

and he followed. They came to the place where the Pylians were all gathered in their messes; there was Nestor, sitting with his sons, and all around were his companions preparing the feast, with meat broiling and grilling on the spits.

When they saw strangers, they came up in a body and welcomed them, and bade them be seated. Nestor's son Peisistratos reached them first; he grasped both their hands, and seated them in front of the spread, upon soft fleeces laid on the sands beside his brother Thrasymedēs and his father. Then he gave them their plates of tripe and chitterlings and poured wine into a golden cup; he raised his cup and called upon Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus Almighty, and said:

"Pray, now, sir, to Lord Poseidon, who owns this feast which you have happened to join. When you have poured your drops* and offered your prayer as usual, pass on the cup to your friend. He too, I think, will join our prayer to the immortals: for all men need the gods. But he is younger, he is of my own age, so I will give you the golden chalice first."

So saying, he put the cup full of delicious wine in her hands; Athena was pleased that he knew what was proper, and gave her the golden goblet first. At once she prayed earnestly to Lord Poseidon:

"Hear me, Poseidon Earthshaker, and grudge not to accomplish these things for us who pray to thee! To Nestor first and his sons vouchsafe renown; and next, to all the Pylians besides grant a gracious requital for this splendid sacrifice! And grant that Telemachos and I may have a safe return, when we have done that for which we came hither with our swift black ship!"

And while she prayed, she was doing her part to fulfill it. Then she passed the fine two-handled cup to Telemachos, and the son whom Odysseus loved made his prayer. The others took the broiled meat off the spits, and distributed the portions, and all had a famous feast.

*The libation of "grace before drink." The attendant poured a few drops in the cup, the drinker spilt them upon the ground with a prayer; then the attendant filled the cup, and he drank.

But when they had taken as much as they wanted, the old cavalier Nestor addressed them:

"That is better; and now I may be allowed to put a few questions to my guests, and ask who they are, since they have enjoyed their meal in peace. Who are you, sirs? Where do you come from over the waters? Is it business, or are you voyaging at random, like the sea-robbers who voyage about and risk their lives to bring trouble in foreign parts?"

Telemachos now plucked up courage; for Athena herself gave him the courage to ask about his father's delay, that he might show he knew how to behave in society. He said:

"May it please your Majesty, Nestor Neleiadēs! You ask where we come from, and I will answer. We come from Ithaca, and the town under Mount Neion; my business is private, not public. I seek any news I can hear anywhere in the wide world of my father, the noble Odysseus, the ever-patient man, who they say fought by your side when you took Troy. We have heard about all the others who were in the war, we know where each of them died, to our sorrow; but as for that man, we have not even heard that he is dead; such is the will of Cronion. For no one can tell us for certain when he died, whether he was brought low on land by his enemies, or at sea amid the billows of Amphitritē. That is why I am here to appeal to you.

"Tell me, if you please, of his lamentable fate, if you saw it with your own eyes, or if you have heard any one speak of him on his wanderings: for he was born to sorrow if any man ever was. And do not soften your words out of pity, to spare me, but tell me plainly what you saw of him. I beseech you, if ever in word or deed my honourable father made you a promise and did it before Troy, where you Achaians suffered so much, remember that now for my sake, and tell me truth."

"My dear boy," answered the fine old cavalier, "how you bring it all back to me! what we reckless fellows did go through! How we ranged over the misty seas in our ships for plunder, wherever Achillēs led us, how we fought round the great city of King Priam—ah! there

and then all our best men were slain! There lies Aias, the man of war, there lies Achillēs; there is Patroclos, prudent as a god in counsel; there is my own dear son, a man strong and without blemish, Antilochos, swift of foot beyond all, and a fighter; and what a world of troubles we suffered besides these—what mortal man could tell them all? Not if you would stay here five long years, or six long years, could you hear the whole story of the troubles which the brave Achaians there endured—you would soon be tired and go back to your own country!

