Make for the porch, and from this scene of blood
Apart withdrawn, sit thou out-doors with him
   Who in so many songs abounds,—the bard ; 605
While I my labours in this house complete,
   Which need may yet compel:"

Thus ended he,
And, from the palace going forth, those twain 610
Their station at the altar of great Jove
Together took; their eyes from side to side
Around them casting, as at ev'ry turn
Their fate they still distrusted. But, with search
Most eager did Ulysses each recess
Of that vast house explore, on any man
Still living thus to light who there might lurk 615
An awful fate eluding. But, his eye
Beheld them all in blood and dust laid low
And in great heaps dispers'd, the finny prey
Resembling which the fishermen to shore,
From out the surging sea, in meshes fine
Cast on the shelving beach, where ev'ry one 620
Among that scaly tribe, now on the sand
Thrown out, its loss of Ocean's flood bewails,
While the sun's torrid radiance each fish
Condemns to die: Ev'n thus that suitor train,
One on another lying, scatter'd lay.
And now Ulysses his lov'd son address'd:— 625
"Telemachus! list! Summon to my side
Nurse Euryclea, that with her awhile
I may confer.” Telemachus his sire  
At once obey’d, and, throwing back the door,  
The nurse address’d:—“Rise thou! and hither speed  
O aged one! Thou matron, full of years!  
Who over all the handmaids that here serve  
The charge hast held: Come—, ’tis my sire that calls, 635  
That he may speak to thee.” Herewith he ceas’d;  
But, not a word on her was lost:—The doors  
Of that thick peopled mansion-house she op’d,  
And to his presence hasten’d, as her steps  
Telemachus preceded. There at length  
Ulysses ’mid the slain and dead she found,  
With human gore and carnage all defil’d:  
As when a lion who some pastur’d ox  
Hath just devour’d strides forth, and all his breast  
And either jaw with blood besmear’d is seen, 645  
And all his countenance terrific glares;—  
So reeking stood Ulysses,—feet below  
And hands above ensanguin’d. But, at sight  
Of corse strew’d around ’mid flow of blood  
Unutterably great,—exploit immense  
To gaze on! Euryclea rais’d a shout:  
But, with preventive check and firm restraint  
Ulysses all her ardent impulse stay’d,  
And thus in haste address’d her:—“In thy breast  
Confine these transports, aged one! Be calm! 655  
Hence with all exclamations! All the joy  
Unhallow’d is that over a slain foe  
Would thus exult. The fate by Heav’n decreed  
And their own senseless acts the men thou seest  
Have thus o’erthrown: for, none of mortals born  
Deprav’d or righteous that this home approach’d
Did they regard; and through blind folly's acts
Have they this ignominious fate invok'd:
But, look thou! Euryclea! From thy lips
Let me the numbers of those women learn
Who, in this palace serving, on my home
Disgrace have cast, or from offence are free."

To him, in turn, the well lov'd Nurse replied:—
"Thou question ask'st; and, for this cause, the truth
Will I declare:—In this palatial home
Thou fifty female servants hast, all whom
In execution of allotted works
We have been training;—either to card wool,
Or in mere menial offices to serve.
Of these there twelve have been who on a course
Of life immodest have set out, and heed
To me, or to Penelope, paid none.
Telemachus has but of late to age
Adult attain'd; and, so his Mother rul'd,
To these our women orders issued none.
But, come, now! To that chamber, which on high
In this thy mansion's upper story shines,
I will forthwith ascend, and to thy wife
On whom some god hath genial slumber shed,
All this discov'ry make."

But, to her speech
Ulysses thus replied:—"Not for a while
From that repose awaken her: Bid thou
Those women hither come who, in days past,
Have such dishonour wrought."

He ceas'd to speak—
And through his palace the old matron sped,
His mandate to convey, and in that hall
Their presence to command. His son, meanwhile,
The swineherd and the herdsman to his side
Ulysses call’d, and with wing’d words the three
Forthwith address’d:—“Now, from this spot convey
The dead that lie around, and aid therein
Let certain women give: and then with sponge
And water all these very beauteous thrones
And tables cleanse; and, when the house within
Ye shall in order most complete have ranged,
Bring out therefrom the handmaids just condemn’d;
And when between the circling vestibule
And the fair court of this palatial hall
Ye shall have led them, with your long swords strike,
And with redoubled stroke those women wound,
Till ye have ev’ry life destroy’d, and they
All memory of Venus shall have lost,
To whom, in secret union with the crowd
Of these dead suitors they their minds had giv’n.”

He ended; and in one collective throng
Came in those handmaids,—many a dolorous moan
Outpouring and in tears dissolv’d. The dead
They first remov’d, and in the corridor
Of the well-fenced court-yard plac’d each corpse;
Against each other jostling, as the task
They struggled to complete;—for, quick dispatch
Ulysses’ self, in stern command, enforc’d,
And by constraint were all the slaughter’d dead
Thus borne along. Then all those beauteous thrones
And tables were with sponge and water cleans’d.
The pavement of that vast and strong-built house
Telemachus, Eumæus, and the herd
With hoe and shovel into cleanliness smooth’d;
The handmaids all its gross defiling dirt
Removing, till without the palace gates
All was cast forth. And when, in each recess,
The building through, completest order reign’d,
Between the vestibule and the fair court
Of that palatial hall Telemachus,
Eumæus, and the herd the women led,
And in a space confin’d, from whence escape
Was all cut off, they shut them in, and then
Telemachus these words pronounce’d:—“In death
That any slightest show of honour wears
I would not that these women’s lives should end;
Females who on my head disgrace have heap’d,
And on my mother’s, too; and with the crowd
Of all her suitors shameless commerce held.”

He spake;—and to a lofty pillar’s shaft
The hawser binding of a dark-ribb’d ship,
Around the vaulted roof the rope he cast
And from on high a running noose drew down,
Whence none the pavement with her feet could touch:
And as when thrushes, with their outspread wings,
Or doves, against a net, which in some copse
Extended hangs have on a sudden dash’d,
(As they their nests were nearing), and a bed,
Which hath their foe become, includes them all—
So did this female group their heads in line
One with the other hold, and round their necks
Were slip-knots run, that by the direst death
They all might perish. For a space, indeed,  
They with their feet in grasping spasm strove,  
But, all was over soon. Melantius  
Was through the corridor and hall led out.  
The armèd men his nostrils and his ears  
With pitiless blade excis’d: his very groin  
Was to the rav’nous maw of hounds laid bare;  
And both his hands and feet,—so hotly raged  
Avenging wrath!—were from his body hewn.  

Telemachus, at length, and both the herds  
When they their hands and feet by blood defil’d  
Had in ablution cleans’d, the house regain’d  
And there Ulysses join’d. The work had now  
Its full completion reach’d. But, Euryclea  
Ulysses now address’d:—“Thou agèd one!  
Some sulphur hither bring, which may the taint  
Of all this evil remedy. Bring fire:—  
That I throughout the palace may a fume  
Of purifying vapours raise; and then  
Do thou the presence of Penelope  
With her attendant female train request,  
And bid all handmaids, in this house, appear!”  

Where to the well-lov’d nurse:—“What now, my child!  
Thou hast enjoin’d beseems thee well: but, come!  
Fit raiment will I bring thee; both a cloak  
And tunic. But, upon this palace floor  
Thy station in such plight no more maintain,—  
Those ample shoulders thus in tatters cloth’d!  
This were enough, indeed, to make one wrath!”  

Ulysses, ever ready, thus rejoin’d:—
"Before all else let me that cleansing fire
In this my palace see." No more spoke he;
For, not regardless did the matron hear,
But, fire produced and sulphur; and herewith
Ulysses all the palace purified,
The house and its great hall. The aged dame
Her way then through her prince's mansion took,
The female train to summon, and the speed
Of all to hasten: and forthwith they came
Each with a torch in hand,—and then, indeed,
Did they around Ulysses throng! All rush'd
To welcome and with fond embrace to load—
His head they kiss'd and shoulders, and fast hold
Took they of both his hands, until his heart
An impulse soft began to feel which tears
And sighs of sadness prompted,—for, right well
Ulysses, as he ponder'd, knew them all!

END OF THE TWENTY-SECOND BOOK.
AGED Euryclea with rejoicing heart

The upper chambers of the palace sought,
The tidings in her mistress' ear to pour
That in his home at length her husband stood.
The ancient nurse new vigour in her knees,
As on she hasten'd, felt; and with strange speed
Her feet upon that message mov'd, till now
O'er the couch bending she thus eager spake:—
"Wake from this sleep! Penelope! dear child!
And with those eyes of thine the fond desire
Of thy life's days behold:—He is arriv'd!
Ulysses—tardy as his coming was—
This house, his home hath reach'd! The suitors, all,
That proud presumptuous crew,—he hath destroy'd;
The men who fill'd this home with cares,—whose greed
His fortune wasted,—who with harsh control
His son o'erpower'd."

