

the mists, they put the horses to and mounted the car; he whipt up the horses, and the pair flew along. By and by they came to a plain full of growing wheat, and there at last they were near the end of their journey: so well did the swift horses carry them on. The sun went down, and all the ways became dark.

BOOK IV

What Happened in Lacedaimon

SO NOW THEY WERE IN THE DEEP VALLEY OF LACEDAIMON, and drove up to the gate of the illustrious King Menelaos. They found him holding a feast with a large company of friends, for his daughter and for his admirable son at the same time, in his own house. He was giving his daughter to the son of Achillès the invincible; he had promised to give her first in Troy, and now the gods were bringing off the match. He was sending her with horses and chariots to the far-famed city of the Myrmidons, where the young man was King. He was bringing from Sparta the daughter of Alector for his son; a fine young man, called Megapenthès, the son of sorrow,* late-born and the son of a slave-woman; for the gods had given Helen no more children after her first daughter Hermionê, a girl as lovely as golden Aphroditê.

And so there was feasting in the lofty hall, all the neighbours and friends of Menelaos, enjoying themselves mightily. In the company was a minstrel, playing divinely upon the harp; and as he struck up his tune, a couple of tumblers were making wheels all over the place.

The two young men stopt their horses before the gateway of the mansion; and out came my lord Eteoneus,

*So named from the faithlessness of Helen.

one of the King's men-in-waiting. When he saw them, he went into the house to tell the news to the King, and as he reached him he said in plain words:

"Here are two strangers, your Majesty. They look like young princes. Tell me if we are to put up their horses, or send them to find entertainment elsewhere."

This made Menelaos very angry, and he said:

"I didn't know before that you were a fool, Eteoneus Boëthoïdês! but what you say now is a child's foolish prattle. How often have we eaten the food of a stranger, you and I, in other parts of the world, on our long journey home, praying that Zeus might somewhere give us rest and peace at last. Go and take out their horses, and bring the men in to share our feast."

The man shot out of the hall, and called the others to lend him a hand. They took the horses from under the yoke, all in a sweat, and tied them up at the stalls, and gave them a feed of spelt mixed with white barley. Then they tilted the car against the inner wall of the doorway, and led the men into the stately hall.*

How astonished the strangers were at what they saw round them in this royal house! for a brilliance like the light of sun or moon filled the lofty rooms. When they had gazed in delight at everything, the servants took charge of them and led them to the bathroom, bathed them and rubbed them with oil, dressed them in woollen robes and tunics, and conducted them to seats beside Menelaos. A maid poured the hand-wash out of a golden jug over a silver basin, and set a smooth table by their side. A dignified housewife brought them bread, and laid ready all sorts of vittles, for she did not spare her store. A carver set out plates of all sorts of meat, and put golden cups ready at hand. There stood their host, with his golden-brown hair piled in a glossy mass upon his head, and falling in a thick bush over his shoulders. He received them with the words:

"Break your bread, and be welcome. After you have dined, you shall tell us who you are, for you do your

*The body of the car was lifted off the wheels, and each part put away conveniently.

parents credit: you must come of a line of princes ruling by divine right, since no bad stock would produce men like you."

As he said this, he set before them a good juicy chuck from the roast sirloin with his own hands, the portion of honour which had been set before himself; and they helped themselves to the good things that lay ready. Then after they had taken all they wanted to eat and drink, Telemachos moved his head close to Nestor's son, that the others might not hear, and said,

"Just look, Nestoridēs, dear old boy. Look at the bronze gleaming all over these resounding halls! the gold, the amber, the silver, the ivory! I think Zeus must have a palace like this in Olympos, when I see all these treasures that no tongue could tell! I am fairly amazed!"

Menelaos overheard this, and said:

"My dear boys, no one can be compared with Zeus, let me tell you. His halls are imperishable, and so are his treasures. But there may be a man to match me, or there may not. I offer no opinion.

"Ah, yes, I have suffered much and wandered far, while I collected my treasures in my ships, and came home after seven long years. I went to Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt; I saw the Ethiopians, the Sidonians, the Erembans; I went to Libya, where the lambs are born with horns ready made! Yes, the ewes wean their lambs three times every blessed year! There neither prince nor shepherd lacks cheese or meat, or fresh milk, the ewes always have milk in their dugs all the year round!

"And while I was in those parts and collecting all this wealth, a man was murdering my brother, who looked for anything but that—by the machinations of his accursed wife. So you see not for nothing I got my royal state (you will have heard all this from your fathers, whoever they may be)—since I had very much to suffer, and left a fine domain to be ruined; well laid out indeed it was, and full of excellent stuff. I wish I had kept only one-third of it and stayed at home, and saved all those lives which were lost on the wide plains of Troy, far from Argos and the fine horses that Argos breeds!

