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THE RETURN
OF ODYSSEUS



MARION MILLS MILLER

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THE RETURN OF ODYSSEUS

A GREEK CHORIC PLAY
IN TWO CONTINUOUS ACTS SEPARATED BY
AN INTERLUDE OF VISIONS

By MARION MILLS MILLER
Litt. D. (Princeton)

Editor of "The Classics—Greek and Latin"; Translator of
"The Sicilian Idyls of Theocritus," etc.



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Carnegie Hall, New York, N. Y.



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MAIN

Preface

THIS play, while suited to the stage of the regular theater, is especially intended for performance in the open air, particularly within the stadia of our universities.

All but two of the speaking characters being women, it is peculiarly adapted to the requirements of women's schools and colleges.

Unlike the plots of the original Greek dramas, the story of the play is familiar to all persons possessing a good education in English alone, and the passions depicted, patriotism and comradeship, and love in all its natural aspects — between husband and wife, parent and child, mistress and maid, as well as between man and woman — appeal no less to the modern than to the ancient mind. Motives such as incest and matricide, which were favorites with the Greek populace, but which are abhorrent to people of the present day, are entirely omitted, and the doctrines of the *hybris*, pride, and of *nemesis*, its punishment, while these have been introduced as the essential religious elements of Greek drama, are paraphrased, as it were, so that the ancient theological aspect of the "sin" is obliterated in the universal ethical aspect. For dramatic as well as moral reasons this treatment may be justified. The purpose of the stage, says Shakespeare, is to show "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," not to galvanize an ancient

mummy to a mockery of life by a mechanical substitute for a spirit which, happily for good art and good taste, as well as good morals, has forever fled.

In fine, the present play is written not for archeological scholars but for average Americans — people who do not pretend to like what is alien to their natures in order to acquire a reputation for academic culture, and who, if they are to catch any measure of the Greek spirit, must mark its rhythm by the pulse of the red blood bounding in their own veins.

The play is open, from the scholar's standpoint, to the charge of anachronism, both constructive and specific, but this, it is maintained, is of form and fact rather than of spirit. Sappho, Theocritus, the Greek epigrammatists, and even the Latin Ovid, have been sources of phrase and legend, as well as Homer, although the action depicted is pre-Homeric. Even Homer himself is represented as a contemporary of Odysseus, the author's justification being the artistic if not the scholarly one that in "poetic justice" the blind bard ought to have come into personal contact with the heroes whom he depicted and whom he robbed of their proper laurels by ascribing their deeds to the gods.

Feminism, the spirit of woman, is presented as a dramatic motive, with the justification that it was rampant in ancient Greece, as witness the comedy of Aristophanes called "The Ecclesiazusae," or "The Women in Congress," a play which in a modern presentation that would paraphrase its timely wit might be very properly denominated "The Suffragettes."

In one lyric a modern invention (unless we recognize as its prototype the artificial wings of Daedalus), the aeroplane, is mentioned as a symbol of man's domination of the air, which was deemed in ancient times no less than in the present day a human right and ultimate achievement.

In short, the essential purpose of *THE RETURN OF ODYSSEUS* has been to portray those phases of ancient life and thought and spirit which are also modern, doing so without regard to any special classic era, and employing any means of representation which universally obtains in order that these subjects may be comprehended by the modern non-scholastic mind.

Because of dramatic requirements certain liberties have been taken with the classic story which forms the plot of the play. For example, the slaughter of the suitors takes place in the Banquet Hall, and this did not permit of the preceding open-air scene described by Homer, where Odysseus wins the contest in archery.

Wherever practicable, however, the narrative of Homer has been faithfully followed. To this end, with a few adaptations necessary to make artistic compositions, the descriptions of the "visions" of Penelope (the various adventures of Odysseus on his way home from Troy) are given in the words of the *Odyssey* as rendered in that best of all English translations, the version of Butcher and Lang, which, being in Biblical prose, imparts to the English ear that effect of sacred associations which the original possessed for the Homer-reverencing Greek.