But, Penelope
Thus in her turn rejoind:—"Dear nurse! the gods
Thy reason have derang'd! Their pow'r avails
To make the shrewdest mad, and turn the mind
Of folly into wisdom. Thus have they
Thy senses injur'd, who, in days bygone,
Hadst intellect unerring. Wherefore thus,
Amid my many sorrows, with such words—
The utterance of merest foolishness—
Would'st thou thy mistress mock? Why from sweet sleep
Which, like some veil my eyelids closing round,
Had held me fast, hast thou awaken'd me?
For, never since to that ill-omen'd Troy,
(The very name of which I fain would shun,) 25
Ulysses sail'd, have I in such deep sleep
Reposing lain. But, listen, now: descend,
And to the palace wend from hence thy way;
For, from among the women of my court,
Had any other come,—the messenger
Of tidings such as thine, and from my sleep
Thus rous'd me, with rebuke of no light wrath
Should I have bid her hence her steps retrace
And in the palace bide: but, length of life
Is now a good turn serving thee!"

Hereto
The well-lov'd Euryclea urged reply:—
"I mock thee not, dear child! In all good truth
Ulysses is here come: His home,—again
I say it—he has reach'd; that wanderer
Whom ev'ry one within these palace walls
With contumely had spurn'd. Of this return
And of his presence here, Telemachus
For some time past was 'ware; but—(rightly judg'd)
This consciousness of his returning sire
He had to none reveal'd; that all the wrongs

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By these presumptuous suitors perpetrate
That parent might avenge."

Thus spake the nurse,
And,—all delight,—Penelope, as now
She from her couch upsprang, that aged one
In her embraces folded, while her eyes
A tear let fall, and thus in haste she spoke:—
"Come, then, dear nurse! If, of a certain truth,
He, as thou say'st, his home hath reach'd,—say, next,
How did he, all alone, upon this crowd
Of shameless suitors fall, while they the house
As constant inmates held?"

Hereto the nurse
Replying:—"Nought saw I,—and question none
I ask'd: The dying moans alone I heard
Of those who in that slaughter fell. We all
In panic fear were crouching in each nook
Of th' upper-chamber story, where the doors,
So well compacted, all protection gave;
For that thy son Telemachus as yet
No summons from that spot to move had brought:
His father, later in the day, the youth
To call me sent. Ulysses then I found
'Mid the dead bodies standing which all round
Were each on th' other lying;—the whole space
Of the stone pavement cov'ring. Joy, indeed,
Would all thy heart have fill'd, hadst thou but then
Thy consort seen, so like a lion smear'd
With blood and gore! The corpses of the slain
Are all in the court-entry stow'd; but, he
With sulph'rous exhalations, from a fire
On the hall-pavement kindled, hath thine house
All beauteous purified, and now at length
Hath bade me call thee to him: Follow me,—
That, after countless miseries endur'd,
Your hearts the transports of this joy may feel!
This hope, at last,—This hope, so long deferr'd,
Is now fulfill'd! On his domestic hearth
He, even he, the living man himself,
Hath placed his foot; and thee and his dear son
Hath he in this palatial mansion found; and here,
Its walls within, hath he on all that crew
That wooed thee for thy hand, but on himself
Base wrongs had heap'd, an ample vengeance ta'en."

Still, in reply, Penelope these words
To Euryclea spake:—"Oh! my lov'd nurse!
Boast not so proudly! laughing there so loud!
Full well thou know'st the greetings of delight
He would from all within these walls receive—
From me, how far beyond them all! From him
Our son, too; who to us existence owes.
But, these are no true tidings,—as thy lips
Have just declar'd them: Some one of the gods
Those princely suitors hath in death laid low,
The outrage thus resenting of a pride
Which griev'd all hearts, and of their many acts
Of sin most foul: for, to no living man
Of mortals born, the righteous or the vile,
Appear who might, paid they regard. The fate
They now have met, their arrogance provok'd.
But,—, for Ulysses! From Achaia's shores
Far distant, in all efforts to gain home
He utterly hath fail'd; and he himself
Hath to death's doom succumb'd."

But, Euryclea
Her speech resum'd:—"My child! What words are these
That from thy lips have pass'd? What! did thy thoughts
Forbid thee to believe that he who now
Upon his hearth is standing,—thine own lord—
Would e'er his home regain? But, slow indeed
Of all belief hast thou long been. Now, list!
Proof yet more sure will I before thee bring—
The selfsame scar which, with its ivory tusk
A boar once on him left, I with these eyes
While I his feet was laving, recognis'd:
And much I long'd, that moment, to thyself
My knowledge to impart: but, he my lips
With both hands closing (so discreetly wise
In that discernment was he) interdict
Upon me laid against my telling thee.
Oh! do but follow me! and I this gage
Will for myself lay down: If I deceit
Should herein use, thou by the worst of deaths
Shalt take my life."

Hereto Penelope
In answer spake:—"Dear nurse! Too hard for thee
To fathom are the counsels of the gods—
(Those beings that in life eternal live—)
Though thou indeed be shrewd: But, go we hence
My son to seek,—that I upon the heaps
Of those slain suitors may my glance, too, bend—
And look on him who kill'd them!"
With these words,
The upper chamber leaving, her descent  
She now began to make; and many a thought  
Was in her inmost heart revolving then,  
Whether of that dear husband from a spot  
Somewhat remote she first should question ask,  
Or, all at once into close presence brought,  
Her kisses on his head impress,—his hands  
Within her own enclose: but, when at length  
The hall she reach'd and the stone threshold cross'd,  
A seat she took from whence Ulysses' form  
By the bright fire illumin'd she beheld,  
As by the wall right opposite he sate.  
'Gainst a high column leaning was he seen—
His eyes upon the pavement fixt, as though  
In expectation musing whether first  
That noble wife at sight of him would speak:
But, long time sate she mute, as o'er her sense  
Amazement fell: At one time with a gaze  
Intently fixt she eyed him: then, on view  
Of that vile garb which on his body hung  
All recognition fail'd. Telemachus,  
At length, in tone reproachful spake, and thus  
The queen rebuk'd:—

"O mother mine! and, yet,  
Misnam'd 'a mother' now! who thus so hard  
In feeling sittest there,—why thus apart  
Remainest thou, nor at my father's side  
Thy place hast taken, or a question ask'd,  
Or with intensely curious searching words  
Thy scrutiny begun? No wife that lives
Book XXIII.]  \textit{Homer's Odyssey.}  

Would in a spirit so unkind have thus
From her own husband kept aloof,—a man
Who, after twenty miserable years
Of suff'ring, had his native land regain'd!
But, harder than a rock must be thy heart."

To him, in turn, Penelope:—“My child!
My mind is in profound amazement wrapt:
Nor accents can I utter,—nor of him,
The man who sits before me, question ask—
Nor gaze intent upon his features fix:
But, if of very truth Ulysses 'tis—
If he indeed his home hath here regain'd—
Far better than hereby shall we ourselves
Discern and recognise; for tests there are
By us well known, to others unreveal'd,
Which we shall try.” Thus spake Penelope;
But, great Ulysses smil'd, and to his son
These hurried words address'd:—“Telemachus!
See thou that in our palace this approof
Thy mother make; and with assurance strong
Will she far better know me. On this scene,
For that I filthly seem, and in this garb
So vilely am array'd, the present slight
She puts upon me; and not yet admits
That I am he, her own! But, take we thought
For what most prudent now may seem. The man
Who may a single citizen have kill'd
(One who but few behind him leaves, his death
Thereafter to avenge) to flight would take
And all his kindred leave and native soil;
But, we a city's garrison, as 't were,
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Have just destroy'd;—the prime, by far, of all
Whom Ithaca among her youth enroll'd:
Wherefore, on this, I pray thee, well reflect.”

Telemachus thus answer'd:—“Thou thyself
Alone, dear father! this can handle best;
For that the public voice thy counsels deem
The soundest ever; nor, 'mid living men
Would one be found that could with thee compete:
But, we with readiest zeal will in thy steps
Be followers found, and, to our pow'rs' extent,
I deem we shall no failing nerves betray!”

