

**THE ODYSSEY FOR
BOYS AND GIRLS**

**THE ODYSSEY FOR
BOYS AND GIRLS**

TOLD FROM HOMER

BY THE

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MY FIRST CRITIC

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CHAPTER I

THE CYCLOPS

A GREAT many years ago there was a very famous siege of a city called Troy. The eldest son of the king who reigned in this city carried off the wife of one of the Greek kings, and with her a great quantity of gold and silver. She was the most beautiful woman in the world, and all the princes of Greece had come to her father's court wishing to marry her. Her father had made them all swear, that if any one should steal her away from the man whom she would choose for her husband, they would help him to get her back. This promise they had now to keep. So they all went to besiege Troy, each taking a number of his subjects with him. On the other hand, the Trojans were helped by many of the nations that lived near them. The siege lasted for a long time, but in the tenth year the city was taken. Then the Greeks began to think about going home. The story that you are now going to hear is about one of these Greek princes, Ulysses by name, who was the King of Ithaca. (This was an island on the

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west coast of Greece, and you can find it now marked on the map.) Ulysses was, according to one story, very unwilling to go. He had married, you see, a very good and beautiful wife, and had a little son. So he pretended to be mad, and took a plough down to the sea-shore and began to plough the sand. But some one took his little son and laid him in front of the plough. And when Ulysses stopped lest he should hurt him, people said: "This man is not really mad." So he had to go. And this is the story of how, at last, he came back.

When Troy had been taken, Ulysses and his men set sail for his home, the Island of Ithaca. He had twelve ships with him, and fifty men or thereabouts in each ship. The first place they came to was a city called Ismarus. This they took and plundered. Ulysses said to his men: "Let us sail away with what we have got." They would not listen to him, but sat on the sea-shore, and feasted, for they had found plenty of wine in the city, and many sheep and oxen in the fields round it. Meanwhile the people who had escaped out of the city fetched their countrymen who dwelt in the mountains, and brought an army to fight with the Greeks. The battle began early in the morning of the next day, and lasted nearly till sunset. At first the Greeks had the better of it, but in the afternoon the people of the country prevailed, and drove them to their ships. Very glad were they to get away; but when they came to count, they found that they had lost six men out of each ship.

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After this a great storm fell upon the ships, and carried them far to the south, past the very island to which they were bound. It was very hard on Ulysses. He was close to his home, if he could only have stopped; but he could not, and though he saw it again soon after, it was ten years before he reached it, having gone through many adventures in the meantime.

The first of these was in the country of the Cyclopes or Round-eyed People. Late on a certain day Ulysses came with his ships to an island, and found in it a beautiful harbour, with a stream falling into it, and a flat beach on which to draw up the ships. That night he and his men slept by the ships, and the next day they made a great feast. The island was full of wild goats. These the men hunted and killed, using their spears and bows. They had been on shipboard for many days, and had had but little food. Now they had plenty, eight goats to every ship, and nine for the ship of Ulysses, because he was the chief. So they ate till they were satisfied, and drank wine which they had carried away from Ismarus.

Now there was another island about a mile away, and they could see that it was larger, and it seemed as if there might be people living in it. The island where they were was not inhabited. So on the second morning Ulysses said to his men: "Stay here, my dear friends; I with my own ship and my own company will go to yonder island, and find out who dwells there, whether they are good people or no." So he and his men took their ship, and rowed over to the other island. Then Ulysses took twelve men,

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the bravest that there were in the ship, and went to search out the country. He took with him a goat-skin of wine, very strong and sweet, which the priest of Apollo at Ismarus had given him for saving him and his house and family, when the city was taken. There never was a more precious wine; one measure of it could be mixed with twenty measures of water, and the smell of it was wondrously sweet. Also he took with him some parched corn, for he felt in his heart that he might need some food.

After a while they came to a cave which seemed to be the dwelling of some rich and skilful shepherd. Inside there were pens for the young sheep and the young goats, and baskets full of cheeses, and milk-pans ranged against the walls. Then Ulysses' men said to him: "Let us go away before the master comes back. We can take some of the cheeses, and some of the kids and lambs." But Ulysses would not listen to them. He wanted to see what kind of man this shepherd might be, and he hoped to get something from him.

In the evening the Cyclops, the Round-eye, came home. He was a great giant, with one big eye in the middle of his forehead, and an eyebrow above it. He bore on his shoulder a huge bundle of pine logs for his fire. This he threw down outside the cave with a great crash, and drove the flocks inside, and then closed up the mouth with a big rock so big that twenty waggons could not carry it. After this he milked the ewes and the she-goats. Half the milk he curdled for cheese, and half he set aside for his own supper. This done, he threw some logs on the fire,

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which burnt up with a great flame, showing the Greeks, who had fled into the depths of the cave, when they saw the giant come in.

“Who are you?” said the giant, “traders or pirates?”

“We are no pirates, mighty sir,” said Ulysses, “but Greeks sailing home from Troy, where we have been fighting for Agamemnon, the great king, whose fame is spread abroad from one end of heaven to the other. And we beg you to show hospitality to us, for the gods love them who are hospitable.”

“Nay,” said the giant, “talk not to me about the gods. We care not for them, for we are better and stronger than they. But tell me, where have you left your ship?”

But Ulysses saw what he was thinking of when he asked about the ship, namely, that he meant to break it up so as to leave them no hope of getting away. So he said, “Oh, sir, we have no ship; that which we had was driven by the wind upon a rock and broken, and we whom you see here are all that escaped from the wreck.”

The giant said nothing, but without more ado caught up two of the men, as a man might catch up two puppies, and dashed them on the ground, and tore them limb from limb, and devoured them, with huge draughts of milk between, leaving not a morsel, not even the bones. And when he had filled himself with this horrible food and with the milk of the flocks, he lay down among his sheep, and slept.

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Then Ulysses thought: "Shall I slay this monster as he sleeps, for I do not doubt that with my good sword I can pierce him to the heart. But no; if I do this, then shall I and my comrades here perish miserably, for who shall be able to roll away the great rock that is laid against the mouth of the cave?"

So he waited till the morning, very sad at heart. And when the giant awoke, he milked his flocks, and afterward seized two of the men, and devoured them as before. This done, he went forth to the pastures, his flocks following him, but first he put the rock on the mouth of the cave, just as a man shuts down the lid of his quiver.