The artistic spirit of the play proper is that of Aristophanes rather than of the Greek tragedians, especially in the employment of the chorus for spectacular and aesthetic effects. Nevertheless none of the Greek dramatic unities as observed by these tragedians is violated. The scene is the same throughout, and the action is continuous, taking place within less than the time of one day. The far more important unities of the modern, or, better, the universal, stage, are also observed. The actors are persons who would naturally be present, and their exits and entrances are appropriately timed; the "properties" are few and simple and ready at hand, and the theatrical devices — visions, statue-poses, and choruses — are far better suited to the occasion of their introduction than is usually the case in modern light opera, to which the play is aesthetically related.

The "visions," while with a few exceptions they would be more artistically, though very incompletely, presented in the form of tableaux or "living pictures," may also be shown by the cinematograph, and thus reduce the number of the cast.

The play is frankly English in verse form, for the author, who has metrically translated several Greek poets, believes that any attempt to reproduce in a modern tongue the classic measures not only must fall far short of the original in artistic effect, but must also violate the principles of rhythm native to the languages of the present day. Thus to write "Sapphics" or Homeric hexameters in English, one must substitute for accent (the native, essential element of our prosody) the element of classic quantity,

which is worse than exotic, being utterly extinct and unrevivable as a practical metrical principle. The best that can be done in true English rhythmic translation is to produce, not the identical aesthetic effect of the original Greek measures, but an equivalent effect. Thus Chapman, an English dramatist of the intensely dramatic Elizabethan age, translated Homer dramatically, even theatrically, for example, swelling the simple phrase, so thrilling to the reverential Greek, "When holy Troy shall fall," to "When holy Troy shall shed her towers for tears of overthrow"—a grandiose figure of speech perfectly suited to the boundless imagination of Chapman's time, and, in spite of its recognized incongruity, appealing with a measure of its former strength to the more controlled artistic sense of the present day.

Now to impart a modern equivalent effect of Greek poetry the blank verse usually employed by English translators and imitators is, except in rare passages, singularly inadequate, since, while the Greeks wrote in what technically may be called blank verse, their lines throughout were rich in tone-color, or sound symbolism, which in the evolution of phonetic art has received in English poetry the culminating addition of end rime. Rimed verse, especially in choruses, gives a nearer equivalent than English blank verse for the lyric effect of the Greek original which is necessarily lost in translation and imitation. Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon," vibrant with sensuous symbolism of sound and idea, reproduces the animated effect of Greek poetry where the "Merope" of Matthew Arnold, though severely classic in form, im-

parts an impression of corpse-like coldness. The recent revival of interest in ancient Greek tragedies is largely due to the fact that these are presented in the excellent rimed versions of Dr. Gilbert Murray.

The verse of the present play, while rife in rime, is otherwise intentionally "flat" in tone-color, especially in the more dramatic scenes, since the action has been held by the author to be more important than poetic form, and the "reader's attention" has therefore been concentrated upon it in obedience to the dictum of Herbert Spencer. In every respect language has been subordinated to that expression of ideas which is produced by emotional gesture and facial expression. The text is thus virtually a libretto of the dance, taking the latter term in the inclusive sense of all choric movements.

The action of the play, in its aesthetic aspect, is Hellenic in a modified form, being a physical interpretation of the Greek spirit according to the system of François Delsarte, which, because of the non-essential mystical claims made for it by its originator, and the unintelligent application of it by many of his disciples, has fallen somewhat into disrepute. Nevertheless this is capable of high development, and seems to be the only system of bodily expression of emotion by which the puerile ballet may be exalted into a really high art-form. At least it is a coherent philosophy of expression, and of this the choric art is sadly in need. For example, few dancers understand, except instinctively, the natural relation between motion and pose, namely, that the latter should never stand by itself, but always be preceded by action —

the more energetic the better. I have seen an entertainment in which a woman, who had previously demonstrated her ability as a dancer by most artistic renditions of the violent movements of a nautch-girl, appeared in a succession of poses with the least possible action between them. The entertainment was naturally a failure, and the shallow critics explained this by saying that the public was "unappreciative of high art," desiring only dancing of the violent, "vulgar" sort.