Where to the shrewd Ulysses thus replied:—
“This, then, as most expedient, I advise:
When ye, yourselves, ablution shall have made,
And tunics put upon you, this command
To all the handmaids in our palace give,
That they, too, quickly in array appear,
And let the gifted minstrel with his harp
Melodious wake the sport-exciting dance;
That they who on the wayside path that sound
As casual passers-by may hear, or who
In homes contiguous dwell, may mention make
Of some gay marriage feast;—lest, (ere we hence
To our well-timber'd land excursion make,) Wide rumour'd news of that most bloody death
Which all the suitors hath but now destroy'd,
Should through the city spread; and hereupon
We will with due reflection meditate,
And all the good per pend which in our hands
Great Jove may deign to place.”
Ulysses thus

His counsel gave; they heard him, and complied:
And each of them, ablutions having made,
His tunic donn’d: The women, in their turn
Array’d, stepp’d forth; and the inspirèd bard
His hollow harp began to sound, the love
Of dulceet song inspiring and of dance
That all might join reproachless: till the house,
In deep full tones that rose and fell around,
Its echoes sent from bounding feet of men
With fair-zon’d women jubilant, till a voice
From one, without that mansion, on whose ear
The sound was falling, thus exclaim’d: "’Tis true!
Some one, at length, hath this long courted queen
In marriage taken to himself! Poor fool!
She held not out till he should come whom first
She in her maiden prime her consort made;
Nor charge of his vast mansion hath she kept."
Thus casual comment made they--; of events
Just past, or how transpiring, ignorant.

Euronyme, the while, in his own house,
(Where oversight of all she held,) the feet
Of great Ulysses wash’d, and o’er his skin
The fluid unguents pour’d; a splendid robe
And tunic, too, around his form she drew.
And beauty, in large measure, from his brow
Minerva downward shed;—increase of height,
Increase of bulk bestowing. From his head
The hair like hyacinthine flow’rs in locks
That clust’ring curl’d she scatter’d. And, as when
Some cunning craftsman whom in various art
Both Vulcan and Minerva have endow'd,
The silver with rich gold surmounts, and work
Ornate therewith completes,—so, round his head
And shoulders did the goddess grace diffuse;
And, all the semblance bearing of some god,
Forth stepp'd he from the bath; and on that seat,
From whence he recent rose, again enthron'd,
He to the queen sate opposite, and thus
Appealing spake:—"O great and rev'rend dame!
The deities that on Olympus' heights
Eternal dwell a heart have given thee
'Bove all thy sex most obdurate: No wife,
Thyself except, would thus with stubborn heart
Have from her husband shrunk,—a man in grief
So long immers'd, and who his native soil
Had only in the twentieth year regain'd!
But, come thou, Euryclea! Nurse!—a couch
Prepare for me, that I in lonely rest
May on that bed recline: for, 'tis a heart
Of iron which beneath that bosom lies!"

But, to these words Penelope, in turn,
Rejoinder made:—"O great and noble sir!
'Tis in no haughty spirit that I thus
Myself comport; nor with delib'rate slight
Or with intense astonishment these eyes
Upon thee bend: No:—well can I recall
What my Ulysses was when from this isle
Of Ithaca he in that galley sail'd
By long-oar'd rowers mann'd. But, come thou, Nurse!
See that in that same chamber which, in strength
So durable, he (in the days long past)
Himself constructed,—thou a thick bed lay:
Throw coverlets and wool thereon, with cloaks
And rugs of tissue elegant."

She ceas’d;
Her lord hereby intent to test,—who thus
The wife who well her duty conjugal
Knew how to fill, in mournful tone address’d:—
"Lady! heart-grieving and most sad is this
Which thou hast just commanded! Who is it
That hath my bed to any spot remote
From where it stood, remov’d? An arduous task
Were it for any one, however skill’d,
That couch to shift;—except some god, indeed,
Who might with ease, if so he will’d, anew
Its station fix. But, not a man that lives,—
Though with the strength of youthful prime endow’d,
Could without toil extreme that couch displace.
A feature of great note is in its frame
(So curiously wrought) work’d up,—whereon my hand
Alone, and no one’s else, was occupied:—
Within our palace-court a leafy shrub
Of olive once uprose which in full growth
Was thriving on a stem which semblance bore
In thickness to some pillar: About this,
As round a centre, I a chamber built
Until with close compacted stones its height
Complete was crown’d, and a fit roof above
Was carried over: Here, too, were there doors
Close shutting and with well-join’d panels fram’d.
That olive then of all its leaves I stripp’d,
And having from the stem all branches clear’d,
I with sharp metal, deftly and with skill
The tools applying, to a polish bright
This pillar brought and by a standard's gage
I work'd it straight: and when the gouge's edge
The flatings had incis'd, this of my bed
The staunch support became: and from this stem
The work of polishing I plied till all
In brightness stood. With gold and silver then
And ivory designs was it inlaid,
And then did I a thong outstretched from hide
Of heifer cut, which in rich purple dyed
Shone brightly beautiful. This is the test!
The signal proof I here to thee uphold!
Not that I knowledge any yet have gain'd,
O Lady! whether still that bed stands firm,
Or whether some strange hand the olive's root
Excising have my rest set up elsewhere."

He ended: but her knees beneath her sank—
Her heart within her fainted, as the proofs
She now so well discern'd,—(which with such truth
Ulysses had detail'd)—and with a burst
Of tears she forward rush'd; and as around
His neck she threw her hands, his head she kiss'd
And thus exclaim'd:—"Bend not one angry look
On me, Ulysses! thou who hast a mind
That better far than all men can discern!
The gods a painful struggling life on thee
Impos'd, who, in their envy, grudg'd that we,
In union close abiding, should the bliss
Enjoy of our youth's prime, and stand at last
Upon the threshold of a good old age.
Let me not now thine anger feel, nor sense
Of indignation wake in thee for that
In these embraces fond I held thee not
When first mine eyes upon thee fell: for, doubt
Hath, day by day, with shuddering distrust
My bosom fill'd, lest some one with forg'd tale
Should hither come deluding me: so great
Their number is who, for mere lucre's sake,
The basest arts will use! That Argive wife,
Helen, great Jove's own progeny, had ne'er
Her love and self to a mere alien giv'n,
Had she but known that the brave sons of Greece
Would to that land restore her which at heart
She held most dear. Some deity it was
That to an act so vile her spirit mov'd!
No forethought took she for that dread event,
That dire first cause which whelm'd us, too, in woe.
But, now,—Since thou hast proofs so dear adduced,
(All in our chamber manifest) which none
Of mortal born save thou and I have seen,
The handmaid Actoris except, whom erst
My father gave me when I hither came,
And who our guarded chamber door hath kept,—
Thou hast conviction on me forc'd,—though hard,
Most hard, I felt it,—such belief to yield."

Thus spake Penelope,—in her lord's breast
Distressful passion 'wak'ning: He, all tears,
To that sweet consort clung who all the claims
Of duty so well knew:—And, as when land
A sight most precious to the swimmer's eyes
At length begins to loom, when in the deep
Some goodly bark by Neptune has been merg'd, 385
'Tmid sweeping hurricanes and billows dark;
And small their number is who in that wreck
By swimming on to shore the hoary waves
Of ocean have evaded, and with limbs
In spume saline encas'd, have on the beach
At length set foot, from dread destruction freed—,
Thus, in her sight delightful to regard
Seem'd great Ulysses, from around whose neck
Her fair white arms not yet had she releas'd:
And o'er their tearful joy had orient morn
All roseate shone, but for Minerva's thought—
On their behalf benignly provident—
Who the prolong'd night-hours, as to their close
They 'gan to wane, still further stay'd; and Morn
'Neath Ocean waves detain'd from her gold throne;
And those swift steeds forbade her yet to yoke—
Lampus and Phaeton—, coursers that the day
Draw on apace, and light convey to Man.

But, thus, at length, Ulysses spoke:—"As yet, 395
Dear consort! from the close are we remote
Of trouble that must try us: Toil extreme
And measureless remains: before us lie
Tasks heavy and most arduous—, but, still,
By me, of urgent need, to be perform'd:
For, this was by Tiresias' shade premis'd
When I to Pluto's mansions my descent
As an enquirer made,—the means to learn
How I and my companions might our homes
In safety reach. But, come! dear consort mine!
To bedward speed us—, that, ev'n now, our rest
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In slumber seeking, we the boon may gain
Of gentle soothing sleep."

To whom, again,
Penelope:—"Whenever thy desire
Such rest demands—(for that th' immortal gods
Have to this noble home and to the land
Of thy forefathers brought thee—) a fit couch
Shall surely be at hand:—but, since of toil
Thou hast just spoken,—and, maybe, 'tis God
That to thy mem'ry brings it—, come! these tasks
Detail to me:  At later date, methinks,
I should this knowledge gain,—but, harm there's none
If now at once I learn it."

