

keep for yourself and be master in your own house. I pray that no man may ever come to force you against your will, and rob you of your property, so long as Ithaca is a place to live in.

"But I do beg you, my good sir, tell me about that stranger, where the man came from, what country he claims, where he was born, who in the world he is. Does he bring a rumour of your father's return? Did some private business send him here like this? How he jumped up! Gone in a moment, and did not wait for us to make his acquaintance! Certainly he did not look a bad sort of fellow."

Telemachos answered him:

"Eurymachos, I am sure my father will never see home again. I believe no rumours any more, wherever they come from; I take no notice of any divinations, if my mother calls in a diviner and asks him questions. That is an old family friend from Taphos; he says he is Mentes, the son of a clever father Anchialos, and prince of the seafaring Taphians." That is what he said, but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess.

So they turned to dancing and joyous singing, and made merry. They were still at it when the darkness of evening came on them; then off they went, each to his home and bed.

And Telemachos went up to bed in his room, which was built high up over the wide courtyard, with a view all round, and his heart was full of thoughts. To light him on the way a faithful old servant carried a blazing torch. She was Eurykleia, daughter of Ops Peisenoridēs; Laertes had bought her long ago at his own cost, when she was in her first youth, and he gave twenty oxen for her. He treated her as well as he did his own faithful wife; but he did not lie with her, for he wanted to avoid any quarrel with his wife.

This was the woman who carried the torch for Telemachos; she loved him more than any other of the household, and she had been his nurse when he was a little tot. He opened the door of the handsome room and sat down on the bed, and stript off his soft shirt, which he gave into the wise old woman's hands. She

folded it up and smoothed it out, and hung it on a peg beside the bed-frame, and left the room, pulling the door to by the silver crow's-beak, and ran home the bolt by pulling the strap.* There all night long, covered up with a soft fleece of wool, he thought over the journey which Athena had told him to go.

BOOK II

How the Council Met in the Market-place of Ithaca; and What Came of It

DAWN CAME, SHOWING HER ROSY FINGERS THROUGH the early mists, and Telemachos leapt out of bed. He dressed himself, slung a sharp sword over his shoulder, strapt a stout pair of boots on his lissom feet, and came forth from his chamber like a young god. He called the criers at once, and told them to use their good lungs in summoning the people to Council.

The criers did their part, and the people came. As soon as they were assembled, he went down to the Council himself, with a strong spear in his hand, and a couple of dogs for company, which danced round him as he walked. He was full of enchanting grace, and the people stared at him in admiration. Not for nothing Athena was his friend.

He took his seat in his father's place, and the reverend seniors made room.

The first speaker was Aigyprios, a great gentleman,

*The bolt was inside, with a strap fastened to the end, which passed through a hole to the outside; pull the strap and the bolt runs home inside. The door-handle is the crow's-beak; the islanders still use the term crow (*koráki*) for a drop-catch at the top of a casement window.

bent with age and full of ripe wisdom. He also had lost a son, who had sailed with Prince Odysseus in the fleet to Ilios, Antiphos the lancer; the savage Cyclops had killed him in the cave, in fact he was the monster's last supper. Three other sons the old man had. One of them, Eurynomos, was among the wooers, and two kept their father's farms; but he could not forget the other, whom he mourned unceasingly, and now there were tears in his eyes for his son's sake as he began to speak:

"Listen to me, men of Ithaca, for I have something to say to you. There has been no session of our Council since the time when Prince Odysseus sailed with the fleet: and now who has summoned us? Is it a young man or one of the elders? Was it some private need that moved him? Or has he news of some threatening raid, and now wishes to report what he was the first to hear? Or is there some other public matter which he wishes to bring before us? He has done well, I think, and deserves our thanks. I pray Zeus may grant him that blessing which his heart desires."

These words seemed a good omen to Telemachos, and encouraged him. He made no delay, for he was eager to speak, so he stood up before the Council. The speaker's staff was put in his hand by Peisenor, the public crier. Then Telemachos first addressed himself to the old Councillor:

"The man you call for is not far away, reverend Sir, who summoned the people together, as you shall soon know—I am that man, and I am in great trouble of my own. There is no news of a threatening raid to report; I have no advantage of you there, and there is no other public matter which I wish to bring before you. This is my own private need, trouble which has fallen upon my house—two troubles, indeed: first, I have lost a good father, who once was king over you that are present here, and he was like a kind father to you, and now again there is something much worse, which I tell you will soon utterly tear to pieces my whole house, and destroy my whole living. My mother is besieged by those who would marry her against her will, own sons to those men who are chief among you here; they will not go

near her father's house, and lay a formal proposal before Icarios—the thought makes them shiver!—for then he might collect the bridal gifts for his daughter, and give her to the man of his choice, the one he likes best. No! it is our house they visit regularly every day, kill our cattle and sheep and fat goats, hold high revel and drink my sparkling wine, quite reckless: that is the way it all goes. For there is no man at the head, no one like Odysseus, to drive this curse from the house. You see, we are not able to drive it away ourselves. Sorry champions we shall prove, if we try; we have little skill for the combat.