All day Ulysses thought how he might save himself and his companions, and the end of his thinking was this. There was a great pole in the cave, the trunk of an olive tree, green wood which the giant was going to use as a staff for walking when it should have been dried by the smoke. Ulysses cut off this a piece some six feet long, and his companions hardened it in the fire, and hid it away. In the evening the giant came back and did as before, seizing two of the prisoners and devouring them. When he had finished his meal, Ulysses came to him with the skin of wine in his hand and said, "Drink, Cyclops, now that you have supped. Drink this wine, and see what good things we had in our ship. But no one will bring the like to you in your island here if you are so cruel to strangers."

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ULYSSES GIVING WINE TO POLYPHEMUS

The Cyclops took the skin and drank, and was mightily pleased with the wine.

“Give me more,” he said, “and tell me your name, and I will give you a gift such as a host should. Truly this is a fine drink, like, I take it, to that which the gods have in heaven.”

Then Ulysses said: “My name is No Man. And now give me your gift.”

And the giant said: “My gift is this: you shall be eaten last.” And as he said this, he fell back in a drunken sleep.

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Then Ulysses said to his companions, "Be brave, my friends, for the time is come for us to be delivered from this prison."

So they put the stake into the fire, and kept it there till it was ready, green as it was, to burst into flame. Then they thrust it into his eye, for, as has been told, he had but one, and Ulysses leant with all his force upon the stake, and turned it about, just as a man turns a drill about when he would make a hole in a ship timber. And the wood hissed in the eye as the red-hot iron hisses in the water when a smith would temper it to make a sword.

Then the giant leapt up, and tore away the stake, and cried out so loudly that the Round-eyed people in the island came to see what had happened.

"What ails you," they asked, "that you make so great an uproar, waking us all out of our sleep? Is any one stealing your sheep, or seeking to hurt you?"

And the giant bellowed, "No Man is hurting me."

"Well," said the Round-eyed people, "if no man is hurting you, then it must be the gods that do it, and we cannot help you against them."

But Ulysses laughed when he thought how he had beguiled them by his name. But he was still in doubt how he and his companions should escape, for the giant sat in the mouth of the cave, and felt to see whether the men were trying to get out among the sheep. And Ulysses, after long thinking, made a plan by which he and his companions might escape.

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By great good luck the giant had driven the rams into the cave, for he commonly left them outside. These rams were very big and strong, and Ulysses took six of the biggest, and tied the six men that were left out of the twelve underneath their bellies with osier twigs. And on each side of the six rams to which a man was tied, he put another ram. So he himself was left, for there was no one who could do the same for him. Yet this also he managed. There was a very big ram, much bigger than all the others, and to this he clung, grasping the fleece with both his hands. So, when the morning came, the flocks went out of the cave as they were wont, and the giant felt them as they passed by him, and did not perceive the men. And when he felt the biggest ram, he said—

“How is this? You are not used to lag behind; you are always the first to run to the pasture in the morning and to come back to the fold at night. Perhaps you are troubled about thy master’s eye which this villain No Man has destroyed. First he overcame me with wine, and then he put out my eye. Oh! that you could speak and tell me where he is. I would dash out his brains upon the ground.” And then he let the big ram go.

When they were out of the giant’s reach, Ulysses let go his hold of the ram, and loosed his companions, and they all made as much haste as they could to get to the place where they had left their ship, looking back to see whether the giant was following them. The crew at the ship were very glad to see them, but wondered that there should be only

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six. Ulysses made signs to them to say nothing, for he was afraid that the giant might know where they were if he heard their voices. So they all got on board and rowed with all their might. But when they were a hundred yards from the shore, Ulysses stood up in the ship and shouted: "You are an evil beast, Cyclops, to devour strangers in your cave, and are rightly served in losing your eye. May the gods make you suffer worse things than this!"

The Cyclops, when he heard Ulysses speak, broke off the top of a rock and threw it to the place from which the voice seemed to come. The rock fell just in front of the ship, and the wave which it made washed it back to the shore. But Ulysses caught up a long pole and pushed the ship off, and he nodded with his head, being afraid to speak, to his companions to row with all their might. So they rowed; and when they were twice as far off as before, Ulysses stood up again in the ship, as if he were going to speak again. And his comrades begged him to be silent.

"Do not make the giant angry," they said; "we were almost lost just now when the wave washed us back to the shore. The monster throws a mighty bolt, and throws it far."

But Ulysses would not listen, but cried out: "Hear, Cyclops, if any man ask you who put out your eye, say that it was Ulysses of Ithaca."

Then the giant took up another great rock and threw it. This time it almost touched the end of the rudder, but missed by a hand's breadth. This time,

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therefore, the wave helped them on. So big was it that it carried the ship to the other shore.

Now Ulysses had not forgotten to carry off sheep from the island for his companions. These he divided among the crews of all the ships. The great ram he had for his own share. So that day the whole company feasted, and they lay down on the sea-shore and slept.

CHAPTER II

OF THE HOME OF THE WINDS AND OF CIRCE

THE next day Ulysses and his companions set sail. After a while they came to the floating island where the King of the Winds had his home. Ulysses told the king all his story, how he had fought against Troy, and what had happened to him afterwards. For a whole month the king made him welcome, and when he wished to go home, he did what he could to help him. He took the hide of an ox, very thick and strong, and put in it all the winds that would hinder him in getting to his home, and fastened it to the deck of his ship. Then he made a gentle wind blow from the west. For nine days it blew, till the ships were very near to the island of Ithaca—so near that they could see the lights on the cliffs. But just before dawn on the tenth day, Ulysses, who had kept awake all the time, for he would not let any one else take the rudder, fell asleep. And the crew of his ship said to each other: “See that great bag of ox hide. It must have something very precious inside it—silver and gold and jewels. Why should the chief have all these

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good things to himself?" So they cut the bag open, and all the winds rushed out and blew the ship away from Ithaca. Ulysses woke up at the noise, and at first thought that he would throw himself into the sea and die. Then he said to himself, "No! it is better to live," and he covered his face and lay still, without saying a word to his men. And the ships were driven back to the island of the King of the Winds.