To these words
Ulysses, in so many counsels vers'd,
This answer made:—"O unreflecting one!
Why thus, so earnest pleading, would'st thou still
Such narrative prolong?  But, of the past,
The story of my life, will I yet speak
And nought withhold, and, yet, thine heart herein
No joy will feel, nor mine; for that the Seer
To many a peopled city shap'd my course
Enjoining me in these my hands an ear
To bear along till I the realm should reach
Of men who of the sea are ignorant
And who of aliments with salt combin'd
Were never known to eat: who never saw
A dark-prow'd ship, nor those smooth-bladed oars
Which ships propel as pinions.  But, this sign—
A plain one, too!—he gave me (nor to thee
Shall it rest unreveal'd)—when in my path
   Another, on his travels, should appear
And tell me that, across my shoulder thrown,
   A winnowing-fan I carried, I thereat
   (For, so Tiresias charg'd me) was this oar
To set upright in earth; and having then
To Neptune faultless sacrifices burnt,—
   A ram, a bull, and boar,—the mate of swine—
My journey homeward take, and hecatombs
To those immortal deities who th' expanse
   Of Heaven inhabit, duly offer up:
This, too, he added, that from off the Sea
Death would hereafter light on me,—a close
Of life most calm; such as my days would end
By blest old age alone subdued, while all
That round me might be dwelling would the lot
Of thriving nations share. All this, he said,
Would in the issue happen.”

In reply
Penelope:—“If the immortal gods
Shall with the years of thine advancing age
A lot more prosp'rous blend, good hope remains,
Should ill befal, thou shalt uninjur'd flee.”

Such commune held they, while Eurynome
And th' aged Nurse, by radiant torches' light
Illumin'd, plied their task: A couch they spread
Of fitting thickness and of cov'ring soft;
And then, this done, in her own place of rest
The ancient matron hasten'd to recline,
And to the household's stations took her way.
But, she who o'er the chambers oversight
Continual held, Eurynome, a torch
In her hands bearing, led them to their couch,
And thence,—her guidance ended,—to her own
Forthwith repair'd, as they that ancient bed
And rest therein, all happiness, resum'd.

Meantime, Telemachus, the herd, and he
Who of the swine had charge, from further dance
Their feet withdrew, and bade the handmaids cease;
And in the shady palace shelter'd slept.

And now Ulysses and Penelope,
Their fill of gladness taking, new delight
In converse free and long recitals felt:
She, best of women, joying to relate
What outrages within her palace walls
She had to brook, as that pernicious throng
Of suitors she beheld who, in her name,
Such herds of oxen and such flocks of sheep,
The fatlings, kill'd; and from the stores of wine
Such lavish draughts had drawn. He, in his turn,
(The Chief, of Jove's own lineage sprung) the plagues
He, in his day, on fellow men had brought,
Now to his queen narrated, and the pangs
Of anguish he himself in many a toil
Had borne and struggled through: And she a charm
Eccstatic felt in list'ning; nor did sleep,
Until that tale was told, her eyelids close:

His conquest, first in order, he rehears'd
Of the Ciconian tribe, and how the coast
And fertile fields of the Lotophagi
He lighted on; and, next, the many wrongs
By Polyphemus done, and how the death
Of his brave comrades, whom the Cyclops seiz'd
And pitiless devour'd, he had aveng'd:
And how to Æolus at length he came,
Who genial welcome gave him, and from thence
Upon his voyage sped him, though the fates
Ordain'd that not as yet he home should reach—
The hurricane from his sea-track'd course
Back driving him, in sorrow most profound,
Across the teeming main: and how he next
To Æestrigonia came, whose city's gates
So widely sep'rate stood, and where his fleet
Was broken up, and all that with him sail'd,
His well-greav'd crews, their doom incurr'd;—himself
Alone life saving in a dark-ribb'd ship:
The guile, too, he describ'd, and divers arts
Of Circe, and the passage, in a bark
Of many rowers made, to the vast realms
Of Pluto, that he conference might hold
And counsel from Tiresias of Thebes
(A shadowy soul) obtain: and here did he
His comrades, all, behold: the mother, too,
Who gave him birth and when an infant babe
Had cherish'd him. In narrative he told
How he the Sirens' blended voices heard,
And reach'd those rocks "The Wand'ners" call'd, and then
The dread Charybdis and that Scylla, ne'er
By men, yet, scathless shunn'd; and how his crew
The oxen slaughter'd of the Sun; and Jove
From on high fulminant the flying bark
With fumid bolt had stricken, and the whole
Of his dear comrades in the waters sunk,
Though he, himself, from that dread doom was saved.
The story, too, Ulysses now detail'd
How to the isle Ogygia he was borne
And to the nymph Calypso came, who there
The inmate made him of her cavernous grot,
Eager to make him evermore her own;
How there she fed him, and assurance gave
That she would an immortal make him,—freed
Through all existence from old age; but, how
By no persuasion could she bend his will:
How, also, after suffering extreme,
The land of the Pheacinian race he reach'd,
Who in their hearts had homage to him paid
As though 'twere to some god; and with a ship
Convey'd him to the land, to him so dear,
That gave him birth; and brass and gold in gifts
Most bountiful, and raiments, too, bestow'd.
This was the theme he last had touch'd, when sleep
Of gentlest slumber, which his frame entire
To ease was yielding up, upon him fell,
And of all burd'ning cares that mind reliev'd.

But, now, to thoughts herefrom diverse her mind
Minerva giving, (as belief arose)
That both his couch and sleep to full content
Ulysses had enjoy'd—) from Ocean's depths
The golden-thronèd mother of the dawn
In zealous haste arous'd, that she her light
To mortals might dispense; and from his bed
Of softness rose the Chief, and on his wife
This charge enjoin'd:—"Dear wife of mine! we both,
After so many trials, have of grief
A surfeit felt: thyself—when 'twas thy wont
To fret and weep, in doubt of my return
Which could but load me with o'erwhelming toil;—
And Jupiter, and every other god
In bonds had fetter'd me, whose ev'ry thought
In carking care dwelt on my native land.
Now,—since we both upon that couch have lain
So long, so dearly wish'd for! let thy care
To such of all my substance be address'd
As here in this our palace is preserv'd.
But, as to all my sheep which that proud crew
Of suitors have devour'd, I will, myself,
From flocks around reprisals largely make,
And others shall the Greeks make good, till thus
Shall all my folds be stock'd therewith. My steps
To our well-timber'd land I now must bend,
My admirable father there to see,
Who day by day has o'er my absence mourn'd:
Now, upon thee, although with mind discreet
Thou be endow'd,—this further charge I lay;
For, at the sunrise will report be rife
About the suitors whom within these walls
I have destroy'd:—With all thy female train
Go thou to th' upper chamber, and thy seat
Therein select: look not abroad therefrom,
Nor questions ask of any."

Thus spake he,
And round his shoulders his bright armour braced:
Telemachus from slumber he awak'd,
The herdsman, and Eumaeus;—of each one
Desiring that with martial arms equipp'd
They would go forth. And they, in brazen mail
Accoutred, went compliant: and the doors
Wide op'ning, sallied forth,—Ulysses' self
The way before them leading. Day, indeed,
Was on the Earth in light; but, with all haste
In gloom enshrouding them, Minerva's will
Made Night,—and from the city led them forth.

END OF THE TWENTY-THIRD BOOK.
BOOK XXIV.

MERCUERY, worship'd at Cyllene's fane,
    His summons to the slaughter'd suitors' shades
Proclaiming stood; the beauteous golden rod
On high upholding at whose touch the eyes
Of men he charms at will, or out of sleep
(Their lids uprais'd) can wake them; and herewith
The shadowy throug he urged to move,—in front
On-leading; and with short sharp wailing cries
Most inarticulate, they follow'd close:
And as when in the inmost cavernous depths
Of some mysterious cave the flitting bats
Twitter in air, when, off the string where each
From the rock pendant to the other clings,
A single one hath fallen,—even thus
The shades of the defunct in huddled mass
With murmurs shrill but voiceless mov'd along,
As through the dank and dusky passages
The gracious Mercury led the way. The tides
Of Ocean and Epirus' whit'ning cliff
They first approach'd: the portals of the Sun
They next gain'd sight of, and the land of dreams;
And quickly on the meads of asphodel
Their entry made, where disembodied roam
The spirits of the dead. The soul they found
Of Peleus' son, Achilles: th' image, too,
Saw they of brave Patroclus, and withal
Antilochus the irreproachable,
And Ajax, who in mien and stature (next
To Peleus' noble son) of all Greeks else
Stood chief. But, all, around their leader group'd,
In gath'ring multitude began to throng;
When Agamemnon's soul, king Atreus' son,
With mournful plaint drew nigh, and at his side
Stood, hovering, as many as with him
Had in the palace of Aegisthus fall'n
And their own doom provok'd: To him forthwith
The soul of Peleus' son these words address'd:—

"O son of Atreus! 'bove all heroes else
We deem'd thee best of Jove belov'd,—of him
Who 'mid the thunder-bolts his pastime takes—
For that o'er numberless and noble men
In the wide population of that Troy,
Where we the Grecians such sharp trials bore,
Thou rul'dst supreme: but, fate most murderous
Was, of a truth, to prove thy doom: on thee
That destiny untimely fell which none
Of mortals born can shun. Oh! would that thou
In full enjoyment of that glorious fame
In which thou reign'dst hadst in the battle-field
Of Troy thy death-stroke met! Achaia then
United would thy monument have rais'd,
And great had been the heirship of renown
To thy lov'd son descending: but, behold!
Thy fate it was of death most piteous
To feel the stern arrest!