"Indeed I would defend myself if I had the strength! What they have done is quite intolerable, there is no decent excuse for the ruin they have made of my house. *You* ought to be ashamed in your own hearts, you ought to think what others will say about it, our neighbours, who live all round us; you should fear the wrath of the gods, who may be provoked by such wickedness to turn upon you. I appeal to Olympian Zeus, and Themis, who dissolves the parliaments of men, and summons them! Let me be, my friends! leave me alone to be worn out by my bitter sorrow—unless I must suppose that my father Odysseus, my good father, was a cruel man and ill-treated the nation, and that is why you are cruel and ill-treat me, out of revenge—why you encourage these men.

"I should like it better if *you* would eat up my treasures and my flocks. If *you* would eat them up, perhaps there might be some redress. Then we might go round the town, dunning you, imploring, demanding our goods again, till you should give all back. But now! I am helpless, all I can do is to suffer the humiliations which you heap upon me!"

He spoke angrily, and now he dropt down the staff on the ground and burst into tears. All the people were sorry for him, and they all sat silent, not one had the heart to say an unkind word in reply; only Antinoös answered and said:

"You are a boaster, Telemachos, and you don't know how to keep your temper! What a speech! Cry shame on us, fasten the blame on us, that's what you want to do! Blame us indeed! Your own mother is at fault. You

cannot find fault with us for paying court to your mother. She is a clever piece indeed! It is three years already, and the fourth will soon go by, since she has been deluding the wits of the whole nation. Hopes for all, promises for every man by special messenger—and what she means is something quite different. Here is the latest trick which came out of her meditations.

"She set up a great warp on her loom in the mansion, and wove away, fine work and wide across, and this is what she told us: 'Young men who seek my hand, now that Odysseus is dead I know you are in a hurry for marriage; but wait until I finish this cloth, for I don't want to waste all the thread I have spun. It is a shroud for my lord Laërtēs, against the time when all-destroying fate shall carry him away in dolorous death. I should not like the women of our nation to cry scandal, if he should lie without a winding-sheet when he had great possessions.'

"That is what she said, and we swallowed our pride, and consented. There she was all day long, working away at the great web; but at night she used to unravel it by torchlight. So for three years she deluded the whole nation, and they believed her. But the seasons passed on, and the fourth year began, and a time came when one of her women told us, one who knew the secret; we caught her unravelling that fine web! So she had to finish it, because she must, not because she would.

"And as for you, this is the answer of those who pay court to your mother, a plain answer to you and to all the nation: Send your mother out of the house, tell her to marry whichever her father says, whichever she likes herself; but if she will go on and on teasing the young men of our nation—with her head full of pride to think how Athena has been generous to her beyond all others, given her skill in beautiful work, and good intelligence, and cleverness such as never was heard of; even in the old stories—those women of our nation who lived long ago, with their lovely hair, Tyro, Alcmenē, Mycenē with her fine coronals—not one of them had the clever wits of Penelopeia: but this clever turn was a wicked trick. To put it plainly, we will go on eating up your living

and substance just so long as God allows her to keep the mind she has now. She is making a great name for herself, but for you—good-bye to a great fortune! As for us, we will not go to our lands or anywhere else, before she marries whoever may please her best out of the nation!"

The boy stood up to him, and said:

"Antinoös, it is impossible for me to turn out of doors the mother who bore me and brought me up; my father is somewhere in the world, alive or dead, and it is a hard thing for me to pay back all that dowry to Icaros, if I send away my mother of my own will. Her father will be bad enough, but heaven will send me worse, for my mother will call down the dread Avengers upon me, if she leaves home; and men will reproach me—so I will never say that word. And if your own minds have any fear of such a reproach, go out of my house, get your dinners elsewhere, eat your own food turn by turn in your own houses. But if you think it meet and right to consume one man's goods without paying, carve away; I will appeal to the everlasting gods, and see whether Zeus may not one day grant me vengeance. There would be no ransom then, in that house you should perish!"