"But however, although I mourn for them all and

often sit brooding in my mansion—sometimes I weep outright, and so ease my heart a bit, sometimes again I stop—a man soon has enough of groans, which fairly freeze him to the bones! However, I do not mourn so much for the whole lot of them, though I really am sorry for them, as for one man, who keeps me awake at night and will not let me eat, because I miss him so; for not one man of the nation worked so hard as Odysseus worked and laboured. Well, trouble was to be his portion, it seems, and mine to be sad on his account, never to be consoled, wondering how he can delay so long, and we don't know whether alive or dead. Surely they will all be mourning for him at home, the old man Laërtēs, and discreet Penelopeia, and Telemachos, whom he left a new-born babe in the house."

Now the young man could not restrain himself; tears dropt from his eyes to the ground as he heard his father's name, and he held up the purple robe before his eyes with both hands. Menelaos noticed this, and he considered whether he should leave him alone to think of his father, or if he should first ask him about everything.

But while he was pondering things over in his mind, Helen appeared from her fragrant room upstairs, looking like Artemis of the golden arrows. Adrestē came with her, and moved up a handsome couch; Alcippē brought a rug of soft wool; Phylo carried her silver basket.

This was the gift of Alcandrē, whose husband Polybos was a great nobleman in the Egyptian Thebes, with a palace full of treasures. He had given Menelaos two bathing-tubs of silver, a couple of tripods and ten talents' weight of gold; besides this, his wife had given fine gifts to Helen, a golden distaff, and a basket with wheels underneath, made of silver and the edges finished off in gold. This basket the attendant Phylo brought and placed near her, stuffed with dressed yarn; and the distaff was laid across the top with dark-blue wool upon it.

Helen sat on the couch and put her feet on a footstool. She began at once, and asked her husband about everything in plain words:

"Do we know, my dear, who these gentlemen are who have come to our house? Can I be wrong? Can it be

true? I think it is. I declare I never saw any one so like, man or woman—it amazes me quite, how this young man looks exactly like the son of Odysseus! I mean Telemachos whom Odysseus left a new-born babe behind him, when the whole nation invaded Troy on my account, I am ashamed to say, and began that cruel war."

Menelaos answered at once:

"I think so too, my dear, now you mention the likeness. That man had feet just like that and hands just like that, and the way his eyes go, and a head and hair on him just like that. Just a moment ago I was describing Odysseus as I remember him, what hard work he did for me and all his distresses, when the young man burst into sobs and put up the purple cloak in front of his eyes!"

Then Prince Peistratros said:

"Your Majesty, that man's son he is in truth, as you say; but he is modest, and he feels shy, on his first visit like this; he would not thrust himself forward or put in any remarks of his own, in your presence, sir, when your speech delights us both as if it were a voice from Heaven. And my royal father has sent me with him as his escort; for he desired to see you, in case you might offer some advice or help. There are always troubles in a house when the father is away and the son is alone, and there are no others to stand up for him; so now with Telemachos, his father is away, and there are no others in the town who will protect him from injustice."

Menelaos answered:

"Dear me, I did love that man, and here is his son in my house! Many a hard labour he wrought for me, and I made sure he would come here and let me show how I loved him beyond any man of the nation, if only we two had come speeding home over the sea in our ships, if Zeus Olympian in his infinite wisdom had granted that! Yes, I would have given him a city and house in Argos to live in, and brought him from Ithaca with his goods and his son and all his people—I would have cleared one of those cities which are all round here, part of my own domain. Yes, we should have always been in and out with each other, and nothing should ever have

parted us or put an end to our happy friendship, until the black cloud of death should have swallowed us up. But I suppose that must have been too much happiness for God to grant, since he is the only one to whom return is denied."

This made them all seek relief in tears. Argive Helen wept, Helen the daughter of Zeus; Telemachos wept, and King Menelaos; tears also were in the eyes of Nestor's son, for he thought of the admirable Antilochos, who was killed by the glorious son of Eos; but as he thought of him he said plainly:

"My lord King, my honoured father would always say that you were courteous above all men, we've often talked of you at home together; so now if it is possible at all, let me persuade you, for I do not enjoy crying over my supper; besides there will be to-morrow for that, when daylight doth appear. Not that I grudge sorrowing for the dead, when a mortal man meets his fate. Indeed, this is the only tribute we can pay to unhappy mankind, to cut the hair and to let the tears run over the cheeks. I know, because a brother of my own is dead, by no means the least valiant of our army; you must have known him. I never saw him myself, but they say that Antilochos was in the first rank, both as a sprinter and as a fighter."