The so-called choruses of the present play are essentially ballets, full of action, entertaining in itself, but, it is hoped, much more highly pleasing because of the symbolism involved. The poses, which in every instance are cases of arrested motion, have the same character. Since the latter are reproductions of classic statues which are meaningless to many people because these do not possess sufficient imagination to conceive of the action with its underlying thought and emotion leading up to the pose presented, the play, it is hoped by the author, will be recognized by teachers to possess interpretative value in the field of art education.

Pictures of the statues referred to in the matter of poses are all to be found in Bulfinch's "Age of Fable," and most of them in Harper's "Classical Dictionary," not to speak of specific works on classical art in the reference department of every well equipped public library.

THE RETURN OF ODYSSEUS

Persons of the Play

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

ODYSSEUS . . .	<i>King of Ithaca</i>
TELEMACHUS . . .	<i>Son of Odysseus</i>
PHEMIUS . . .	<i>A blind minstrel</i>
PENELOPE . . .	<i>Queen of Odysseus</i>
EURYCLEIA . . .	<i>Nurse of Odysseus</i>
EURYNOME . . .	<i>The house-mistress</i>

MAIDENS OF PENELOPE (THE CHORUS)

ADRASTE <i>Leader</i>	DAPHNE
ALCANDRE	DYMAS
ALCIPPE	EURYMEDUSA
ARETE	IANTHE
CHLORIS	PERSE
CLYTIE	PHYLO

and others, since the number of the Chorus may be indefinitely extended.

IN PANTOMIME

ATHENE, *the goddess, as Iphthime, sister of Penelope.*

MORPHEUS, *as precentor of Penelope's dream.*

IN VISIONS

ODYSSEUS

Companions of Odysseus

EURYLOCHUS

POLITES

THE LOTUS EATERS

POLYPHEMUS, *the Cyclops.*CIRCE, *the enchantress.*HERMES, *herald of the gods.**Souls in Hades*TEIRESIAS, *the Theban seer.*ANTICLEIA, *mother of Odysseus.*

THE SIRENS

CALYPSO, *the goddess of the isle Ortygia.*INO, *a sea-nymph.*NAUSICAA, *princess of Phaeacia.*ALCINOUS, *king of Phaeacia.*ATHENE, *patron goddess of Odysseus.*ARGOS, *the old hound of Odysseus.*SAILORS, CYCLOPES, SPIRITS, MAIDENS, and
COURTIERS.

SCENE

The outer court of the Palace of Odysseus in Ithaca, supposed to be on an elevation facing the sea. High steps lead up to the pillared porch of the palace. Between the two central pillars are seen the open doors, leading to the central Banquet Hall. On the right of the porch is the entrance to the Chamber of Penelope. On the left of the porch is the entrance to the Armory. In the center of the court is an altar, which serves not only for worship of the gods, but also as a support for the actors in various statue-poses.

TIME

The evening of one day, and the morning of the next.

Argument

THE plot presented is the dénouement of the *Odyssey* of Homer, the return of Odysseus to Ithaca after an absence of twenty years, the last ten of which he has spent in wandering homeward after the fall of Troy. He is supposed to be dead, and Penelope, his queen, is sought in marriage by a horde of princely suitors who fill her palace and waste her substance. She has thus far contrived to delay the choice of a husband forced on her, by weaving by day a shroud for old Laërtes, Odysseus' father, who is still living, and unweaving it by night. This subterfuge is no longer available, and her decision must be made on the morrow. She appears on the scene, interrupting the song of Phemius, the blind minstrel, telling of the "pitiful return of the Achaeans from Troy." Eurycleia, the old nurse of Odysseus, enters from the Banquet Hall, and the Maidens of Penelope from the side doors. They perform the choruses, "The Passage of the Banquet Hall," descriptive of the sottishness of the suitors, and "The Weaving," descriptive of Penelope's labors. Penelope dismisses her maidens, and beseeches the gods to give her assurance whether Odysseus be alive or dead. This they grant in the form of visions of him in his wanderings, the last visions showing him landed in the guise of a beggar on the shore of Ithaca.