"Nine long years we were busy, scheming and plotting and planning in every possible way, and only just managed it, thanks be to God! All that time no one came near Odysseus in resource, for that grand man was first by a long way in all plots and plans and schemes, your father, I say, if you are really his son—if! you amaze me, young man: when I hear you speak, I might be hearing him, you could not imagine a young man *could* speak so like him! All that time I and Odysseus never took different sides, either in parliament or in council: we were of one mind; with good sense and wisdom we advised the people always that which promised the best success. Again, when we had sacked the tall city of Troy, and embarked, and God scattered the fleet, ah, then Zeus ordained a lamentable home-coming for us; for not all were sensible and fair-minded, and so a great many of them drew upon themselves an evil fate, from the destroying wrath of the Bright-eyed Daughter of the Thundering Father, who made a quarrel between the two princes of the house of Atreus.

"When these two called the people to parliament—quite wrong, most improper, at sunset of all times—and they all came heavy with wine—the two of them explained why they had summoned the people. Then Menelaos advised them to see about the return voyage, and Agamemnon did not like it at all. He wanted to keep the people back and to make solemn sacrifice, hoping to calm the dire anger of Athenaia; poor fool, he did not know that she was not likely to yield, for the mind of the everlasting gods is not quickly turned. So there the two stood, bandying angry words! All the men-at-arms

jumped up, and there was the devil of a noise in the place, as each backed his own opinion.

"All through the night there was a lull; but the angry passions remained, for Zeus was preparing an unhappy issue from this trouble. Then at dawn, some of us launched our ships, and put our goods on board with the captive women drest in their best. About half stayed on shore with King Agamemnon; half of us embarked and rowed away.

"Quickly the ships ran on, for God made smooth the great billows of the deep. We came to Tenedos, and offered sacrifice there to the gods, longing to get home; but Zeus had no thought yet of home for us—hard god! to put a quarrel among us again for the second time! There some turned back their ships—a fine trim-built lot they were, led by Prince Odysseus; for that deep and clever man wished to take the side of Agamemnon once more. But I went on with all the ships that were left, since I knew that providence had trouble in store for them. With me went the warrior Diomedēs, and he brought his companions; then, better late than never, Menelaos came after us, and caught us up at Lesbos, while we were hesitating about the long voyage straight across; whether to go seaward of rocky Chios close along the island of Psyria, keeping the island on our left, or inside of Chios, past windy Mimas.

"We prayed God to show us a portent; and he showed us one, and told us to cut straight across the sea to Euboea that we might escape our troubles the quickest way. A whistling wind began to blow; the ships ran at a great rate over the water, and in the night they put in at Geraistos.* There we sacrificed many rump-slices of bulls to Poseidon, in thanks for traversing that long stretch' of sea. It was the fourth day when the party of Diomedēs Tydeidēs brought their fine ships to harbour in Argos; but I held on for Pylos, and the wind never fell from the time when the god first let it out to blow.

"So I came home, my dear boy, without news; and I know nothing of the others who were saved of the army,

*The south promontory of Euboea.

or those who were lost. But all the news I get while I sit in my hall, you shall hear, as is right and proper, and I will not hide anything. There was a good return for the Myrmidons, they say, those champion spearmen, who were led by the doughty son of proud Achillēs; a good return for Philoctêtēs, the famous son of Poias; all the company of Idomeneus were brought back safe to Crete, all who survived the war, and the sea did not take one of them. But Agamemnon you have heard of yourselves, although you live far away; how he came back, and how Aigisthos plotted a pitiable death for him. Well, he paid for it, sure enough, in horrible fashion. What a good thing it is that a son should be on the spot when a man is dead! That son, you see, took vengeance upon his father's murderer, the traitor Aigisthos, who killed his famous father. You too, my friend, be brave, for I see you are handsome and tall; and then those to be born in future generations will praise you."

Telemachos answered:

"May it please your Majesty, Nestor Neleiadēs! He did indeed take his vengeance, and his fame shall be carried down in the world for many generations to come. How I wish that the gods would invest me with power as great as his, to take vengeance on the men who woo my mother, for their outrageous violence, for the intolerable insults of their scheming brains! But no, the Spinner has spun me no such happiness for my father and me: we must just be patient, come what may."