Ulysses went to the king's palace with one of his companions, and sat down outside the door. The king came out to see him, and said, "How is this? Why did you not get to your home?" Ulysses said, "I fell asleep, and my men opened the bag. I pray you to help me again." "Nay," answered the king, "it is of no use to help the man whom the gods hate. Go away!"

So Ulysses and his men launched their ships again and rowed for six days and nights. On the seventh day they came to a certain city named Lamos, a country where the night is as light as the day. Here there was a fine harbour, with a very narrow mouth, and high rocks all round it, so that it was always calm. It seemed so pleasant a place that all the ships were taken inside by their crews, only Ulysses thought it safer to keep his ship outside. He sent two of his men to see the king of the place. These met a very tall and strong girl as they went, and asked her the way to the palace. She told them—and, indeed, she was the king's daughter. So they knocked at the door; but when it was opened, and they saw the queen, they were terribly frightened, for she was as big as a mountain, and

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dreadful to look at. They ran away, but the queen called to her husband the king, and the king shouted to the people of the city. They were cannibals all of them, and when they saw the ships they threw great rocks at them and broke them in pieces; and when the men tried to swim to shore, they speared them as if they had been fishes, and devoured them. So all the ships inside the harbour were destroyed; only the ship of Ulysses was left. He cut the cable with his sword, and cried to his men to row away with all their might, and so they escaped. But Ulysses had now only one ship left with its crew out of the twelve which he had at first.

After a while they came to a strange island, and drew up their ship upon the beach, and sat beside it weeping and lamenting, for now there were but some thirty or so left out of six hundred. This they did for two days. On the third day Ulysses took his spear and sword, and climbed up a hill that was near, to see what kind of a place they had come to. From the top of the hill he saw a great wood, and a smoke rising up out of the midst of it, showing that there was a house there. Then he thought to himself: "I will go back to the ship, and when we have dined, some of us will go and see who lives in the island." But as he went towards the shore, he saw a great stag coming down to a spring to drink, and it crossed the path almost in front of him. Then he threw his spear at the beast, and killed it; and he tied its feet together, and put it on his neck, and carried it leaning on his spear, for, indeed, it was a very heavy load for a man to bear. When he came to the ship,

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he threw down the stag on the shore, and the men looked up, and were glad to see the great beast. So they feasted on deer's flesh and wine, and Ulysses put off the searching of the island till the next day.

In the morning he told them what he had seen, but the searching of the island did not please, for they thought of what they had suffered already. Then Ulysses said: "We shall divide the crew into two companies; one shall be mine, and of the other Eurylochus shall be chief; and we will cast lots to see who shall search the island." So they cast lots, and the lot of Eurylochus came out first. So he went, and twenty men or so with him, and in the middle of the wood they found an open space, and in the space a palace, and all about it wolves and lions were wandering. The men were very much afraid of the beasts, but they did them no harm. Only they got up on their hind legs and fawned on them, as dogs fawn upon their master, hoping to get some scraps of food from him. And they heard the voice of some one who sat inside the palace and sang as she worked a loom, and a very sweet voice it was. Then said one of the men: "Let us call to this singer, and see whether she is a woman or a goddess." So they called, and a certain Circé, who was said to be a daughter of the Sun, came out, and asked them to go in. This they did, and also they drank out of a cup which she gave them. A cup of wine it seemed to be, mixed with barley-meal and honey, but she had put in it some strange drug, which makes a man forget all that he loves. And when they had drunk, lo! they were turned into pigs. They had snouts and bristles,

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and they grunted like pigs, but they had the hearts of men. And Circé shut them in sties, and gave them acorns and beech-mast to eat.

But Eurylochus had stayed outside when the others went in, and he ran back to the ship and told Ulysses what had happened. Then Ulysses armed himself, and said: "I will go and save these men." Nor would he listen when the others begged him not to go. "Thou wilt not do them any good," they said, "but wilt perish thyself." "Nay," he answered; "stay here if you will, and eat and drink; but I must go and rescue my men, for I am their chief."

So he went; and when he came near to the house, he saw a very beautiful youth, who had a golden stick in his hand. The youth said: "Ulysses, art thou come to rescue thy comrades? That thou canst not do. Thou wilt rather perish thyself. But stay; you are one that fears the gods, therefore they will help you. I will give you such a drug as shall make all Circé's drugs of no power. Drink the cup that she gives you, but first put into it this drug." So he showed Ulysses a certain herb which had a black root and a flower as white as milk. It was called Moly.

So Ulysses took the herb moly in his hand, and went and stood in the porch of Circé's palace, and called to her. And when Circé heard him she opened the door, and said, "Come in." Then he went in, and she made him sit on a great chair of carved oak, and gave him wine to drink in a gold cup. But she had mixed a deadly drug in the wine. So

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Ulysses took up the cup and drank, but before he drank he put the moly into it. Then Circé struck him with her wand, and said, "Go now to the sty, and lie there with thy fellows." But Ulysses drew his sword, and rushed at her, as if he would have killed her. She caught him by the knees and prayed him not to hurt her. And she said: "How is this, that my drugs do thee no harm? I did not think that there was any man on earth who could do so. Surely thou must be Ulysses, for Hermes told me that he would come to this island when he was on his way back to his home from Troy. Come now, let us be friends." But Ulysses said: "How can we be friends when thou hast turned my companions into swine? And now I am afraid that thou wilt do me some great harm if thou canst take me unawares. Swear to me then, by a great oath, that thou wilt not hurt me." So Circé swore.

Then her handmaids, very lovely women born in the springs and streams and woods, prepared a feast. One set purple rugs on the chairs, and another set silver tables by the chairs, and others put on the tables baskets of gold. Also they made ready a bath of hot water for Ulysses, and put some wonderful thing into the water, so that when he had bathed he did not feel tired any more. Then one of the women, who was the housekeeper, and whom they all obeyed, brought Ulysses some very fine wheaten bread, and set many dainty dishes on the tables. Then Circé said: "Eat and drink, Ulysses." But he sat and ate and drank nothing. "How is this?" she said. "Dost thou think that I will harm thee? Did I not

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swear a great oath that I would not?" And Ulysses said: "How can I eat and drink when my companions have been changed into brute beasts?"