Menelaos answered:

"My friend, you speak like a man of sense, you are older than your years; your father is just the same, you get it from 'him. It is easy to know a man's breeding, when Cronion spins out happiness for him in birth and marriage; just as now we see he has been gracious to Nestor, always and all his days, so that he grows old in plenty and comfort, and his sons are men of sense and excellent spearmen. We will leave the lamentation which we had begun, and turn our thoughts to supper; let them swill our hands. Stories may wait for to-morrow, when Telemachos and I will have something to say to each other."

Then Asphalion poured water over their hands, and they helped themselves to the food which lay ready before them.

But the admirable Helen had a happy thought. She lost no time, but put something into the wine they were drinking, a drug potent against pain and quarrels and charged with forgetfulness of all trouble; whoever drank this mingled in the bowl, not one tear would he let fall the whole day long, not if mother and father should die, not if they should slay a brother or a dear son before his face and he should see it with his own eyes. That was one of the wonderful drugs which the noble Queen possessed, which was given her by Polydamma the daughter of Thon, an Egyptian. For in that land the fruitful earth bears drugs in plenty, some good and some dangerous; and there every man is a physician and acquainted with such lore beyond all mankind, for they come of the stock of Paiēon the Healer. She dropt in the drug, and sent round the wine, and then she said:

"My lord King Menelaos, and you sons of honourable men who are here—but God gives good fortune or bad fortune to this man or that man when he pleases, for he can do all things—sit there now in our hall, eat and drink and enjoy yourselves with talk; for I have something to tell in the same mood.

"I am not going to tell you everything, all the long tale, all the labours of Odysseus, that indomitable man; but one daring deed which he did in the land of Troy where you Achaians had so many hardships. He had allowed himself to be cruelly scored with lashes; and with a ragged old wrap over his shoulders, like a menial, he entered the streets of the enemy town; he pretended to be a beggar, when he was anything but that in the Achaian fleet. In this disguise he entered the city of Troy, and they were all taken in; I was the only one who knew him in that shape, and I questioned him, but he was clever enough to evade me. However, I gave him a bath and a good rubbing with oil, and swore a solemn oath never to let out the secret before he returned to the camp; and then he told me the whole plan of the Achaians.

"He killed many a Trojan with his own spear before he got back again, and he brought away many secrets. There was loud lamentation among the women of Troy,

but my own heart was glad. For I was already longing to come home again, and I mourned the infatuation which Aphroditē brought upon me; when she carried me away from my native land, and parted me from my daughter and my home and husband, although there was no fault in him either of mind or body."

When he heard this, Menelaos answered:

"Upon my word, my dear, that is quite right and proper. I have heard tell of many heroes and their intelligence and their prudence, and I have travelled much in the world; but never did I set eyes on a man like Odysseus for patience and pluck.

"See now what the bold man did and dared in the Wooden Horse, where we all were hidden, the best men of the army, to bring death and ruin upon Troy! You came there, my dear, on that occasion; some divine power must have sent you who wished to give triumph to the Trojans; and that fine fellow Deiphobos came with you. Three times you walked all round our hiding-place, feeling over it with your hands, and you called out the names of the best men in the army, mimicking the voice of each man's wife! I was there, and Diomedēs, and Odysseus, sitting among the rest, and we listened to your calls. Both of us wanted to jump up and get out, or to answer at once from within; but Odysseus prevented us and kept us back, although we wanted to do it very much. So nobody uttered a sound; only Anticlos would have made you some answer, but Odysseus held his two hands tight over the man's mouth, and saved the whole nation—and there he held them firmly until Pallas Athena led you away!"

Then Telemachos said, quite to the point:

"Your Majesty, that is only so much the worse; all this did not save him from a lamentable fate, nor would it even if the heart within him had been made of iron. But let us go to our beds, that sleep may give us pleasure and peace for the time being."

As he said this, Helen directed her maids to lay the beds under the open gallery, gay blankets of purple with coverlets upon them and woollen gowns for them to put on. So the maids took torches out of the hall and laid

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the beds; and a marshal led out the guests. Telemachos and Nestor's son lay down to rest in the gallery before the hall-door; but the King lay in a closet of the hall, and beside him the beautiful Helen in her long robe.

When dawn showed her first gleams, Menelaos leapt out of his bed, and put on his clothes, and slung a sharp sword over his shoulder, and put on his shoes, and went out of his chamber. He sat down by Telemachos, and said to him:

"What business brought you here to Lacedaimon, brave Telemachos, over the broad back of the sea? Public or private? Tell me, and conceal nothing."