Then Nestor answered:

"My friend, since you have spoken of it yourself and recalled it to my memory, they do say that there are a great number of men in your house, seeking your mother's hand in marriage against your will, full of evil schemes. Tell me, do you submit willingly to this? Do all the people dislike you because of something said by the voice of God? Who knows if some day he may come and take vengeance for their violence, whether alone, or all the people with him! If only Athena Brighteyes would choose to show her love to you, as she used to care for that glorious man Odysseus in the Trojan land, among all those hardships which our nation had to

suffer!—for never have I seen the love of the gods so manifestly shown as when Pallas Athena stood manifestly by his side: if only she would show love to you like that, and care for you, many a one of them would have something else than weddings to think of."

Telemachos answered:

"Sir, I do not think that will happen yet; what you say is too great; it amazes me. Never could I hope for that, even if it should be the will of God!"

Then Athena said:

"Telemachos, what words you have let slip between your teeth! It is easy for God to bring a man safely home if it be his will, even from a long way off. I would choose to suffer great tribulations, and then live to return home, rather than to return safely, and then die beside my hearth; as Agamemnon died, by the treachery of Aigisthos and his own wife. But death is the common lot, which not even gods can keep from a man they love, as soon as the lamentable fate of dolorous death gets hold of him."

Then Telemachos answered:

"Let us say no more of this, Mentor, although we are not free from sorrow. The day of his return can never dawn, but the immortals have already ordained death for him and a black fate.

"Now there is something else I want to ask Nestor, since he knows men's manners and minds better than others do; they say he has been King through three generations of men, so that he has quite the look of an immortal to me—Nestor Neleiadēs, tell me the truth: how came my lord King Agamemnon to die? Where was Menelaos? How did the traitor Aigisthos manage to murder him, since the murdered man was far stronger? Was he not in his own city of Argos? or was he somewhere else, and so the man took courage and killed him?"

Nestor answered him:

"Indeed I will tell you the whole truth, my boy. Surely you can surmise yourself what would have happened if Aigisthos had been found in the place by King Menelaos when he came from Troy? Dead he would have been,

not a clod of earth dropt upon him, but dogs and vultures would have torn his corpse to pieces, thrown on the ground outside the city walls: not a woman in the whole nation would have wept for him; for it was a monstrous crime he plotted.

"We were over there doing our arduous duties, firmly fixed; he at his ease in a corner of that land of horses, bewitching Agamemnon's wife for ever with his talk. At first she would have nothing to do with the shameful business, I mean Queen Clytaimnestra; for she was not really a bad woman. And there was that singing-man by her side, who was put in full trust by Agamemnon when he went to Troy, to look after his wife. But when the chains of fate bound her fast and she must needs be mastered, then the man took his minstrel to a desert island, and left him prey and plaything for the carrion birds; and the woman he took to his own house, one as willing as the other. Many thank-offerings he burnt on the gods' holy altars, many precious things he cast into the fire, woven stuffs and gold, for success in a great enterprise which he had never in his heart expected to carry out.

"Well then, we both set out from Troy, Menelaos and I, in great contentment together; but when we came to holy Sunion the headland of Attica, Phoibos Apollo attacked the helmsman of Menelaos and slew him with his gentle shafts, while the man held the steering-oar between his hands and the ship was running free; that was Phrontis Onetoridēs, champion of the world when the stormy winds do blow. So for all his haste to go on he stayed there until he could bury his comrade and perform the funeral rites.

"But when he followed us over the purple sea, and the ships came in their course to the steep cliff of Malea, Zeus Almighty decreed a hard road for him to travel: he poured out a hurricane of whistling winds and monstrous swollen waves mountain-high. Then he cut the fleet in two, and brought part of them to Crete, where the Cypriots are settled about the stream of Iardanos. There is a smooth cliff running down steep into the sea at the verge of Gortyn, over the misty deep, where the wind

from the south-west drives a great wave against the western headland up towards Phaistos, and a little bit of stone keeps off the great wave. So far they came, and then the men escaped death with great trouble; but the ships were all smashed to pieces on those rocks by the sea.

"The other ships, five in number, were driven to Egypt by wind and water. While Menelaos was there, collecting a heap of gold and commodities, and sailing his fleet about into foreign parts, that was the time when Aigisthos was making his murderous plans at home; and after he killed Agamemnon he reigned seven years in all the wealth of Mycenê, while the people were cowed under his rule. But in the eighth year came his ruin; Prince Orestes came back from Athens, and killed his father's murderer, the traitor Aigisthos, because he had killed his famous father.