ULYSSES AT THE TABLE OF CIRCE

Then Circé arose from her chair, and took her wand in her hand, and went to the sties where she had put the men that had been turned into swine. And she opened the doors of the sties, and rubbed a wonderful drug on each beast as he came out. And, lo! in a moment the bristles fell from their bodies, and they became men again, only they looked to be younger and more handsome than they were before. And when they saw their chief, they clung to him, weeping for joy. Even Circé herself felt a little pity.

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After this they all went into the palace, and ate and drank. And when they had finished their meal, Circé said to Ulysses: "Go now to thy ship, and put away all the goods that are in it and all the tackle in the caves that are on the sea-shore, and then come back here, and bring the rest of your comrades with you."

So Ulysses went. And when his companions saw him, they were very glad, for they had thought that he was lost. They were as glad as calves which have been penned in the yard all day when their mothers come back from the fields in the evening. But when Ulysses said to them: "Come back with me to the great house in the wood," Eurylochus said to them, "Don't go, my friends; if you do, you will be turned into lions or bears or pigs, and will be kept shut up for the rest of your lives. This foolhardy Ulysses is always leading us into trouble. Was it not he who took us to the cave of the Cyclops?" Ulysses was very angry when he heard this, and was ready to kill the man. But the others stopped him from doing it. "We will go with you," they said, "and if this man is afraid, let him stay by the ship." So they went with Ulysses, and Eurylochus himself, when he saw them go, went with them.

For a whole year Ulysses and his companions stayed with Circé. She feasted them royally, and they were well content to be her guests. But at the end of the year the men said to their chief: "Should we not be thinking of going home?" And he knew that they were right. So he said to Circé: "It is time for us to go home. Pray do what you can to help us on our

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way.” Circé said: “I would not keep a guest against his will.”

So they made their ship ready, and Circé and her handmaids brought down to the shore flesh and bread and wine in plenty, and they stored them away as provision for their voyage, and then they departed. But first Circé told Ulysses what things would happen to them by the way, and what he and his companions ought to do, and what they ought to avoid, if they wished to get safely home.

CHAPTER III

OF THE SIRENS AND OTHER WONDERS

THE first place they came to was the Island of Sirens. The Sirens were women of the sea, such as mermaids are, who sang so sweetly, and with such lovely voices, that no one who heard them could pass on his way, but was forced to go to them. But when he came near the Sirens flew upon him and tore him to pieces, and devoured him. So they sat there on their island, with the bones of dead men all round them, and sang. Now Circé had warned Ulysses about these dreadful creatures, and told him what he ought to do. So he closed the ears of his companions with wax so tightly that they could hear nothing. As for himself, he made his men tie him with ropes to the mast of the ship. "And see," he said, "that you don't loose me, however much I may beg and pray." As soon as the ship came near to the island the wind ceased to blow, and there was a great calm, and the men took down the sails, and put out their oars, and began to row. Then the Sirens saw the ship, and began to sing. And Ulysses, where he

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stood bound to the mast, heard them. And when he understood what they said he forgot all his prudence, for they promised just the thing that he wanted. For he was a man who never could know enough, he thought, about other countries and the people who dwelt in them, what they think and how they spend their days. And the Sirens said that they could tell him all this. Then he made signs with his head to his men, for his hands and feet were bound, that they should loose him. But they remembered what he had told them, and rowed on. And two of them even put new bonds upon him lest he should break the old ones. So they got safely past the Island of the Sirens.

And now Ulysses had to choose between two ways. One of them was through the Wandering Rocks. Circé had told him of these; that they were rocks which floated about in the sea, and that when any ship came near them they moved very fast through the water, and caught the ship between them and broke it up. So fast did they move that they caught even the birds as they flew. And Circé told him that only one ship had ever escaped them, and that this was the *Argo*, when the heroes went in it to fetch back the Golden Fleece. "This," said Circé, "was by the special favour of the gods, and because there were many children of the gods among the crew." So Ulysses thought it better not to try that way, though the other way was dreadful also.

After a while they saw what looked like smoke going up from the sea, and heard a great roar of the waves dashing upon the rocks, for they were coming near to another dangerous place which Circé had

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warned them about. This was a narrow place between the mainland and an island. On the one side there was a cave, in which there dwelt a terrible monster, Scylla by name, and on the other side there was a dreadful whirlpool. If a ship ever got into that, it was sucked down to the bottom of the sea and never came up again. Now, Circé had told Ulysses all about this place, and had told him what he should do. "It will be better," she had said, "to go near Scylla than to go near Charybdis; one or other of these two thou must do, for there is no room in the middle. It is true that Scylla will pounce down upon your ship when it comes within her reach, and will take out of it six men, one for each of the six heads which she has. But if you go too near to Charybdis then will your whole ship be swallowed up; and it is better to lose six men than that all should be drowned." And when Ulysses had said, "May I not take shield and spear and fight with this monster?" Circé had answered, "Thou art wonderfully bold; thou wouldst fight with the gods themselves. But be sure that thou canst not fight with Scylla; she is too strong for any man. And while you linger she will take six other men. No: fly from the place as fast as you can." So had Circé spoken to Ulysses, and he remembered what she had said; but he did not tell it to his companions, lest they should lose heart.

So now he bade the steersman steer the ship as near as he could to that side of the strait on which was Scylla's cave. Nevertheless, they went very close to the whirlpool. And a wonderful sight it was, for at one time you could see to the very bottom of the

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sea, and at another the water seemed to boil up almost to the top of the cliffs. Now, Ulysses had said nothing to his men about the monster on the other side, for he was afraid that if they knew about her they would not go on with their voyage. So they all stood and watched the whirlpool, and while they were doing this there came down upon the ship Scylla's dreadful hands, and caught up six of the crew, the bravest and strongest of them all. Ulysses heard them cry to him to help them, but he could do nothing to help them. And this, he used to say afterwards, was the very saddest thing that happened to him in all his troubles.