Telemachos answered him:

"Your Majesty, I came to learn if you could tell me any news of my father. My house is being eaten up, my rich estate is ruined, the place is full of malicious men, who kill my sheep for ever and my crumple-horn skew-the-dew cattle; they want my mother as a wife, but all they do is outrage and violence. And so I come to your knees as a suppliant that you may tell me of that man's lamentable fate, whether you have seen it with your own eyes in any place or heard from another the story of his wanderings; for he was born to sorrow if any man ever was. 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 father, your faithful friend, made you a promise and did it before Troy when you suffered all those hardships, remember that now for my sake, and tell me the truth."

Menelaos in hot anger said to this:

"Bless my soul! I declare they are a lot of cowards, who wish to lie in the bed of a mighty man! Imagine a deer in the jungle, which has laid her suckling fawns just born to sleep in the den of a strong lion, while she goes over the hillocks and into the grassy dells to seek her food: then the lion comes back to his lair, and deals death on the lot of them, dam and fawns, and tears them to pieces! So Odysseus will deal death on these, and tear them to pieces!"

"Oh Father Zeus, Athenaia, Apollo! could he but ap-

pear before them as he was in the pleasant island of Lesbos, when he up and wrestled a match with Philomel-eidēs, and threw him by main force, and the whole nation was delighted! If he could be as he was then, and grapple with these men as they gaily go a-wooing! Quick would be their death, more rueing than wooing! But as to your prayer and petition, I'll not misguide you along, I will not deceive you, but what the Old Man of the Sea told me (and he speaks the truth), that I will tell you and hide nothing.

"In Egypt, when I wished to return here, the gods kept me back because I had not performed the proper sacrifices to them. For the gods are always determined that we shall remember their claims. Well then, there is an island in the open sea before Egypt; they call it Pharos, as far off as a sea-going ship makes in a whole day when a whistling wind blows abaft. In this there is a capital harbour, where voyagers take in fresh water before they push off again. There the gods kept me back for twenty days; never a good wind blew over the brine, none of those which speed a ship over the broad back of the sea. All our provisions would have been used up, and the spirit of the men gone, if a divine being had not pitied me and saved me; a daughter of mighty Proteus the Old Man of the Sea, one Eidothea.

"I must have touched her heart, when she met me wandering alone without companions; for they used to go about fishing with hook and line, since famine tore at their bellies. She came up and spoke to me, and said, 'Are you a fool, stranger, just slack and lazy? or do you prefer to let things slide, and do you enjoy hardships? Here you are all this long time stuck in this island, and you cannot find any way out, while the heart of your men is fainting!'

"I answered, 'I tell you plainly, divine being, whoever you are, it is no wish of mine that I am stuck here; but I must have offended the deathless gods who rule the broad heavens. Do tell me, I pray, for the gods know all things, which of the immortals chains me here, which has tied me back from my way; tell me how I shall make

my journey over the fish-giving sea.' That is what I said, and the divine being answered: 'Well, then, stranger, I will tell you exactly what to do.'

"This place is frequented by the Old Man of the Sea, immortal Proteus the Egyptian, a servant of Poseidon; who always tells the truth, who knows all the deep places of the sea. They say he is my father and begetter. If you could lie in wait for him, and catch him, he would tell you your way and the measure of your homeward path, and how you may pass over the fish-giving sea. Yes, and he would tell you, sir, if you wish, what has been done at home and both good and bad, while you were travelling on your long and painful road."

"I answered her: 'Give me a plan yourself to catch the Old Man divine, or he may see me first, and forewarned is forearmed: the gods are little cattle for mortal men to tackle.'

"Then she said: 'Very well, stranger, I will tell you exactly what to do. When the sun mounts to mid-heaven, that is the time when the Old Man of the Sea comes up out of the brine, under the breath of the west wind, hidden by the dark ripples; and when he comes out, he lies to rest in a hollow cave. All round him sleep the seals, in a shoal, the brood of Halosydnê, breathing out the rank scent of the briny deep. You must choose three comrades with care, the best you have in your company. I will lead you to the place in the light of dawn, and lay you all in a row. And now I will tell you all the Old Man's tricks. First, he will inspect the seals and count them. When he has seen them and reckoned them up, he will lie down among them, like a shepherd among his sheep. As soon as you see him safe in his bed, that is the time for brawn and muscle: catch him fast and hold him, however he may struggle and fight. He will turn into all sorts of shapes to try you, into all the creatures that live and move upon the earth, into water, into blazing fire; but you must hold him fast and press him all the harder. When he is himself, and questions you in the same shape that he was when you saw him in his bed—then no more violence, but let the Old Man go; and then, sir, ask which god it is who is angry, and how you

shall make your way homewards over the fish-giving sea.'