So spoke Telemachos: and Zeus, whose eye can see what is far off, sent him a pair of eagles, flying from a lofty mountainpeak. On they flew down the wind awhile, side by side, soaring on wide-stretched sails; but when they came right over the place of debate, they took a turn round; then hovering with quick-beating wings they stared down on the heads of all, with death in their eyes; and tearing at their cheeks and necks with their talons, away they darted to the east across the houses of the town. The people were amazed, when they saw this sight with their own eyes; and they pondered in their hearts what was to come of it.

Then up and spoke a noble old man, Halithersēs Mastoridēs; for there was no man of his day who came near him in the knowledge of birds or in telling what omens meant. He spoke to them in this fashion, out of an honest heart:

"Hear me now, men of Ithaca, for I have something

to say. I speak especially to those who would wed, for upon them a great woe is rolling; Odysseus will not long keep away from his friends, but I think he is already near, planting the seed of death and destruction for all these men. Trouble there will be also for many others of us who live in the island of Ithaca. But let us consider in good time how we can stop these men; or let them stop themselves—indeed, the sooner the better. I am no novice in prophecy, that is something I understand. As for that man, I declare that all has been fulfilled as I told him, when our people embarked for Ilios and with them went Odysseus, the man who is ready for anything and everything. I said he would have many troubles, and lose all his companions, and after twenty long years, unknown, he would come home again: and see now, all is being fulfilled."

Then another man got up, Eurymachos, and he said: "Off with you, old man, go home and prophesy to your children, or they may come to grief sometime! In this matter I am a better prophet than you are. Any number of birds are flying about under the sun, and not all of them are birds of omen. At any rate, Odysseus is dead, far away from this place, and I wish you had died with him! Then you would not be here making a long speech as God's mouthpiece; you would not unleash this angry Telemachos! No doubt you expect to find something from him when you get home, if he doesn't forget it. But I tell you this, and I will do it too: he is a young man, and you are full of antediluvian wisdom, but if you cajole him and inflame his passions, he shall be the first to suffer.

"As for you, sir, there will be damages which you will be sorry to pay; a heavy burden shall be yours. For Telemachos, this is my advice which I give before you all: Let him tell his mother to go home to her father's house; they will arrange a marriage, and collect the bridal gifts, plenty of them, as many as there ought to be for a beloved daughter. For I do not think the young men will cease their importunate wooing until that is done, since we fear no one in any case—not Telemachos, certainly, for all his flood of words, and we care nothing

for your prognostications, respected sir; they will come to nothing, and only make you more of a nuisance than you were. Yes, his wealth shall be wasted and consumed, and there shall be no retribution, as long as that woman keeps putting off her wedding and wasting our time! Here we are, waiting day after day, rivals for a great prize, never look at another woman, when you would expect each man to go a-wooing for himself!"

But Telemachos still kept his wits about him, and he replied:

"Eurymachos, and all you other gentlemen who pay court to my mother, I make no more appeal to you, I have no more to say: for now the gods know, and all the nation.—But I beg you to lend me a swift ship and twenty men, to carry me there and back. For I am going to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to find out about my father and why he is so long away; perhaps some one may tell me, or I may hear some rumour that God will send, which is often the best way for people to get news. Then if I hear that my father is alive and on his way back, for all my wearing and tearing I can bear up for another year; but if I hear he is dead, and no longer in the world, I will come back to my own home and build him a barrow, and do the funeral honours in handsome style, as I ought, and give away my mother to another husband."

He said his say and sat down; then up rose Mentor, friend and comrade of the excellent Odysseus, to whom Odysseus had entrusted his whole house when he sailed away; they were to obey the old man, and he was to keep all safe. This is what he said, and very good sense it was:

"Listen to me, men of Ithaca, and hear what I have to say. Let no man henceforth take the trouble to be kind and gentle, no sceptred prince; let none try to be fair and right, but let him be always harsh and do what he ought not to do: since no one remembers the noble Odysseus, not one out of all the people he ruled like a kind father. I do not grudge at the proud men who pay their court, if they act with violence in the mischievous bogery of their minds: they stake their own heads when they devour the house of Odysseus with violence, and

think he will never come back. But now it is you, the others, who make me ashamed; how you all sit mum, when you ought to denounce them and hold back a few young men when you are many."

Leocritos Euēnoridēs answered him:

"Mentor, you mischief-maker, you madman! What a thing to say! drive them on to stop us! One against many is done, a many's too many for one, in fights for a supper! Why, even Odysseus himself, if he came back to Ithaca and found a sturdy company feasting in his own house, and thought of driving them out of hall—his wife would have little satisfaction, however much she may have missed him, but then and there he would die an ugly death, if he's one against many! What you say is all wrong. Come now, men, make yourselves scarce, away to your lands every one. As for this fellow, Mentor shall help him with his voyage, and Halithersēs, since they have been friends of the family for ages. But I think he will have to sit here for a good long time and wait for his news in Ithaca; he will never bring off that voyage."