After this the ship came to the Island of the Three Capes, which is now called Sicily. And while they were still a long way off, Ulysses heard the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle. As soon as he heard these sounds he remembered what Circé had told him about the last of the dangers which he and his companions would meet on their way home. What Circé had said was this: "You will come, last of all, to a beautiful island, where the Sun keeps his herds and flocks. There are seven herds of cattle and fifty in each, and seven flocks of sheep of fifty also; and each has a nymph to look after it. Now, I advise you to sail by this island without landing. If you do, you will get safe home; but if you land, perhaps your men will kill some of the Sun's cattle and sheep for food. And if they do this, something dreadful is sure to happen to them." So Ulysses said to his men: "Listen to me. Circé told me that this island was a very dangerous place, and that we had better sail by

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it without landing, and that if we did we should get safe home. Think, now, how many of our companions have been lost, and that we only remain. Take my advice, I pray you, for some of us at least will be saved." But Eurylochus said: "Truly, Ulysses, you seem to be made of iron, for you are never tired, and now you would have us pass by this beautiful island without landing, though we have been working for days and nights without rest. And, besides, it is not safe to sail at night. Perhaps some storm will fall upon us, or a strong wind will spring up from the south or west, as it often does in these parts, and break our ship to pieces. No; let us stay for the night, and sleep on land, and to-morrow we will sail again on the sea till we get to our home." And all the others agreed with what he said. Then Ulysses knew that he was going to suffer some terrible thing. And he said: "You are many and I am one; so I cannot stop you from doing what you will. But swear all of you an oath, that if you find here any flock of sheep or herd of cattle, you will not touch them; no, however hungry you may be, but that you will be content with the food that Circé gave us."

So they all swore an oath that they would not touch sheep or cattle. Then they moored the ship in a creek, where there were little streams falling into the sea. And they took their meal upon the shore. After the meal they mourned for their companions whom Scylla had carried off from the ship, and when they had done this, they slept.

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The next morning Ulysses told them again that they must not touch the sheep or cattle, but must be content with the food that they had. And he told them also the reason: "These creatures," he said, "belong to the Sun, and the Sun is a mighty god, and he sees everything that men do over all the earth."

But now the wind blew from the south for a whole month, day after day, except some days when it blew from the east. Now, neither the south wind nor the east wind was good for their voyage, so that they could not help staying on the island. As long as any of the food that Circé had given them remained, they were content. And when this was eaten up they wandered about the island, searching for food. They snared birds and caught fishes, but they never had enough, and their hunger was very hard to bear. And Ulysses prayed to the gods that they would help him, but it seemed that they took no heed of him.

At last Eurylochus said to his companions: "Listen, my friends, to me, for we are all in a very evil case. Death is a dreadful thing, but nothing is so dreadful as to die of hunger, and this we are likely to do. Let us take some of these oxen and make a sacrifice to the gods, and when we have given them their portion we will eat the rest ourselves. And after the sacrifice we will pray to them that they will send us a favourable wind. Also we will promise to build a great and fair temple to the Sun when we get to our home. And if the Sun is angry on account of the oxen, and is minded to sink our ship, let it be so; it is better to be drowned than to die of hunger."

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To this they all agreed; and Eurylochus drove some of the fattest of the kine down to the shore, and the men killed them, and made sacrifice according to custom. They had no meal to sprinkle over the flesh, so they used leaves instead; and they had no wine, so they used water. And when they had done this, and were now beginning their feast, Ulysses, who had been asleep, awoke, and he smelt the smell of roast flesh, and knew that his companions had broken their oath, and had killed some of the beasts of the Sun.



MORNING

In the meantime, two of the nymphs that kept the cattle had flown up to the sky, and had told the Sun what had been done. And when the Sun heard it, he was very angry, and said to the other gods: “See now what these wicked companions of Ulysses

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have done. They have killed the cattle which it is my delight to see, both when I climb up the sky and when I come down from it. Now, if they are not punished for this evil deed, I will not shine any more upon the earth, but will give my light to the place of darkness that is underneath it." And the king of the gods answered, "Shine, O Sun, upon the earth as thou art wont to do. I will break the ship of these sinners with my thunderbolt while they are sailing on the sea."

Ulysses was very angry with his companions, and rebuked them for their folly, and because they had broken their oath. But he could not undo what had been done, for the kine were dead. And the men were greatly frightened by what they saw and heard; for the skins of the cattle that had been killed crept along the ground, and the flesh bellowed on the spits as if the beasts had been still alive. Nevertheless they did not leave off feasting on them. For six days they feasted, and on the seventh day they set sail.

For a time all seemed to go well, for the wind blew as they desired. But when they were now out of sight of land, suddenly all the sky was covered with a dark cloud, and a great wind came down upon the ship, and snapped the shrouds on either side of the mast. Then the mast fell backwards and broke the skull of the man that held the rudder and steered the ship, so that he fell into the sea. Next there came down a great thunderbolt from the sky, and the ship was filled with fire and smoke from one end of it to the other. And all the men were blown out of the ship, some on one side and some on the other. Only

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Ulysses was left. He stayed on the ship till the ribs were broken away from the keel by the waves. And when only the mast and the keel were left together, Ulysses bound himself by a thong of leather to them, and sat on them, and was driven by the wind over the waves. All night long was he driven, and when the day dawned he came to the passage where there was Scylla's cave on one side and the great whirlpool on the other. Now, there was a fig-tree that grew at the top of the cliff that was above the whirlpool. Circé had told Ulysses of this same tree, for she knew all things, and Ulysses remembered her words; and when the keel and the mast were carried up to the top, he caught hold of the branches. But he found that he could not climb any higher, so he waited till the keel and the mast should come again, for they had been swallowed up. For four hours or so he waited, and when he saw them again, he loosed his hold on the fig-tree, and caught hold of them, and sat upon them as he had done before. Now after the water had risen to the top, there was calm for a little time before it began to sink again, and Ulysses paddled with his hands as hard as he could, and so got away. By good luck Scylla did not see him, for if she had, he would most certainly have perished.

For eight days and nights Ulysses was carried by the winds and waves over the sea, and on the ninth day he came to a beautiful island where there dwelt a goddess, by name Calypso. There he lived for seven long years. Long they seemed, for though he had all that a man could wish for, yet he would

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gladly have gone home. “Oh!” he would say to himself, “if I could but see the smoke rising up from the chimneys of my own home!” But the island was far away in the midst of the sea, and no ship came near to it. So he could do nothing but wait.