"When she had spoken, she dived into the waves. But I went back to my ships on the sands, all in a brown study. When I reached the seaside, we prepared our meal, and holy night came on. Then we slept upon the seashore.

"But when dawn showed the first streaks of red, I walked along the shore of the sea, earnestly praying to the gods; and I took three comrades, men whom I trusted most for every enterprise.

"Meanwhile, she had dived into the broad bosom of the sea, and brought out four seal-skins newly flayed. It was a little dodge of her own she had made to take in her father! She had hollowed out beds in the sandy beach, and there she sat waiting. When we came near she made us lie down in a row in these beds, and threw a skin over each. That would have been a most trying wait for us, for we were terribly tormented by the horrible stink of the seals from the salt sea. Who would like to lie beside a monster of the salt sea? But she had thought of this without our asking and made it all right. She had brought some ambrosia, and now she put a plug of it into each man's nose, smelling O so sweet! which quite drowned the stink of the monsters.

"All the morning we waited patiently; then the seals came out of the sea in a body. They soon lay down in rows on the sand; and at noon the Old Man came out of the sea, and found his fat seals, and went his rounds, counting the number: counted us first among the monsters, and never dreamt of the trick! Then he lay down himself in the count. At once we rushed on him with yells, and seized him—the Old Man did not forget his arts! First he turned into a bearded lion, then into a serpent, then a leopard, then a great boar; he turned into running water, and a tall tree in full leaf, but we held fast patiently.

"At last the Old Man grew tired of the tricks he knew so well, and questioned us in proper speech: 'Which of the gods devised this plan for you, Prince Atreidê, and helped you to catch me like this against my will in your

trap? What do you want?" I answered: "You know, sir; why do you ask, and try to put me off? You know I am kept back in this island, and cannot find a way out, so that my heart fails within me. I pray you to tell me—for the gods know all things—which of the immortals chains me here, which has tied me back from my way, how I shall make my journey over the fish-giving sea." He answered me at once: "Why, of course you ought to have made a handsome sacrifice to Zeus and the other immortals before you embarked, if you wanted a quick passage to your native land over the purple sea. So it is not your lot to see your friends and to return to your fine house and your native land, until you go back to the waters of Aigyptos, that river which is fed from the sky, and perform a solemn sacrifice to the immortal gods who rule the broad heavens: then and not before the gods will open the road which you desire."

"When I heard this, my heart was broken within me, that he commanded me to go a long and dangerous journey back to Egypt over the misty sea. Nevertheless I said to him: 'This I will surely do, reverend sir, as you command me. But please tell me really and truly; did all our people come home safe in their ships, those who were left by Nestor and me when we set out from Troy? Did any one perish by some unkind fate in his own ship, or with friends around him after we had wound up the war?'

"He answered at once: 'My lord, why do you ask me that? You ought not to know or to learn my mind: you will not long be tearless, when you hear all that happened. Many of them were lost, and many were left, but only two captains of the armed host perished by the way; at the fighting you were present yourself. And one still lives, kept a prisoner somewhere in the broad sea. Aias was lost, with his galley. First Poseidon wrecked him on the Gyraian rocks, but he was saved from the sea; and indeed he could have escaped death, although Athena was his enemy, if he had not uttered a boastful speech in his blindness—for he declared that he had escaped the devouring gulf "God willing or not!"' But Po-

seidon heard his wicked boast; then and there he lifted the trident in his strong hand, and struck the Gyraian rock, and split him off—the rock remained where it was, but the splinter fell in the sea, the part on which Aias was sitting at first when his heart was blinded, and this carried him with it into the bottomless deep. So there he perished with a mouthful of salt water.

"Your brother managed to escape the dangers of the sea; he was saved by Queen Hera. But when he was just coming to the steep cliff of Malea, a storm caught him and carried him over the sea in great distress, to the headland of that country where Thyestes ruled long ago, and then ruled his son Aigisthos. Even then he found a safe voyage, as the gods turned back the wind and home they came. Full of joy he set foot on his native soil, and touched the ground, and kissed it, while the tears ran down his cheeks at the welcome sight of his own country. But a watchman spied him from his look-out; Aigisthos the traitor had placed him there, and promised him two nuggets of gold as a wage. The man had been watching for a year, that the King might not land and pass unseen and be able to defend himself. He hastened with the news to the prince in his palace. At once Aigisthos arranged his plot. He chose the best fellows in the town, twenty of them, and posted them ready; at the other side of the house he ordered a feast to be prepared. Then he went down, with murder in his heart, bringing chariot and horses to invite King Agamemnon; and so he brought him up suspecting nothing, and feasted him, and killed him, as one might kill an ox at the manger. And not one of the King's escort was left, and not one of Aigisthos' men, but all were killed in the place."