"When Orestes had killed him, he gave a funeral feast to the people over his hateful mother and Aigisthos the coward: and on that very day arrived that stout champion Menelaos, with a heap of wealth filling his ships. Now my friend, don't go a-roaming too long far away from home, and desert your property, and leave those blustering fellows in your house like that; or they will eat up everything and share your wealth among themselves, and your journey will end in nothing. Go to Menelaos, that is my advice and bidding. He has lately come from abroad, from such places as he could never really expect to return from, when you think how at first the storms drove him astray over all that expanse of sea; even the birds take more than a year to cross it, for it is wide and dangerous too. Off with you at once, ship and crew and all; or if you prefer the land, horses and car are at your service, my sons are at your service, and they shall be your guides to lovely Lacedaimon, and there you will find Menelaos. Beg him yourself to tell you the truth; but he will not deceive you, for he knows what is right and proper."

When he finished, the sun set and darkness came. Then Athena spoke, with her bright eyes glinting:

"Sir, you have told your tale well. Now then, cut the

tongues of sacrifice, and mix the wine, that we may pour libations to Poseidon and the other immortals, and think of our rest; it is high time now, for the light has gone down into the west, and it is not fitting to sit long at a feast of sacrifice, but to pass on."

The others listened, and did as she said. Attendants poured water over their hands; boys filled the mixing-bowls to the brim, and served wine to all after pouring in the first drops; they cast the tongues on the fire, and the company standing poured out one after another the first drops in honour of the gods. And when the libation was done and they had drunk as much as they wished, Athena and the handsome lad made as though to return to their ship; but Nestor would not have it: he said at once:

"Zeus and all the immortal gods forbid that you should leave me and go off to your ship, as if I were a pauper without a rag, as if I had not plenty of blankets and rugs in the house, nothing for myself to sleep soft on, nothing for my guests! Come, come, I have blankets and rugs of the best. No, no, that man's son shall not lie on a ship's deck, his very own son, so long as I am alive, and while children are left after me to entertain the guests who may come to my house!"

Athena answered him:

"That is well said, dear and reverend sir! It is yours to command, and Telemachos must obey, as is right and proper. Well, he shall stay with you and sleep in your mansion; but I will return to our ship, to hearten the men and make them do their duty. You see I am the only man of full years among them; the rest are all of an age with our brave young Telemachos, and come as volunteers out of affection for him. So I will just lie down in the old black ship for this night; but to-morrow I mean to visit the Cauconians. Those good fellows owe me a claim, no new thing and no small thing. And our friend here—since he has come to your house, lend him your son and a carriage, and let him go on; and lend him horses, the fastest and strongest you have."

With these words, Athena departed, taking the shape of a sea-osprey. All that saw it were amazed; the old

man was amazed, when he saw this with his own eyes, and he grasped Telemachos by the hand and said:

"My friend, I do not think you will turn out a coward or a craven, if in your young days you have gods to escort you! For this is one of those who dwell in Olympos, none other than the very daughter of Zeus, most glorious Tritogeneia, the same who used to honour your father amongst our people.—O Queen, do thou be gracious and grant me an honourable name, myself and my children and my beloved wife! And I in my turn will sacrifice to thee a yearling cow, broad-browed, unbroken, which no man has ever brought under the yoke: such a one I will sacrifice to thee, and cover the horns with gold."

Thus he prayed, and Pallas Athena heard his prayer. Then Nestor led them all, sons and godsons, to his fine mansion-house. And when they came to the King's house, they sat down in order upon chairs and settles. Then the old King had a mixing-bowl filled with delicious wine, eleven years old when the cellarer cut the cap and opened it. Such was the wine which the old King sent for; and as he sprinkled the sacred drops, he prayed earnestly to Athena daughter of Zeus Almighty.

They poured their drops, and drank, and separated, each to his own room to sleep. But royal Nestor took Telemachos in hand, and left him to sleep there in the echoing gallery; and by his side the famous lancer Peistratos, a born leader of men, one of his sons who lived in the mansion still unmarried. The king slept himself in a recess of the lofty hall, and there the Queen his wife prepared bed and bedding.