CHAPTER IV

OF WHAT HAPPENED IN ITHACA

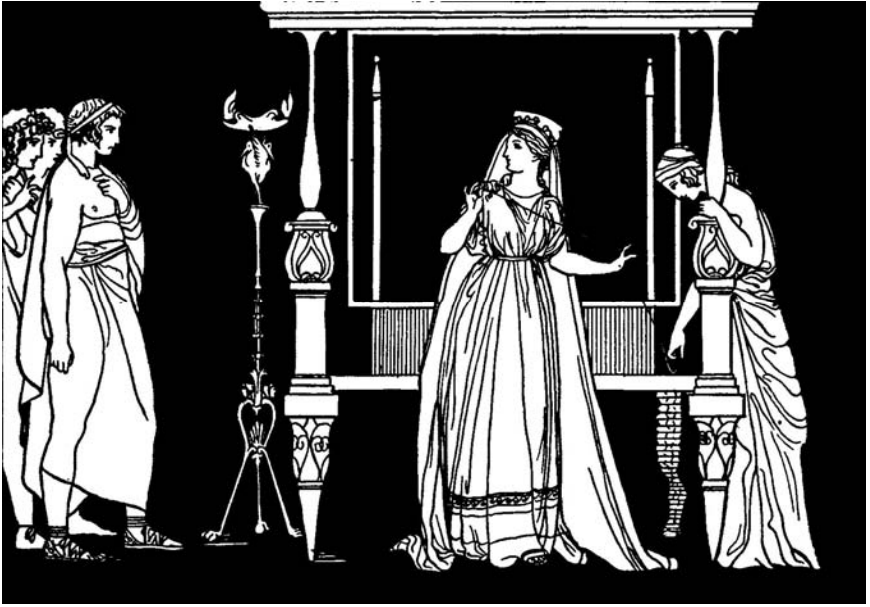
Now we must leave Ulysses in the island of Calypso, and see what was going on at his home in Ithaca. You have been already told that before he went to Troy he had married a wife, Penelopé by name, and had a son who was called Telemachus. When this son was still only a baby, Ulysses had to go to Troy with the other chiefs of the Greeks to fight with the Trojans. And now nearly twenty years had passed, and he had not come home: and no one knew what had become of him. What had happened to the other chiefs every one knew. Some had died during the siege, and others had perished on the way home, and the leader of them all had come back and been wickedly killed by his wife, and another had had to fly from his home and build a city in a distant country, and others had got back safely, sooner or later; but Ulysses was still absent, and, as has been said, no one knew where he was, or whether he was alive or dead. But it seemed most likely that he was dead. It is no wonder, then, that many of the young

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men among the nobles of Ithaca, and of the islands round about, came and tried to persuade his wife Penelopé to marry again. "It is of no use," they said, "for you to wait any longer for your husband. By this time he must be dead. And you ought to have some one to look after your property and your kingdom, for your son is too young to do this properly."

Now Penelopé believed in her heart that her husband was alive, and that he would come back; but she knew that hardly any one else believed it. And she felt very helpless. The people of Ithaca thought that she ought to marry again. They were very badly governed when there was no king. Even if the man whom she chose—for, of course, her husband would be king—was not very good, this would be better than to have a whole crowd of men coming day after day to the palace, eating and drinking and gambling, and wasting the king's goods. So she tried to gain time. She thought to herself: "If I can put off these people"—suitors they were called—"for a while, perhaps my husband will come back in the meanwhile." So she said to them: "You know that my husband's father is an old man, and that it would be a great disgrace to me if he were to die and there were no proper grave clothes to bury him in; for you know that he has been a king, and should be buried with honour. Let me weave a shroud for him, and when this is finished, then I will choose one from among you to be my husband." The Suitors were glad to hear this, for they said to themselves: "This weaving cannot take a very long time; and when it is finished, then one of us, at least,

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PENELOPE SURPRISED BY THE SUITORS

will get what he wants.” So they waited, but somehow the weaving was not finished. The truth was that the queen undid every night what she had done in the day. How long this would have gone on no one knows, but at last one of the women that waited on the queen told the secret to a friend of hers among the Suitors. That night three or four of them were taken by the woman to the queen’s own room, and found her undoing what she had done in the day. So the queen could not put the Suitors off any longer in this way; the shroud was finished, and she did not know what to do.

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Now there was one among the gods and goddesses who more than all the others cared for Ulysses. This was Athené, the goddess of Wisdom, and she loved Ulysses because he was so wise. And Athené thought to herself: "Now there are two things to be done: we must bring Ulysses back to his home; he has been away for twenty years, and that is enough, and too much. And we must not let Telemachus, his son, sit still any longer and do nothing, as if he did not care at all what has happened to his father, and whether he is alive or dead. It would be a bad thing if Ulysses were to come home and find out that Telemachus had never taken any pains to look for him or ask about him. For Telemachus is now a young man, and able to think and act." And Athené, being wise, saw that this was the first thing to do, for nothing could be worse than that, for any reason, father and son should not be good friends. And the way in which she stirred up Telemachus was this.

One day he sat among the Suitors, who were feasting and playing draughts in his father's house. Every day did they come thither, and they made a sad waste of the things which belonged to Ulysses. The sheep and oxen and swine were killed for their meat, and they drank the wines from his cellars. And Telemachus could do nothing, for he was but one against many. As he sat very sad at heart, there came a stranger to the door. Now this stranger was Athené, who had come down to the earth and taken a man's shape. When Telemachus saw him, he got up from his place and brought him in, and

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commanded his servants to set food and drink before him.

When he had ended his meal, Telemachus asked him his business. The stranger said: "I am Mentès; I am king of the Taphians, and I am on my way to Cyprus* with a cargo of iron, which I am going to exchange for copper. And I have come wishing to see your father, for I knew him and his father also. But now they tell me that he is not here. Something has hindered him from coming home, for I am sure that he is alive. But who are these? what are they doing here? Is this a wedding feast? A wise man would not like to see such doings in his house."

And Telemachus answered: "Oh, sir, while my father was yet alive, this house was rich and prosperous. But now that he is gone, things go very ill with me. It had been far better if he had fallen in battle fighting against the Trojans, but now the sea has swallowed him up. And these men are the princes of Ithaca and of the islands round about, and they come, they say, seeking my mother in marriage. She will neither say Yes nor No to them. Meanwhile they sit and waste my substance."