"When he had finished, my heart was broken within me; I sat weeping and rolled my body on the sand, and cared no longer to live and see the light of the sun. When I could weep no more, the truthful Old Man of the Sea said to me, 'My lord, do not go on weeping so long, since there is no help for it; but lose no time in trying to make your way back to your native land. Either

you will find him alive, or Orestès will have caught him and killed him, and then you will come in for the funeral feast.'

"This gave me heart and courage, and comforted me in spite of my grief, so I said to him: 'So much then for these; but there is a third I would ask you to name, who is still held prisoner somewhere in the broad sea, or he may be dead; but I want to hear, though it may hurt me.' At once he answered: 'Odysseus Laëtiadès, the man of Ithaca! I saw him in an island weeping hot tears, in the house of Calypso the nymph who holds him by force; and he cannot get away to his native land, since he has neither men nor galleys to take him over the broad back of the sea. But your fate, royal Menelaos, is not to die and meet your end in Argos. The immortals will convey you to the Elysian plain at the end of the earth, where golden-headed Rhadamanthys dwells. That is the place where life is easiest for mankind: no snow, no stormy wind or rain, but Zephyros with his gentle whistling breeze ever comes up from the Ocean to refresh mankind. For you are Helen's husband, and they look on you as one of the family of Zeus.' With these words, he dived into the billowy deep.

"Then I returned to the ships, all in a brown study, with my loyal comrades. When we reached our ships, we made our meal, and as soon as sacred night came on we laid us to rest on the seashore. But when dawn came again rosy through the mist, first of all we launched the ships, then we set up masts and sails; then the men embarked and took their seats on the benches, and paddled away over the sea. Back we went to Aigyptos, that river which is fed from the sky; and there I stayed the ships, and performed the solemn sacrifice. When I had thus allayed the resentment of the everlasting gods, I built a barrow for Agamemnon, that his name might not be forgotten. This done, I set out, and the immortals gave me a fair wind and brought me very soon to my native land.

"So come now, stay here in my mansion for ten or twelve days, and then I will give you a good send-off

and a handsome gift, three horses and a chariot; I will give you a fine chalice too, that when you pour your drops to the immortal gods you may think of me all your days."

But Telemachos knew better, and said:

"My lord, do not keep me here long. It is true I could stay here a whole year with you, idle, and I should not miss home or parents; for I am terribly in love with your stories and your conversation: but my companions are bored already in Pylos, and I am staying here a long time. If you should offer me a gift, let it be something for me to treasure; but horses I will not take to Ithaca. I will leave them for you to enjoy; for you are lord of a broad plain, in which is plenty of clover, here is galingale and wheat and spelt and broad-eared white barley. But in Ithaca we have neither wide roads nor meadows; it is a goat-country, much pleasanter than a horse-country. None of the islands in the sea is good for driving or good for meadows, and Ithaca least of all."

When he said this, the great champion smiled, and stroked him with one hand, and said to him:

"You come of good blood, dear boy, to hear you speak. Then I will give you something else, that will be easy enough. You shall have the best and most precious of the treasures which lie in my house. I will give you a mixing-bowl finely wrought; it is all silver, but the lips are finished off with gold. It is a genuine work of Hephaistos; the noble Phaidimos presented it to me. He is King of Sidon, and his house gave me shelter on my homeward journey; now it shall be yours."

As they were thus conversing, the banqueters arrived at the King's mansion. They drove sheep with them, and carried wine that makes glad the heart of man, and their wives at home were sending on the bread.

While these were busy about the feast in Lacedaimon, the others in front of the house of Odysseus were enjoying their game with quoits and javelins upon the paved space as usual, full of riotousness. Antinoös was sitting there, and the handsome Eurymachos, the two

leaders among them, who excelled in all their feats. Just then the young man Noëmon appeared, and asked a question of Antinoös:

"Do we know, or don't we, Antinoös, when Telemachos is coming back from Pylos? He took my boat with him, and I want it. I want to cross over to the lowlands of Elis, where I have a dozen mares, with as many hardy mules at foot, unbroken. I want to drive off one of them to be broken in."