Dawn showed her rosy fingers through the mists of the morning: King Nestor arose from his bed, and went out to the smooth stone benches which were before his lofty doors, all white and brightly polished. There in former days had sat Neleus his father, wise as a god in counsel; but he long since had yielded to fate and gone down to Hadès, and now Nestor sat there as warden of the nation, holding the royal sceptre. About him gathered all his sons as they came from their rooms: Echephron and Stratios, Perseus and Aretos, and the young

Prince Thrasymedēs. Last came the sixth, Peisistratos, a fine young fellow; and they led out Telemachos to a seat, looking like a young god. Then Nestor addressed the company:

"Quickly, my dear boys, carry out my wish, that I may find favour with Athena first of all the gods, who showed herself manifestly at our rich sacrifice yesterday. Be quick! let one go into the country for the heifer, and let the herdsmen in charge drive her in; one go to the ship of brave Telemachos, and bring up all his companions, leaving only two; one summon Laërcēs the goldsmith, that he may cover the heifer's horns with gold. The rest of you stay here together, and tell the women indoors to get ready a good meal in my house and set the places and collect the firewood and bring clean water."

Then they all bustled about. The heifer came from the country; the companions of Telemachos came from their ship; the smith came with all his tackle, the tools of his trade, anvil and hammer and handy tongs, which he used to work the gold: and Athena came to receive the offering. Old King Nestor provided the gold, and the goldsmith covered the horns, fitting the gold neatly to please the goddess with a handsome sight. Stratios and young Echephron led the heifer by the horns. Aretos came out of his room, bearing in one hand the jug of water in a bowl worked with a flower-pattern, and in the other hand a basket with the sprinkling-meal. Thrasymedēs the young soldier was there, holding a sharp axe to cut down the heifer. Perseus held the bowl for the blood. Old King Nestor began the rite with hand-wash and barley-meal, and as he did it he prayed earnestly to Athena, while he cast the forelock into the fire.*

When they had prayed and sprinkled the barley-meal, at once Thrasymedēs approached and struck the blow; the axe cut through the sinews of the neck, and the strength went from her. Then all the women raised their alleluia, daughters and sons' wives and Nestor's honoured consort Eurydicē, eldest of the daughters of Cly-

*The barley-meal was sprinkled on the victim's head; a few hairs were plucked from the head and cast into the fire.

menos. The other sons lifted up the victim from the ground, and held it on their shoulders; Peisistratos cut the throat. Then the red blood flowed and life left the body. So they broke her up forthwith, and cut out the rump-slices in proper form, and wrapt them one slice between two pieces of fat, and laid other slices of raw flesh upon these. The old King burnt them upon the faggots, and poured over them sparkling wine; the young men stood by his side, holding their five-prong forks in their hands. Then, after the rump-slices were burnt, and they had divided the tripes, they chopt up the rest and ran the pieces on spits, and grilled them holding the ends of the spits in their hands.

Meanwhile Telemachos had been bathed by Polycasta, the youngest daughter of Nestor Neleiadēs. And when she had bathed him and rubbed him with olive oil, she gave him a wrap and a tunic to wear; then he stept out of the tub, as handsome as a young god. He came to Nestor's side, and sat him down by the King.

The others had now roasted the fleshy parts and taken them off the spits, and they were sitting down to their meal; good men looked after them, pouring out the wine into golden cups. And when they had eaten and drunk all they wanted, old King Nestor addressed them:

"My boys, hurry up with the horses and put them under the yoke, that he may get on his way."

They did as they were told, with a will; quickly they put the swift horses under the yoke. And the house-keeper packed in bread and wine, and meat such as kings eat by the grace of heaven. Up climbed Telemachos into the splendid car; beside him was Peisistratos Nestoridēs, who got into the car and took hold of the reins. He whipt up the horses, and they left the tall castle of Pylos, and flew on nothing loath into the plains. So all day long they shook the yoke up and down.

The sun went down, and all the ways became dark; and they came to Pherai, to the house of Dioclēs the son of Ortilochos, whose father was the river-god Alpheios. There they rested for the night, and he gave them the gifts that were a guest's due.

But when Dawn showed her rosy fingers again out of