Then said Mentès: "It is indeed time that Ulysses should come back and put an end to such doings. But it is time also that you should do something for yourself. Now listen to me. First call the people of Ithaca to an Assembly. It is well to have the people on your side. Then bid the Suitors depart, each man to his house. And if your mother

* The word "Cyprus" means *copper*.

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be minded to take another husband, let her go back to her father's house, and let her own people make ready a wedding feast and other things such as a daughter should have. When these things are done, make ready a ship with twenty oars, and go inquire after your father; perhaps some man may have seen him or heard of him; perhaps the gods themselves will give you an answer if you ask them. Go first to Pylos, where the old man Nestor lives. After that go to Sparta, and see King Menelaus, for he was the last of all the Greeks to get back to his home. And if you should find out that your father is dead, then raise a mound for him, and give him such honours as are due to the dead. And if these Suitors still trouble you, then devise some way of slaying them. It is time for you to behave yourself as a man."

Telemachus said: "You speak to me as a father might speak to his son, nor will I ever forget what you have said. But come now, stay awhile, that I may give you some goodly gift such as a friend should give to a friend."

"Nay," said Mentès, "I cannot stay. Keep your gift, I pray you, till I come again."

So he rose from his seat, and went out at the door. And lo! of a sudden he seemed to change his shape. It was as if he were changed into a sea-eagle. And Telemachus knew that this stranger was not Mentès, but the goddess Athené. And he went back to the hall of the palace, where a minstrel, Phemius by name, was telling the tale of how the Greeks came back from Troy, and of the many things which

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they suffered because they had sinned against the gods. And lo! in the midst of his telling, Penelopé came down from the upper chamber where she sat, having two handmaids with her. She stood in the door of the hall, having drawn her veil over her face, and said to the minstrel: “Phemius, you know many tales about the deeds of gods and men. Tell one of these, and let the guests hear it while they drink their wine. But tell this tale no more, for it breaks my heart to hear it. Surely I am the most unhappy of women, for of all the chiefs that went to Troy, and never came back to their homes, my husband was the most famous.”

Then said Telemachus: “Mother, why do you forbid the minstrel to make us glad in the way that he thinks best? Why do you forbid him to sing of the coming back of the Greeks? ’Tis a new tale, and men always like to hear that which is new. Go back, then, to your chamber, and mind the business of the house, and see that your maids do their work, their spinning and the like. But here I am master.”

And Penelopé went back to her chamber without answering a word, for never had Telemachus spoken in such a way before. But she wept for Ulysses her husband, till sleep came down upon her eyes.

And when she was gone, Telemachus said to the Suitors: “Let us now feast and be merry, and let there be no quarrelling among us. And let us listen to the minstrel’s tale. What could we do better, for his voice is as the voice of a god. But mark this. To-

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morrow we will have an Assembly of the people, and there I will declare my purpose. And my purpose is this—that you go away from this place, and eat and drink in your own homes at your own cost.”

And they were astonished at his boldness, just as his mother had been astonished, for he had never so spoken before. And one of them, whose name was Antinoüs, said: “Surely it is some god that makes you speak so boldly. I hope that you will never be king here in Ithaca, though it is but right that you should have that which belonged to your father.”

Telemachus said: “I know that it is a good thing to be a king, for a king has riches and honour. But there are many here in Ithaca, young men and old, who may have the kingdom now that Ulysses is dead. Only this I know, that I will be master in my own house.”

Then stood up another of the Suitors, and said: “It is for the gods to settle who shall be king in Ithaca; but that you ought to be master in your own house, and keep your own goods, no man will deny. But tell me, who was this stranger that came just now to the palace? Did he bring news of your father, or did he come on business of his own? Why did he not stay to greet us? He was no common man, I take it.”

Telemachus answered: “As for tidings of my father, I do not make any count of them, whoever it is that brings them; Ulysses will come back no more. And as for the soothsayers whom my mother loves

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to entertain, that find out for her what has befallen her husband, I think nothing of them. They are makers of lies. As for this stranger about whom you ask: he was Mentés, king of the Taphians." So he said, but he knew in his heart that the stranger was Athéné.

Then the Suitors feasted, and made merry with singing and dancing, till the night was far spent; and they went each man to his own home to sleep. But Telemachus went to his chamber, and Eurycleia, who had been his nurse when he was but a baby, led the way, holding a torch in either hand, to light him. And when he came to the chamber, he took off his doublet and gave it to the nurse, and she folded it and smoothed it, and hung it on a pin. This done, she went out and pushed to the door and made it fast. But Telemachus lay long awake, thinking of the journey which he was about to take.

CHAPTER V

HOW TELEMACHUS WENT TO LOOK FOR HIS FATHER

THE next day, as soon as it was light, Telemachus sent the officers to call the people to the Assembly. And when the people heard the call, they came quickly, for such a thing had not happened now for many years. And, when they were all gathered together, Telemachus himself went, holding a spear in his hand, and with two dogs at his heels. And when he sat down in his father's place all who were there wondered to see him, for he looked not like the boy but like a man.

The first that stood up in the Assembly was a certain old man, Aegyptus by name—very old he was, so that he was almost bent double, and he was very wise. He had four sons, but one was dead, for he had gone with Ulysses to Troy, and had died, with the rest of Ulysses' companions, on his way back, as has been told. Another son was one of the Suitors; and two were with their father, working on the farm. Aegyptus said: "Listen to me, men of Ithaca! who has called us together to-day? Is it

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Telemachus who has done this? If it is he, what does he want? Has he heard anything of his father, and of the men who went with him to fight against Troy?"

Then Telemachus stood up in his place and said: "Men of Ithaca, I am in great trouble. First, I fear that my father is dead, and you, who all loved him, feel for me. And then there have come men from all the islands round about, making suit to my mother, and while they wait they devour my substance. But my mother will not listen to any one of them, for she still believes that her husband will come back. Yes; they waste all that I have, and I cannot hinder them from doing it."