These words struck amazement into their hearts; for they did not think he had gone to Pylos—they supposed he was somewhere about the farms, with the sheep, or with the swineherd. Antinoös answered:

"Tell me the truth about it: when did he go, what lads went with him? The pick of Ithaca, or his own serfs and servants? He might do that, of course. Tell me, I want to know the truth; did he steal your boat against your will, or did he beg and pray until you consented?"

Noëmon said:

"I consented all right; what could any one else have done, when a man like him has something in his mind and asks a favour? It is hard to say no to a borrower. The best lads in the town went with him; and I noticed their leader going aboard, Mentor it was, if he wasn't a god, but he was the very spit of Mentor. What does surprise me is, that I saw the very man himself here yesterday morning. But by that time he was on board ship on his way to Pylos!"

He said his say, and off he went to his father's house; and the two were left behind thunder-struck. They made the others stop playing and sit down together; then Antinoös spoke to them in high displeasure, while the dark places of his heart were full of rage and his eyes flashed fire:

"Damn it all, this is a monstrous piece of defiance, this journey of Telemachos! we never expected him to manage it. Off he goes, with all this crowd against him, a young boy like that, launches a ship, picks and chooses the best of the whole town! First score to him! and more trouble to follow; but I pray Zeus may destroy his power first. Come along, get me a fast boat and twenty men,

that I may lie for him on his way back, and watch in the strait between Ithaca and the cliffs of Samos; then he shall finish his filial expedition in anything but ship-shape fashion!"

They all applauded, and told him to go ahead; then they got up and repaired to the dining-hall.

But Penelopeia did not remain long unacquainted with what they said and what they were scheming in the depths of their hearts; for Medon the marshal told her. He overheard them from outside the courtyard, while they were weaving their scheme inside. He went into the house to inform her, and as he stept over her threshold Penelopeia said to him:

"Marshal, why have these people sent you out? To order the servants of my noble husband to drop their work and get dinner ready for them? If only they might woo no more and visit no more in this world, if only this dinner here this day might be their latest and their last! Here you come constantly in crowds, and you have wasted a heap of wealth, the possessions of Telemachos my clever boy! Did you never hear from your own fathers, when you were children long ago, how Odysseus behaved towards them? never one unjust thing did he say or do among his people like the common run of princes, who hate one and favour another! That man never did a cruel thing in his life. But your way of thinking is as clear as your ugly doings; there is no gratitude in the world for good deeds done."

But Medon answered respectfully:

"I only wish, my lady, that this were the worst; but there is something still worse and still more dangerous which they are plotting, and I pray that Cronion may not bring it to pass! They want to murder him with cold steel on his way home; he has gone to Pylos and sunny Lacedaimon to inquire news of his father."

When she heard this, her knees gave way and her heart fainted, and for a long time she could not utter a word; her eyes filled with tears, and her soft voice was choked. But at last she found words and was able to say:

"Marshal, why has my boy gone? He need not have anything to do with seafaring ships, which carry men

over the wide waters as horses over the wide world! Did he wish to leave not even his name in the wide world?"

Medon answered as before:

"I do not know whether some god sent him, or if it was his own notion to go to Pylos; but he did go to get news of his father, whether he is on his way home, or what fate has befallen him."

This said, he went back through the house. But she was plunged in heart-burning grief. She could not bring herself to sit upon a chair, and there were plenty in the room; but she sat upon the floor near the doorway, bitterly lamenting, while the maids all whimpered, young and old, all through the house. Amid her sobs Penelope said to them:

"Listen, my dears! The Olympian has allotted to me sorrows above all women who were bred and born with me. Long ago I lost a good husband, a man with a lion's heart, first in the whole nation for every noble gift. Now again my beloved son has been torn away by the tempests, without a word, from our house, and I never heard of his going. Hard women you are,—not even you, not one of you could find it in her heart to awake me from my bed, though you knew quite well when he went away to his vessel! If I had only heard that he was planning this voyage, I declare he should never have gone, however much he wanted to go, or he should have gone over my dead body! Go some one, hurry up, and call old Dolios, the man my father gave me when I came here, the man who keeps the garden with all those trees,—tell him to go quickly and find Laertes and tell him the whole story. Perhaps he can think of some plan; he may come out and complain to the people how these men wish to wipe out his whole race and the family of the noble Odysseus!"

Then Eurykleia the nurse said in answer:

"Dear lass, kill me with cruel steel, or let me be in the house, but I will hide nowt from thee. I knowed the whole thing, I gave all a told me, bread and meal of the best, but a made me swear a gurt oath not to breathe one word to thee till twelve days pass or tha'st ask thysen about his goen away. He was afeared tha might spoil thi

pretty skin wi' weepen. Come now, tak' a bath, put on clean linen, go up to thi chamber wi' the maids, and pray to Athenaia the daughter of Zeus Almighty; maybe she'd howd him safe even from death. And donta worret the poor old man who has worrets enough. I make sure the Lord God do not hate the kin of Arceisadēs, but there will be summon yet left i' the world to own the tall house and all the fat farms out younder."