Hereto, in turn,
The soul of Atreus' son replying spoke:
"Godlike Achilles! Peleus' envied son!
Thou who from Argos distant to thy doom
Before Troy's wall didst yield, while in dense throng
The noblest heroes of the rival hosts
Of Troy and Greece on thy behalf met fate
And fell beside thee! On that great death-scene
At length lay'st thou in greatness, while the dust
In whirlwind swept around thee, now no more
For the war-horse or chariot to take thought.
All through that day we fought, nor interval
Had the grim war's encounter any known,
Had not great Jove with darkling clouds and blast
Of raging hurricane a truce compell'd.
And when from off that battle-field thy corse
Was to the moorings of our galleys borne,
Upon a couch we laid thee,—thy fair skin
With tepid water laving, and with oil
Anointing thee, while, all around, the Greeks
In bitter grief look'd on, and scalding tears
In floods were shedding; and each man his hair
To tonsure close submitted. And when now
Thy mother's ear the tidings reach'd, the deep
With the immortal sea-nymphs in her train
She instant left; and from the ocean-waves
Came forth a hollow and mysterious groan
At sound whereof a panic of great fear
On all the Grecians fell, and with a rush
Had they on board the fleet a refuge sought
But for the interpos'd restraint of one
In ancient lore and gen'ral knowledge vers'd,
Nestor, who long before had counsel giv'n
Which wisest seem'd, and who, with judgment sound
And exhortation, timely hearing gain'd:—

'Stay! Argives! stay—flee not, ye youths of Greece!
For this the coming of his mother is
From the great depths of Ocean, with her train
Of nymphs marine, immortal; to take thought
For her now lifeless son.' Such were his words,
And all the terror of those high-soul'd Greeks
At once was soothe'd: and round thy body stood
The daughters of the Old Man of the Sea
With shrill lament deploiring thee, and folds
Of raiment by no hand of mortals wrought
About thee casting. There, too, plunged in grief,
As each with her sweet voice the plaint of woe
To th' other's mournful wail responsive rais'd,
All the nine Muses stood: nor one dry eye
'Mid all the thronging multitude of Greeks
Would any one have noted; to such height
Of sorrow did the clear-voiced Muses' dirge
All hearts awaken. Sev'enteen nights and days
Th' immortal gods and we, mere mortal men,
Thy loss bewail'd; but, on the eighteenth day
Upon the flaming pile thy form we placed,
And many a fatten'd sheep and crook-horn'd ox
Around it slew; and, (in such raiment swath'd
As any one of the immortal gods
Might fitly have invested,—) to the fire
Wast thou consign'd, and in abundance rich
Of unguents and of honey didst thou lie.
Around that flaming pile where thy remains
Consuming lay, a countless warrior-band,—
Heroes of Greece that in her legion'd hosts
On horse contended and on foot,—in arms
Came rushing on, and round thy body ran
Till all the air the din perturbing felt.
But, when the flame of Vulcan had at length
Thy frame consum'd, we, in the matin light,
Thy white bones, O Achilles! gather'd up;
With purest wine and unguents laving them;—
And then a golden vessel in our hands
Thy mother placed;—the gift, she said, it was
Of Bacchus, and renown'd Vulcan's work.
In this, O great Achilles! treasur'd up
Were thy blanch'd bones, and with them blended lay
The bones of dead Patroclus, son renown'd
Of brave Menætius: all apart from these
Were those of lov'd Antilochus, whom first
Of all thy brother warriors in regard
After Patroclus we in honour held.
Then we, the hallow'd legions of that host
Which Greece had arm'd for war, a tomb immense
And glorious to behold around thee rear'd
High on a headland of broad Hellespont,
Where, from the far horizon of the main,
It well might be discern'd by men that still
Upon this Earth are dwelling, and by those
Thereon to live hereafter. And, this done,
Thy mother, upon pray'r to heav'n uplift,
To all the chiefs of Greece suggestions made
For contests most superb, the central space
Of a vast ring to occupy. These eyes
In times bygone the burial have beheld
Of many a hero, when, upon th' event
Of some great sovereign's decease, young men
Their loins have girded up, and for the test
Of prowess made them ready; but, at sight
Of these, with wond'ring admiration struck,
I paus'd to think how noble in display
These contests were which, for thy mem'ry's sake,
The silver-footed goddess had ordain'd:
But, by th' immortals wast thou held most dear.
Thus, ev'n in death, thy name ceas'd not to live,
Achilles! No! Wherever men shall breathe,
With glory shall they ever honour thee!
Yet, when the strife of war I had compos'd,
How did that triumph for my peace avail?
When Jove a doom so wretched had design'd
At base Aegysthus' hand, and my fell wife's,
To end my day of life!" Such interchange
Of speech they held: but great Jove's messenger,
(Who Argus slew) approach'd, the souls with him
Of all those suitors leading whom the arm
Of great Ulysses master'd: at which sight
Amaz'd, the heroes, as each sev'ral shade
They recogniz'd, as though to greet, approach'd.
Atrides Agamemnon's soul at once
Amphimedon, Melantius' son, descried,
Whom, in his mansion on th' Ithacian soil
Once occupied, he had as host receiv'd;
And first Atrides spake:—

"Amphimedon!
What doom hath thus upon ye fall'n, that all
The choicest of your peoples,—All in years
Co-equal as ye are, ye thus have reach'd
This darkness of the nether Earth? Ill fate
Alone could thus the State's most noble sons
Have singled out. Did Neptune in your fleet
This fell destruction work,—the adverse winds
And long waves rousing, or have ruthless foes
Upon the main land haply laid you low,
In gen'ral fight contending for their bulls
And the best fleec'd of all their sheep? or war
Have ye for citadels or damsels waged?
Now, speak to me in answer; for, I claim
To be thy guest. Say—canst thou not recall
How, at thine house arriving, urgent suit
I with the noble Menelaus made
Ulysses to gain o'er, that in our fleet
He should our expedition join to Troy?
A month entire on the broad out-spread main
We in that voyage spent, yet, hardly then
Had that Ulysses won, whose conqu'ring might
So many cities had in ruin laid."

The shade of young Amphimedon in speech
Responsive thus began:—"O noble son
Of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men,
Well can I these events at length recall,
And with recital full and most exact
The fearful tale will tell of what a death
We all were doom'd to die. The wife we sought
In marriage of Ulysses,—from her home
So long estranged: and to those nuptial ties
(However in her sight detestable)
Denial gave she none; but, of our suit
An end refus’d to make,—her sole design
Being in deadly doom to whelm us all.
But, this device, too, had she well contriv’d—
When in her palace a large web (whose threads
Were of the finest and exceeding wide)
She had erected, she began to weave,
And presently these words to us address’d:

‘Young men, who seek my hand—since that great chief
So like a god, Ulysses, is no more,—
Forbear to press my nuptials till this veil
I shall have finish’d, that the threads I use
May not with purpose unfulfill’d be spoilt.
A shroud is it for that heroic chief
Laertes, when that fearful doom is nigh
Which shall arrest and lay him out at length:
Lest any one among the dames of Greece
Upbraidings should upon me heap, if he,
Who liv’d in affluence, should lie entomb’d
Without such covering.’ These were her words,
And we, right-minded men, at once gave way.
But, hereupon, throughout the day she plied
Her work of weaving upon that vast web,
And when the night drew on, (with torches placed
Beside her,) she unloosen’d all the threads!
Thus through three years did she by stratagem
Evade us, and upon the Greeks prevail’d.
But, as the hours sped on, and this fourth year
At length was come, a handmaid (one of those
Well ‘ware of it) the fact to us reveal’d—
Aye, and we came upon her picking out
That glorious web: so that, against her will,
She only by constraint completed it.
But, when, at length that vast web having wov'n,
The robe she brought to view, and all her work
In cleansing streams had purified till bright
As Sun or Moon it shone,—some hostile god
Ulysses homeward, from some spot on Earth
To us unknown,—to the most distant point
Of Ithaca was leading, where the herd
Who kept his swine in his own homestead dwelt.
At this same hut arriv'd the well lov'd son
Of great Ulysses, having from a ship
(From sandy Pylos freighted) disembark'd.
And these, when they their plot had perfected
By death most dire the suitors to take off,
The noble city enter'd. Foremost came
Telemachus: His father last arriv'd,
Led by the swineherd, and a garb most vile
Upon his body wearing, as the guise,
In fact, of a low mendicant he bore
And of an aged man, who on his staff
Decrepit lean'd: and none of us who there
Were at that moment sitting, when he thus
All sudden came upon us—(not ev'n they
Who oldest were of all our company)
The man could recognize: nay, in harsh terms
And ev'n with blows we flouted him:—all which
He,—thus in his own palace rudely struck,
And with gross speech revill'd,—most patient bore,
Till, by great ægis-bearing Jove arous'd,
And his young son Telemachus the arms
(So splendid) of his father bearing off
In th' armoury to stow them and with bolts
To make that chamber fast,—he, all his wit
Inventive using, to his wife gave charge
The bow and white steel-pointed darts to fetch,
And bid the suitors herewith try their skill
And in a contest vie which should our doom
Most miserable seal, and death itself
Initiate. Not one of us the string
Of that stout bow could draw; for, far too weak
We all were prov'd: but when Ulysses' turn
To handle that stupendous weapon came,
We with one voice against the swineherd rail'd
And bade him not deliver it, though much
Telemachus insisted: but, alone
The youth prevail'd and his command enforced.
Then did the great Ulysses with his hands
That weapon grasp: with ease the bow he bent,
And through the rings of steel the arrow shot.
Then, to the threshold springing, up he stood
And, with terrific glances, dart on dart
Among our band sent flying, and the prince
Antinoüs kill'd: aye—, and with truest aim,
Those deadly shafts upon the rest he pour'd,
And suitor upon suitor fell around!
Most manifest it was that in that hour
Some one of the immortals was his aid
Immediate granting: for, with swift pursuit,
The palace through, upon our band they press'd,
On ev'ry side down hewing us, till moans
Most piteous and a bellow most uncouth
From smitten men arose, upon whose sculls
The death-stroke fell; and all the pavement round
Was with the carnage reeking. By such doom,
O royal Agamemnon, died we all,
Whose corse, at this hour, within the walls
Of prince Ulysses' palace lie; of rites
Funereal depriv'd;—for, not as yet
Have those who lov'd us in their sev'ral homes
Of this our fatal ending heard; the friends
Who, having from our wounds the clotted blood
Lav'd and remov'd, would on the bier their slain
Have duly laid, and their bereavement wail'd:
The last of honour which the dead can know."

To whom Atrides thus:—"O favour'd son
Of aged Laertes! with what gallant soul
Didst thou thy wife regain! What noble thoughts
That irreproachable Penelope,
Daughter of Icarus, must have maintain'd!
How true to that Ulysses whom in youth
She as her consort wedded, and whose worth
Shall in renown imperishable live
While the immortals will in beauteous song
The name of wise Penelope preserve.
Not thus did Tyndarus' base daughter shine,
Who with designs iniquitous the prince
Her consort slew,—him whom in maiden prime
She had in marriage wedded: scorn alone
Her mem'ry among men must ever mark,
For, she above all women vers'd in bane
Of deadly ill hath ignominy cast
Not on herself alone, but on the race
Of female kind in ages yet unborn,
Aye, ev'n on women active in all good."
Such interchange of speech did shade with shade
In Pluto's home, the depths of Earth, enjoy:
Meanwhile, Ulysses and Telemachus
And th' herds that with them companied, their way
From out the city taking, on the tract
Soon lighted of Laertes' well-till'd fields,
All which the ancient chief with heavy toil
Had gotten to himself. There stood his house,
And there its court with the out-buildings round,
Wherein his mancipated servants fed,
And lodgment found and rest, such works among
As best his fancies humour'd. There, too, dwelt
An aged Sicilian woman who with care
Assiduous in that rural homestead (far
From the great city) o'er the vet'ran watch'd.
At length Ulysses on his son and those
Who in their train were waiting this command,
As he dismiss'd them, laid:—"Proceed you, now,
And on this mansion's pleasant seat at once
Your entry make, and from the choicest swine
Make ready a repast: but, I, meanwhile,
Will proof of my dear father's memory make,
Whether he will with quick discerning eye
My face recall, or, after such long years
Of absence, fail to know me for his own."

Thus speaking, he his weapons in the hands
Of his attendants placed, who with all haste
The dwelling enter'd; but, upon the test
Intent by which his father he might try,
Ulysses to the fertile vineyard sped.
Dolius, indeed, he found not, as his steps
He bent to the great orchard, nor of those
Who serv'd him, any; nor of sons that there
Were to Laertes born. These from the spot
Were at that moment absent, mounds of stones
Collecting for the vineyard's rising wall:
And Dolius their way had led. Thus, lone
Upon that thriving vineyard's pleasant site
His aged sire he found,—around a plant
The earth upturning. In a filthy garb
With stitches marr'd and altogether vile
The old man was apparell'd: Round his legs
Some pads of ox-hide made and coarsely sewn,
To fend off thorns, he had secur'd; and gloves
Upon his hands he wore, the wounds to shun
By prickly briars threaten'd. On his head
A cap was set of goat-skin: In his heart
Regret and sorrow was he cherishing.

When the high-soul'd Ulysses, (who, himself,
So long with griefs had struggled) saw his sire
Thus by old age worn down, thus deeply griev'd,—
And near a pear-tree standing,—he shed tears,
And ponder'd musing, whether in his arms
At once t' enfold his father and a kiss
Impress and tell him all, how he at last
His native soil and home had reach'd;—or, first,
Of the aged man ask questions, and a test
On ev'ry point apply; and, best it seem'd,
When in his thoughts each counsel he had weigh'd,
With some few stinging taunts essay to make,
And with this bent a station face to face
Ulysses near his father took, who still
As round about the plant he dug, his head
Was downward bending; and when close the two
Together stood, the noble son thus spake:—
“Old man! with no unknowing husbandry
Canst thou an orchard cultivate: thy care
In order duly tends it, nor a plant
Here meets the eye, of fig-tree or of vine,
Olive or pear, nor plot of earth which seems
Unheeded and forlorn: But, on one point
Will I now speak to thee; and let thy heart
No indignation feel thereat,—, Regard,
Such as is due, provides not for thyself;
For, thine old age is wretchedness, indeed;
And, beside this, thou art most vilely clad,
And all thy garb is shameful: In such plight
Can no employer leave thee, for that thou
An idler art: thy features and thine height
No serving man’s presentment bear, for, thou
The likeness, rather, of a sov’reign prince
Displayest, and as one might be esteem’d
Who, when ablution he had made and food
Thereafter taken, should in slumbers soft
His rest enjoy: for, this the priv’lege is
Of men far gone in years: but, come, thus much
Recount to me, and say, in all good faith,
Whom servest thou? Whose orchard dost thou keep
And of this truth assurance give to me
That from thy words I may more certain feel
Of entrance into Ithaca, which one
But now appriz’d me I had rest
Not over wise, who, as I hith
My path was crossing, niggard of his speech
And of my own impatient when request
I made of him for tidings of my host,
Whether he yet be living and 'mong men,
Or dead, and in the realms of gloomy Dis:
For, this, in truth, my simple story is—
Give it thy heed, awhile, and hear me speak:
I once in my own well-lov'd fatherland
A man receiv'd who to my house had come,
Than whom not one, 'mid all the guests that since
From foreign shores my home have visited,
More welcome hath been deem'd. His race, he said,
In Ithaca took rise, and his sire's name
Laertes was, son of Arcesias.
A genial host I prov'd: I took him home,
And, ev'n while many in that home were lodg'd,
Hearty reception gave him, and such gifts
As well becometh it a host should make,
Bestow'd on him; sev'n talents of fine gold
I gave him, and a cup with flowers chas'd
And all in silver wrought;—twelve single cloaks,
As many works of wool-embroidery;—
Of beauteous vests and tunics, like supplies:
Wherewith went four fair women, all expert
In handiwork of faultless taste,—a group
He fain would make his own, and with him took."