And he dashed his spear on the ground, and sat down weeping. Then one of the Suitors, Antinoüs by name, stood up and said: "Telemachus, do not blame us, but blame your mother. Surely there never was so crafty a woman." And he told the people the story of the web, how she wove it by day and unwove it by night. "Do not let her put us off any longer. Make her choose one of us and marry him. But till you do this, we will not leave your house."

Then said Telemachus: "How could I do this to my own mother? It would be against my duty as a son. And besides, I should have to pay a great sum of money to her father, all the dowry that she brought with her. No; I cannot do this thing."

And when he had ended his speech there happened a strange thing. Two eagles were seen high up in the air, which flew along till they came to the

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place where the Assembly was. Then they fought together, and tore from each other many feathers.

Then said a certain man who knew what such things meant: "Beware, ye Suitors; great trouble is coming to you and to others. As for Ulysses, he said that he should come back to Ithaca in the twentieth year after his going, and that, I verily believe, he will do."

Then Telemachus spake again: "Give me a ship with twenty rowers, and I will go to the mainland, to certain kings who went to Troy with my father, as Nestor and Menelaus. And if I hear that he is dead, I will come back, and make a great mound for him that will keep his name in remembrance, and I will also make my mother choose another husband."

Then stood up one Mentor, whom Ulysses had made steward of his house when he went away, and said: "I am ashamed of this people of Ithaca. There is not one of them who remembers Ulysses, and yet he was as gentle as a father with them. Let no king henceforth be gentle and kind. Let him rather be a hard man and unrighteous, for then his people will remember him. See, now, these Suitors, how they are bent on doing evil. Well, I will not hinder them. They will have to suffer for what they do. But the people I blame. See, now, how they sit without saying a word, when they ought to cry shame upon the Suitors; and yet they are many in number and the Suitors are few."

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Then stood up one of the Suitors, and said: "Surely, Mentor, your wits are wandering, when you bid the people put us down by force. They could not do it. And if Ulysses himself came back, he could not do it. He would come to a bad end if he fought with us, for we are many in number. And as for the ship and the twenty rowers that Telemachus asks for, let Mentor find them for him. As for me, I do not think that he will be able to do it."

Then the Assembly was dismissed. And Telemachus went down to the sea-shore; and after he had washed his hands in the sea, he prayed to Athené, saying: "Hear me, O goddess, thou didst bid me yesterday take a ship and rowers and ask about my father—yes, it was thou, though it seemed as if King Mentos was speaking to me—but the Suitors hinder me, and the people will not help. I pray thee, therefore, to put it into my heart what I should do."

And while he was yet speaking, Athené stood before him, and she had taken the shape of Mentor the steward. She said: "Be brave; you have spirit and wit; and are, I take it, a true son of your father and mother. Go now on this journey, for I trust that it will turn out to your profit. As for the Suitors, take no thought about them; they speak folly, and do not know the doom that is coming upon them. Make ready provisions for a journey, wine and meat; meanwhile I will collect men who will offer of their own free will to go with you, and I will also find a ship, the best in all Ithaca."

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So Telemachus went back to the palace, and he found the Suitors flaying goats and singeing swine for their dinner. And Antinoüs caught him by the hand, and said: "Come now, Telemachus; eat and drink with us, and we will find a ship and rowers for you, that you may be able to go whither you will, and ask after your father." But Telemachus said: "Do you think that I will eat and drink with you, who are wasting my substance in this shameful fashion? Be sure that I will have my revenge on you. And if you will not let me have a ship of my own, then I will sail in another man's." And another of the Suitors said: "What now will Telemachus do? Will he get men from Pylos, where old Nestor lives, or from Sparta, where King Menelaus is, to fight against us? Or, maybe, he will put poison in our wine, and so destroy us."

And another said: "What if he should perish himself as his father has perished? It would be a great business dividing his property. As for his house, we would give it to his mother and the man whom she may choose for her husband."

So they made sport of him. But he went to the store-room of the palace, where there were laid up casks of old wine, and olive oil, and clothing, and plates of gold and silver and copper. All these things were in the charge of his nurse Eurycleia. Telemachus said to her: "Look out for me twelve jars of wine, not the best, but the second best, and twenty measures of barley meal. I will come for them to-night when my mother is asleep, for I am going to

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Pylos and to Sparta, to see whether I can hear anything about my father.”

But the old woman cried out: “Oh, my son, why will you travel abroad, you an only son? Your father has perished; will you perish also? These wicked men, the Suitors, will plot against you and kill you. Surely it would be better to sit quietly at home.”

Telemachus said: “Mother, I must go, for it is the gods that bid me. Swear now that you will say nothing to my mother about it for ten or twelve days, unless, indeed, she should ask you about me: then you must say for what I am gone.”

So the old woman swore that she would say nothing. And Telemachus went among the Suitors, and behaved as if he had nothing on his mind. Meanwhile Athené, in Mentor's shape, had got a crew of sailors together, persuading them to go as no man could have persuaded them. And she borrowed a ship, for no man could refuse to lend her what she asked for. And lest the Suitors should come to know of what was going on, she caused a deep sleep to fall upon them. They slept each man in his chair. And then she came to the palace, and she still had the shape of Mentor, and called Telemachus out, saying to him, “The rowers are ready: let us go.”

So the two went down to the shore, and found the ship, and the ship's crew ready to go on board. And Telemachus said: “Come now, my friends, to my room at the palace, for there I have stored away the meat and the drink that we want for the voyage. One woman only knows about the

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matter; not my mother, nor any of her maids, but only my old nurse.”

So they went up to the palace, and carried all the provisions themselves to the shore, and stowed it away in the ship. And Telemachus went on board, and sat down on the stern, and Mentor, that was really Athené, sat down by him. And he told the sailors to make ready to start.

First, they pushed off the ship from the shore. Then they raised the mast, which was made of a pine tree, and lay along the deck in a kind of crutch that was made for it. A hole was ready in which to put the end. So the men raised it, and made it fast with ropes on both sides. And they hauled up the sail with ropes made of ox hide. And the wind filled the sail, and the ship went quickly through the water, the sea bubbling and foaming about it as it went, and Telemachus poured wine out of a bowl, praying to the god of the sea, and to Zeus that he might have a prosperous voyage. So all the night the ship sped along till the dawn began to show in the east.