With these words, the old woman calmed the grief of her mistress and wiped away her tears. Then the lady bathed and put on clean linen, and went up to her chamber with the maids. She filled a basket with the sacred barley-groats, and prayed to Athena:

"Hear me, daughter of Zeus Almighty, Atrytonē! If ever my undaunted Odysseus burnt for thee the fat thigh-slices in this house, remember that for me now, and keep my dear son safe, and defend me against these proud and riotous men!"

Then she cried aloud the women's alleluia; and the goddess heard her prayer. But the pretenders applauded in the gloomy hall when they heard her cry; and you might hear one say to another of these violent men:

"Sure enough after all our courting my lady is going to marry again—and she does not know that death is ready for her son!"

That is what they would say, for they did not know what the cry meant. But Antinoös warned them, and said:

"Now then, you fellows, no bragging, not a word of any sort must pass your lips, if you please! Some one may tell tales inside. Come along, just let us get up quietly and carry out the plan we thought so good."

Then he chose out twenty, the best fellows there, and they set out for the ship on the seashore.

The ship first of all was launched into deep water, the mast and sail set up in the dark hull, the oars hung to the thole-pins* by their leathern loops, arms and armour were all brought by eager attendants. Well out in the

*Each oar had one thole-pin and a loop attached, as the Greek boats have still.

water they anchored her, and left her there, while they ate their meal on shore and waited for evening to come.

But there in the upper chamber lay true-hearted Penelopeia, without food, touching neither meat nor drink, wondering whether her innocent son would escape death or whether he would be brought low by the men of violence. Even as a lion is balked and helpless with fear, when they put a circle of hunters round him, so she lay troubled in mind until she fell into a deep sleep. Then she sank down and slept, and her weary frame had rest.

Now Athena Brighteyes had a thought. She made a phantom in the shape of a woman, Iphthimē, another daughter of Icarios, and the wife of Eumelos who lived in Pherai; she sent it to the house of Odysseus, that Penelopeia might have peace from her tears and lamentable grief. It came into the room along the keyhole strap,* and spoke to her, leaning over her head.

"Are you asleep, Penelopeia, with your heart full of sorrow? Nay, the gods who live in quiet and peace will not have you weep and mourn, since your boy will yet return; for he has not offended the gods in any way."

Penelopeia answered, as she slumbered sweetly within the gates of dreams:

"What brings you here, sister? You never paid me a visit before, living all that way off. Now you tell me to cease from my mourning and all the pains which trouble me in heart and mind. Long ago I lost a good husband, a man with a lion's heart, first in the whole nation for every noble gift; and now again my beloved son has gone on board ship, a mere child, who knows nothing of plots or parliaments. I am really more grieved for my boy than for the other. For him I am all of a tremble, and I fear what may happen to him in the place where he is gone, or on the sea; for enemies many are planning and plotting against him, determined to kill him before he can return to his native land."

Then the dim phantom answered:

"Take courage, let not your heart fear too much; for one is near to guide him whom others have often prayed

*See note on p. 15.

to stand by their side, Pallas Athenaia, and she pities you in your grief. She it is who has sent me now to tell you this."

Penelopeia the true-hearted answered:

"If you are really divine and a god sent you here, tell me also about that unhappy man: is he still alive anywhere, does he see the light of the sun, or is he already dead and within the house of Hadēs?"

Then the dim phantom answered and said: "I may not tell you for certain whether he is alive or dead; it is a bad thing to babble like the blowing wind."

As she said this she slipt along the bolt of the door into the outer air: Penelopeia leapt up, and her heart warmed within her, that this phantom had appeared so clearly in the dark night.

But the plotters embarked and sailed over the waters, with foul murder in their hearts for Telemachos. There is a rocky islet between Ithaca and the cliffs of Samos, quite a small one, called Asteris, and harbours in it for ships on both sides; there they lay in wait for him.

BOOK V

Hermēs Is Sent to Calypso's Island; Odysseus Makes a Raft and Is Carried to the Coast of Scheria

DAWN ROSE FROM HER BED BESIDE OLD TITHONOS,* bringing light for mortals and immortals both; and the gods came to their morning session. There in his place was Zeus Almighty, Thunderer in the heights; and Athena made them a speech about Odysseus and his

*Eos, or Dawn, fell in love with Tithonus, and made him immortal; but although he did not die, he grew older and older forever.