Hereto, as from his eyelids dropp'd a tear,
His father made reply:—"Most certain 't is,
O stranger! that the country thou hast reach'd,
Of which thou question askest;—But, a throng
Of bold licentious men who all controul
Defy have here possession claim'd. In vain
Hast thou thy bounty's largess made, and gifts
Innumerable heap'd; for, would that thou
Among these citizens of Ithaca
Thy guest hadst living found! He then, in turn,
Thy parting hence had speeded, and with proofs
Most gen'rous of kind welcome striven thus
Requital full to make:—the privilege
Of him who in such bounty takes the lead.
But, tell me—and precisely say—what space
Hath laps'd since thou didst thine ill-fated guest,
My son, thus kindly greet?—If son it was,
Unhappy one! whom either in the deep
From friends and from his native land remote
The fishes have devour'd; or, among beasts
And birds on the mainland a prey he lies!
No mother (as his body she laid out)
Her sad lament rais'd over him, nor I,—
That father who with her had giv'n him life.
No,—nor did that discreet Penelope
His wife so richly dow'r'd, for her lov'd lord
All sorrowing grieve, and, as had well become,
His eyes beside the death-bed close: the due
Of homage to the dead. But, tell me this—
And, nought withholding, freely speak to me—
Who art thou? and from whence 'mid living men
Art thou arriv'd? Thy city's name? and those
Who gave thee birth? Where is that fleet bark moor'd
Which thee and thy good comrades hither brought?
Or, didst thou in some stranger's ship embark'd
Thy passage make o'er sea, and having t
To this our shore convey'd thee, are the
Ulysses thus:—"To all that thou hast ask'd
Full answer can I render. I, myself,
From Alybas am come, where an abode
I dwell in which enjoys no mean repute:
For parentage—I am Apheidas' son,
Who royal Polypemon's offspring was;
And I am nam'd Epheritus: but, fate
So order'd that, amid my wand'ring's wide,
I from Sicia, most unwillingly,
Should here have landed: but, right opposite
To certain pastures from the town remote
My ship is moor'd. More than four years have pass'd
Since Alybas Ulysses left, and thus,
Ill fated man! my country saw no more:
Yet, on his right, as he was setting sail,
Birds most propitious in their omens flew,
Whereat elate I sped him on his way,
And he like joy at that departure felt;
Our hearts the hope still nursing that as host
And guest we yet might meet, and splendid gifts
Thus again interchange."

He ended here,
And round that aged parent a dark gloom
Of sorrow 'gan to gather, as the dust
Of ashes gath'ring into both his hands
He held it up, and on his hoary hairs
With long deep sighs and moanings let it fall:
Whereat Ulysses' heart was wrung,—the gush
Of feelings that could no repression know
Ev'n in his nostrils throbbing, as his glance
On his lov'd father rested, and, as now
A spring he forward made,—in close embrace
He folded,—fell upon—him; and a kiss
Impressing thus exclaim'd:—"That man himself
Am I, O Father! even he of whom
Thou fain would'st tidings learn: and here at length,
Evn in the twentieth year, have I set foot
Upon my native soil! But, cease to weep—
Cease from this flooding sorrow;—for, with truth
I say it—and I well may haste to speak—
Those suitors have I in my palace slain,
And all their tyrant arrogance and acts
Of cruel outrage in their deaths aveng'd."

Laertes thus in answer: "If thou be
My very son Ulysses,—If thou here
At length be come, some signal mark produce
That I may yield belief." Whereto, in turn,
Ulysses:—"Let thine eyes, then, first this scar
Behold which, in Parnassus, when I there
My visit paid, a boar with its white tusk
Upon me left. That expedition thou
And my most honour'd mother had design'd,
That from Autolycus, her sire, the gifts
I might receive which, when in this thy home
A guest he liv'd, he promis'd should be mine,
And should by him be given:—but, again,—
I will the number of those trees detail
Which, when I yet was but a child, thy steps
Close following through the vineyard, and request
For each of them was making, thou, thyself,
Here in this orchard didst bestow on me.
We had just reach'd them, and their sev'ral names
Thou wast recounting, and I learn'd them all.
Thou gav'st me thirteen pear-trees—half-a-score
Of apple-trees, and forty which their crop
Of figs were bearing: Fifty rows of vines
Were, also, to be mine; each alley set
With plant of corn;—not but that grapes of kind,
Abundant in varieties, were there,
When at Jove's will the clusters heavy grew
And in due season ripen'd."

Thus spake he,
And now Laertes' knees beneath him sank,
And ev'ry nerve gave way, as he the proofs
So absolute, so certain all, discern'd—
And round his well-lov'd son his arms he threw
As to his breast Ulysses the aged sire,
Whose heart had fainted, press'd. But when his pow'rs
Reviving seem'd, and once again in life
His spirit rose, thus instantly he spake:—

"O Jupiter! of a most certain truth
Do ye immortal gods still reign sublime
In high Olympus thron'd, if true it be
That all these suitors have the penalty
Of their blind folly paid: still, no light dread
I cannot but yet feel, last the whole mass
Of our Ithacian citizens should here
Appearance quickly make, and far and near
The Cephallenian states by summons rouse."
To whom Ulysses:—"Courage take! nor thought
For all this, anxious, cherish; but our steps
To that fair mansion bend which nigh at hand
Upon this orchard, borden: for, thereto,
As in advance, sent I Telemachus,
The herdsman and Eumæus, that with speed
They might prepare our supper.” Thus much said,
The twain into that goodly dwelling pass'd,
And, there arriv'd, Telemachus, the herd
And swineherd found, provision large of meat
In portions sev'ring, as, in turn, the draughts
Of darkling wine they mix'd. In his own home,
Meantime, his aged Sicilian slave the feet
Of great Laertes wash'd, and with rich oil
Anointed him, and o'er his form a cloak
Of beauteous tissue threw; and (drawing nigh)
Minerva's self the People's Pastor's limbs
With ampler bulk augmented, and in strength
And stature nobler than before to view
The man entire endow'd. And from the bath
He issued forth,—Ulysses with surprise
His sire beholding as the simenance clear
He show'd of some immortal; and these words
In rapid speech he utter'd:—“Father mine!
Surely some god this grandeur to thy mien
And stature hath imparted!” Whereunto,
In turn, Laertes thus:—“O Father Jove!
Minerva! and Apollo! Would that I
Might but have yesterday's encounter join'd
With warrior's harness on my back,—that troop
Of suitors to do battle with! as when,
The sov'reign rule o'er Cephallenia's state
At that time swaying, Nerius' proud fort
On the main land I levell'd: Many a knee
Of that presumptuous crew beneath my might
Should there have bow'd in death:—and thou, my son! Should'st have with joy exulted.”

Such discourse

Held they awhile: and now, as each his work
Of preparation for the feast had done,
On couch or throne all took their seats, and hands
Upon the viands laid: and Dolius
The veteran and both the old man's sons
(From works of husbandry awhile withdrawn)
In company drew nigh them; for, the crone
Their mother, the Sicilian, who from birth
Had brought them up, their presence in the house
Had but now summon'd, and with watchful zeal
That aged man she tended,—by great length
Of years well nigh subdued. But, these, at sight
Of great Ulysses, as their wond'ring minds
To recognise him strove, upon that spot
In all amazement stood, till in the words
Of mild rebuke addressing them, the Chief
At length thus spake:—“Old man! at our repast
Sit thou and eat, and this intense surprise
Indulge no more; for, we long time within
Have here been ling'ring, on the meal intent
To lay our hands; and 't is for thee we wait.”

He ended thus:—and Dolius with step
Direct towards him hasted,—both his arms
In air extending, and, Ulysses' hand
Within his own compressing, on the wrist
A kiss impress'd, and thus excited spake:—
"O thou belov'd! Since, then, thou art return'd,
HOMER'S ODYSSEY.

And to our eyes restor'd who long'd for thee,
But hope had cast aside,—the gods themselves
Have hither led thee! Hail thou! and in joy
Of no light gladness triumph! May the gods
All happiness confer on thee! but, say—
That I may full assurance feel,—Doth yet
Penelope of this thy coming know?
Or, shall we, instantly, with all dispatch,
From hence informants send?"

Ulysses thus:—
“Old man! already is my queen aware:
Wherefore for this should’st thou take thought?” He
ceas’d,
And Dolius upon the shining seat
His place resum’d; and with like words his sons
Ulysses gladly greeted, and his hands
Grasp’d in their own, and to their father’s side
In order then return’d: and this repast
Was in Laertes’ mansion thus enjoy’d.

And now was rumour, like some messenger,
Throughout the city spreading, the dire death
And final doom proclaiming of that throng
Which had Penelope in marriage sought.
And they to whom the tidings came, from homes
In ev’ry quarter rush’d, and at the gates
Of prince Ulysses’ house with wail and moan
Began to gather round, and from the court
The corses of the slain remov’d, and each
To burial carried. Those among the dead
Who from the cities of far distant lands
HOMER'S ODYSSEY.