With these words he broke up the assembly forthwith. They all made themselves scarce and went each to his own house, and the pretenders went back to the house of Odysseus.

But Telemachos went by himself to the seashore. There he washed his hands in the grey brine, and offered a prayer to Athena:

"Hear me, thou who yesterday didst come a god into our house, who didst bid me take ship over the misty sea, and inquire if my father is coming home, and why he is so long away: all this the people prevent, but most of all my mother's wooers, men full of wicked pride!"

Such was his prayer; and Athena came to his side, like Mentor in shape and voice; she spoke to him, and the words were plain and pointed:

"You will not lack either courage or sense in the future, Telemachos, for we can see now that there is a drop in you of your father's fine spirit. What a man he was to make good both deed and word! I tell you your journey shall not be hindered or stopped. But if you are not his son and Penelopeia's, then I do not expect you

to succeed in what you wish to do. Few sons, let me tell you, are like their fathers; most are worse, a few are better. But since you will lack neither courage nor sense in the future, and since the mind of Odysseus has not wholly failed in you, there is hope for the future, and I tell you that you will succeed.

"Think no more now of the plots and plans of those who woo your mother, for there is neither sense nor justice in them. They know nothing of the death and destruction which is near them, so that in one day they shall all perish. But the journey which you desire shall not be long delayed, when you have with you such an old friend of your father as I am; for I will provide a swift ship and go with you myself. You must just go home, and mingle with the company; get provisions ready, and put them all up in vessels, wine in jars, and barley-meal, which is the marrow of men, in strong skins; I will go at once and collect volunteers among the people. There are many ships in the island of Ithaca, both new and old; I will look round and find you the best, and we will make all ready and launch her upon the broad sea."

So spoke Athena daughter of Zeus; and Telemachos did not stay long after he heard what the goddess said. He set out for the house, with a heavy heart; and he found the proud pretenders there, skinning goats and singeing fat pigs in the courtyard. Antinoös laughed, and made straight for Telemachos and grasped his hand, and called him by name, and said:

"You are a boaster, Telemachos, and you don't know how to keep your temper! Do not trouble your head about plots and plans, but just go on eating and drinking as usual. Our people will manage all you want, I am sure, a ship and the best crew to be found; they will give you a quick passage to sandy Pylos, if you want to hear news of your father."

Telemachos pulled his hand from the hand of Antinoös, and said:

"Antinoös, with your friends rioting all round it is impossible to enjoy a meal in peace and quiet. Is it not enough, men, that you have been carving up a good

portion of my possessions all this time, while I was still a boy? But now you see I am grown up, and I hear every one talking about it, and so I find things out; now I feel my own strength, and I mean to do my best to bring retribution upon you when I come back from Pylos, or now in this country! I mean to go, and no one shall prevent me, even if I must go as a passenger, since I am not to have my own ship and crew: I suppose that suited you better."

When he said this the others mocked and jeered at him, and you might hear one of the young bullies saying, "Clear enough, Telemachos has murder in his mind! He will bring help from Pylos, or may be from Sparta, since he is so terribly set on it. Or perhaps he wants to go as far as Ephyra, to bring some deadly poison from that rich land, and put it in the cup, and kill us all."

Another of the young bullies would say, "Ah, but who knows? Once aboard ship he may be carried far from his friends, and perish just like Odysseus! That would double our trouble, for we should have to divide all his goods among us! But we would give the house to his mother, for herself and the man who would marry her."

So much for them. But Telemachos went down to his father's storehouse, a room lofty and wide where heaps of gold and bronze were kept, with clothes in coffers and plenty of fragrant oil: jars of delicious old wine stood there, full of that divine drink without a drop of water; there they stood in rows along the wall, ready for Odysseus when he should come home again after all his troubles. The place was closed in by double doors, right and tight. The housekeeper was on the spot day and night, and she took care of everything; and a very clever woman she was, Eurycleia the daughter of Ops Peiseno-rides. Telemachos called her to the storehouse, and said:

"Come, Nanny, draw me some kegs of this fine wine, the nicest you have, next to that which you keep so carefully for your noble master, unhappy man! all ready in case he should come from somewhere or other, if he can get clear of death and ruin.—Fill me a dozen, and put a stopper on each. And a few skinfuls of barley-meal, good skins properly stitched, twenty measures of

good barley-meal ground in the millstones. Keep this to yourself, and let all the stuff be put ready together. This evening I mean to fetch it away as soon as mother has gone upstairs to bed. For I am off to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to see if I can hear any news of my father."