Had living come they to the barks consign'd
Of fishermen which each to his own home
Might o'er the waters bear. And then in groups,
With heavy hearts, the men of Ithaca
In their own Forum musterd. There arriv'd
And in full number met, Eupeithes rose
And speech began: for, on his mind a load
Of grief was lying, which oblivion none
Could ever know,—his son Antinoüs
Deploring, whom, of all the suitors first,
Ulysses slew, and on whose loss, as tears
Of sorrow he shed freely, he thus spake:—
"My friends! This man a deed of dreadful note
'Gainst Grecia's sons hath wrought: On board his fleet
So many of our host,—so gallant, all,—
He took with him! The ships were wholly lost,—
Our people in them, too: And others, now,
The very prime of Cephalenia's youth,
Hath he just slaughter'd. Come, then,—ere this man
Shall either in all haste on Pylos land
Or holy Elis, where th' Epeians sway,
Let us set forward; or, in years to come
We with disgrace shall all the past recall,
And all who shall survive us will with shame
The tale thereof receive. If on the heads
Of those who have our sons and brothers slain
We shall no vengeance wreak, no joy will life
My heart afford: No—by a speedy death
May I 'mid those that are no more be found!
But, let us hence depart, lest they their course
Forthwith pursuing should before us cross,
And our designs, thus passing, overtake.
He finished speaking, as the tears of grief
Anew he shed, and pity at that sight
Each Grecian heart was soft'ning. But 'twas now
That Medon and the heav'n-inspirèd bard,
From sleep arisen, left the palace-gates,
And to the crowd drew nigh. Their place at once
They in the centre took: and with the gaze
Of wonder all beheld them. Medon, first,
A man of thoughts discreet, thus earnest spake:—
“Hear me, awhile, ye men of Ithaca!
Not without sanction of the heav'nly will
Did prince Ulysses this great deed design:
I with these eyes did an immortal god
Beside him see,—in ev'ry single point
To Mentor liken'd: and this deity,
Before Ulysses at one moment stood
All confidence inspiring; then, in turn,
The suitors goaded on, till, in defeat
They fled on ev'ry side, and man by man
Lay low in death.”

He spoke, and pallid dread
On all that heard him fell. Then, Master's son,
The aged Alitherses, who of all
That there assembled stood alone could ken
The past and future, with judicious mind
His thoughts revolv'd, and thus began to speak:—
“Give ear, you Ithacans! to what my lips
Are now about to utter: The past deed
Was through your own sin perpetrate. No heed
Paid ye to me or Mentor, ('shepherd' nam'd
Of all his people) when we warning gave
Your sons' insensate arrogance to check,
Who in their own blind folly had a wrong
Atrocious wrought when they the treasur'd wealth
Conspir'd to squander, and the wife to shame
Of a right noble man, who never more,
As they conceiv'd, would to his own return.
Let this, then, be our course: As I suggest,
So yield ye your compliance; and no steps
Aggressive take we, lest some man of you
Should a disastrous fate upon his head
By his own act draw down."

Thus argued he;
But, with loud clamours forth they rush'd,—a mass
Of more than half the multitude: the rest
Were in the Forum left: for, favour none
Found Medon's words with those whose ready mind
Eupeithes' counsel follow'd. These in haste
To arm themselves rush'd forth, and when in mail
Of shining brass their limbs they had array'd,
A crowd before the spacious city's wall
Their numbers form'd; Eupeithes, at their head,
Leading them in their madness: he, himself,
Proclaiming that the murder of his son
Was now to be aveng'd; though to the spot
Whence this advance he made, he never more
Was fated to return, but, on his head
His doom invok'd.

To Jupiter, meanwhile,
The son of Saturn, Pallas thus appeal'd:—
"O father mine! Thou son of Saturn! King
Of kings supreme! reveal to me who ask,
What counsels art thou in thy secret mind
Perpending? Would'st thou horrid war provoke
And conflicts fearful? or, to friendly pact
Hast thou the mind of either foe inclin'd?"

To whom the cloud-compelling Jove:—“My child!
Why hast thou question ask'd hereon of me?
Say,—hast thou not thyself this counsel plann'd,
That, to his home restor'd, Ulysses thus
Should on his foes wreak vengeance? As thy will
Would have it, act! But, how it best beseems
I here announce to thee: Since on this band
Of suitors great Ulysses is aveng'd,
Let him, henceforth, when oaths of fealty
Shall have been duly sworn, his sway resume:
But, of slain sons and brothers be 't our care
Oblivion to induce, that, as of old,
Each man may love his fellow; and let wealth
And peace, henceforth, in plenteousness abound!"

Thus speaking, he the mind, already prompt,
Of Pallas mov'd; and from th' Olympian heights
Down rushing went she forth.

But, now, all wish
O'er their repast to linger having ceas'd,
Ulysses thus advis'd:—“Let one of you
Step forth without, and with observance mark
Who may approach be making.”

Thus spake he;
And, with his words compliant, forth there went
A son of Dolius, who, as foot he placed
Upon the threshold, saw the hostile crowd
In close approach advancing, and with speed
He hail'd Ulysses—"They are nigh at hand!
Without delay our weapons let us seize!"
Uprose they all;—and in their armour stood:
Four at Ulysses' side, and the six sons
Of Dolius, and with these Laertes, too,
And Dolius, themselves, their arms took up,
Grey-hair'd with age, albeit, and, of need,
As fighting men accoutred; but, when brass
That brilliant shone around them they had girt,
The gates they open'd wide, and sallied forth,—
Ulysses leading on: and now again
Minerva, child of Jove, as Mentor's form
And voice she took upon her, at their side
In presence stood; at sight of whom the heart
Of great Ulysses joy'd, and with these words,
In the same instant, his lov'd son he hail'd:

"Telemachus! now wilt thou full proof make
Of what thou art.—Advancing to attack—
Where battle rages, and the bravest hearts
Are soon discern'd—thou wilt upon the race
Of thy forefathers no dishonour cast,
Who, ev'ry man of us the wide world through,
In might and manly prowess have surpass'd."
But, hereto, young Telemachus, in turn:
"Dear father! If, indeed, thy wish it be—
Thou shalt bear witness that (the word was thine)
No shame will I upon thy race entail."
Thus spake he, and Laertes, overjoy'd,
Exclaim'd aloud:—"O my lov'd friends! what day
Is now arriv'd! Great happiness is this!
My son, aye, and my grandson, too, would vie
In claims to merit!"

But, Minerva, now,
As to the agéd Chieftain she drew close,
In exhortation spake:—"Arcesias' son!
Of all my comrades best belov'd!—with pray'r
Unto the virgin with the gleaming eye
And to great Jove uplift, poise thou with speed
That spear of thine which such long shadow casts,
And hurl it forth!" She spake:—and with vast might
His frame at once endow'd; and, when the pray'r
To great Jove's daughter he had offer'd up,
He pois'd, and then drew back, and then in air
Hurl'd onward that long shafted spear whose point
Right through Eupeithes' brass-cheek'd helmet drove
Which nought could that dire weapon's wound avert,
Through all entirely penetrant. With the crash
That mark'd his heavy fall, the clang of arms
Resounding rung. And on the foremost ranks
Of combatants Ulysses and his son
(That youth in fame uprising) onset made
With swords assailant and with two-edg'd spears;
And now would they have all of them laid low
And from all hope of voyage home cut off,
Had not the child of Ægis-bearing Jove,
Minerva, with a voice sublime exclaim'd,
And that fierce multitude to silence hush'd,
As thus she spake:—"From this revolting strife
Cease ye! O men of Ithaca! From hence
Your forces each withdraw, that with all speed,
But, without further bloodshed, ye may part."  

Thus spake the goddess, and a panic dread
Its paleness cast o'er all. From ev'ry hand
Of that affrighted multitude the arms
Immediate flew, and, at the voice on high
Divinely speaking, prostrate all fell down,
Ere to the city, trembling for their lives,
The host of them retreated. Then with shout
Terrific did Ulysses onward rush,
As, like some lofty soaring eagle rous'd,
He all his might collected,—when, behold!
The son of Saturn from on high a bolt
Of thunder hurl'd which at the goddess' feet
(His blue-eyed daughter's) smould'ring fell; and then
Minerva thus to great Ulysses spake:—

"O thou, who in resources infinite
Aboundest! Aged Laertes' glorious son!
Ulysses! hold thy hand, and cease this strife!
Which, else, a war would wage on either foe
The selfsame bane entailing—; lest that son
Of Saturn, Jove himself, who from afar
In thund'ring loud is heard, his wrath condign
May haply make thee feel."

Thus Pallas spake,
And he, submissive hearing, at his heart
A joy exultant felt; as Pallas, now,
The daughter of the aegis-bearing Jove,
Again in Mentor's likeness,—both in form
And in his voice's tone—resemblance nice
Maintaining, seal'd the mutual pledge of Peace.

THE END.