When he said this, his dear old nurse cried aloud in distress, and said in her downright way:

"Eh, what on earth put that into thi head, love? Why wilta go to foreign parts, and tha an only son, and reet well loved? He's dead, far away from home, my blessed Odysseus, in some foreign land! Aye, and if tha goes, they'll up and plot mischief against tha by and by, to murder thee by some trick, and all that's here they will share among 'em. Stay thee where tha bist, sit down on thi property; what's the sense of wanderen over the barren sea and maybe happenen an accident?"

Telemachos only said, "Cheer up, Nanny, this is God's will, let me tell you. Now promise me on your oath not to say a word to mother for ten or twelve days, unless she asks herself and hears I have gone, or you'll have her crying and spoiling her pretty skin!"

When he said that, she took her oath; and this done with all due solemnity, she wasted no time—drew off the wine into kegs, packed the barley-meal in the skins right and tight; then Telemachos went off and joined the roysterers.

Meanwhile the goddess Athena was doing the rest. She took on the form of Telemachos, and tramped the length and breadth of the city, took aside each of the men and told her tale, then directed them to meet in the evening beside the cutter. The boat itself she begged of Noëmon, the sturdy son of Phronios, and he agreed with all his heart.

The sun went down, and the streets were all darkened. Then Athena ran the boat down into the sea, and put in all the gear that ships carry for sailing and rowing; she moored her at the harbour point, and the crew assembled, fine young fellows all, and she set them each to work.

But she had something else to do. She made her way to the house of Odysseus, and there she distilled sweet

sleep upon them all, and dazed them as they drank, until they let the cups drop out of their hands. So they got up and went to find sleep, dispersing all over the city, for they did not sit long after sleep fell on their eyelids. Then Athena called out Telemachos in front of the great hall, taking the shape and voice of Mentor, and said to him:

"Telemachos, your men are all ready and furnished cap-a-pie, sitting at the oars, waiting for you to start. Come, let us go, and waste no time about it."

With these words she led the way briskly, and he followed in her footsteps. And when they came to the ship and the seaside, there he found the bushy-headed boys on the beach, and he spoke to them, full of dignity and strength:

"This way, friends, let us fetch the provisions; they are all ready and waiting in the house. My mother knows nothing about it, nor any of the servants, but only one single soul has heard our plan."

So he led the way, and they went with him. They carried all the stuff down to the ship and put it on board, as Telemachos told them to do. Telemachos himself went on board following Athena; she took her seat on the poop, and he sat beside her. The others cast off the hawsers, and themselves came on board and sat down on the benches. Athena with her bright eyes glinting sent them a following wind, right from the west, piping over the purple sea. Then Telemachos called to the men, and told them to put a hand to the tackling. They lifted the mast and stept it in its hollow box, made it fast with the forestays, hauled up the white sail by its ropes of twisted leather. The wind blew full into the bellying sail, and the dark wave boomed about the stem of the ship as she went; so on she sped shouldering the swell, travelling steadily on her way. When they had made ~~saug~~ all the tackle about the ship, they set before them brimming bowls of wine, and poured libations to the gods immortal and everlasting, but most of all to the bright-eyed daughter of Zeus. So all night long and in the dawning the ship cut her way.

BOOK III

What Happened in Sandy Pylos

THE SUN LEAPT OUT OF THE LOVELY BAY, HIGH INTO THE brazen sky, to give light to the deathless gods and to mortal men all over the fruitful earth; and they came to Pylos, the stately city of Neleus. The people were on the shore, sacrificing jet-black bulls to the blue-crested god who shakes the earth. There were nine messes, five hundred sitting in each mess, and nine bulls were laid out before each. They had already distributed the tripes, and they were burning the thigh-pieces for the god, when the ship came sailing in. The crew brailed up the sail and trussed it, and moored ship, and went ashore; Telemachos came ashore too, after Athena, who broke the silence by saying:

"Telemachos, there is no need to be shy, not a bit. You know why you have come on this voyage: to ask news of your father, how he died, and where he was buried. Come along, then, straight to Nestor; let us learn what he really thinks and knows about it. You must speak to Nestor yourself, and ask him to tell you the whole truth; he has too much good feeling to deceive you."

Telemachos answered:

"Mentor, how can I go, how can I greet him? I have no practice in polite speeches; then again, a young man must be shy when he addresses an older man."

Athena with a glance of her keen eyes replied:

"Some things you will think of yourself, Telemachos, some things God will put into your mind. Not without the blessing of heaven were you born and bred, I think."

With these words, Pallas Athena led the way briskly,