She awakens comforted and prepares for the homecoming of her lord. Taking Eurycleia, the old nurse of Odysseus, into her confidence, she bids her divert the maidens with ancient stories calculated to imbue them with patriotism, while she gets ready arms and armor for Odysseus. Led by Eurycleia, the maidens perform the chorus, "The Hunting of the Boar," in which is recounted a youthful exploit of Odysseus in which he came near to losing his life, being wounded by an infuriated boar. Eurycleia makes the story symbolic of the ravage of Ithaca by the suitors, and the coming rescue by Odysseus; and Penelope, returning, inspires the maidens with loyal zeal by showing them what part women can play in crises, such as the one approaching, by giving spiritual assistance to the men.

As their patriotic fervor is at its height, Telemachus enters from the Banquet Hall with Odysseus, who is disguised in a beggar's cloak. Penelope, instructed by the vision, recognizes him, and impulsively starts toward him with a cry on her lips, but, being restrained by his look of warning, artfully applies her actions and words to Telemachus. The prince reproves her, directing her to attend to the needs of the guest, whom he represents to be a companion of Odysseus. Odysseus refuses Penelope's attentions, but accepts those of Eurycleia, and departs with the old nurse to the queen's chamber.

Telemachus is brooding over some insult that has happened in the Banquet Hall, and, to lift up his spirit, Penelope orders her maidens to perform a choric dance representing the foot-race of Hippo-

menes and Atalanta, the part of the former being taken by Telemachus, and the part of the latter by one of the maidens. Telemachus applies the moral of the story, strife ending in love, as an omen of happy conclusion of present troubles, and dismisses the maidens. Alone, with his mother he informs her of what she has already divined, that the guest is Odysseus himself, as he had discovered by secretly observing the stranger's actions.

He tells her that, disclosing himself to his father, they had entered the Banquet Hall to test the temper of the suitors, and were despitely used, and that Odysseus was now resolved upon full and speedy vengeance with the bow.

Still awaiting Odysseus' return from the queen's chamber, Penelope summons her maidens and orders them to perform the Archer's Chorus, imitating the bowmen at Troy. Eurycleia enters in the midst of the dance, and bids it cease. She discloses that the stranger guest is Odysseus, discovered by her through the scar made in his youth by the wild boar's tusk. Odysseus enters clothed in armor, over which, however, he wears the beggar's cloak. The maidens greet him, and in their name Eurycleia promises their spiritual assistance. Under her leadership they represent in choric dance "The Origin of the Bow," which is a graphic narrative of the slaying of the Snake, the symbol of evil, by the Arrow, the symbol of Nemesis.

Odysseus relates the legend of Apollo slaying the Python in this connection, ending with the story of the establishment of the Pythian Games in commem-

oration of the deed. Telemachus and the Maidens enact in pantomime the athletic games, taking poses of various Greek statues. At the close they perform a chorus, "The Vengeance of the Bow," in which the slaying of Niobe's children by Apollo and Diana is represented, and the various poses of the "Niobe group" of sculptures are taken.

Odysseus and Telemachus approach the altar and invoke various gods for success in their coming battle. They then throw back the doors of the Banquet Hall, and, rushing within, engage in the Slaughter of the Suitors. Penelope, standing on the porch, describes the action to the maidens in the court below, who reflect it in their emotive movements and expressions.

The play ends with Phemius emerging on the porch and completing his opening pitiful song with a joyous ending; Odysseus and Telemachus reappearing victorious from the contest in the Banquet Hall; and the maidens in the court below waving palm branches in a Dance of Triumph.

Act I

THE DESPAIR OF PENELOPE

Evening; there is a full moon.

Revelry of the suitors within the Banquet Hall. Through the open door of the Hall Phemius comes forward, and, standing on the porch, sings to the accompaniment of his harp:

SONG

THE PITIFUL RETURN OF THE ACHÆANS

“And his song was of the pitiful return of the Achæans that Pallas Athene laid on them as they came back from Troy.”

PHEMIUS

HO for the homeward bound,
Aias! Already thine ears
Catch in the joy of the sound
Omen of welcoming cheers;

Ay, but ever thy folk
Greet thee, the godhead defied,
Hurling the lightning stroke,
Layeth thee low in thy pride.

Wo for thy coming home,
 Great Agamemnon, king!
 Over the flying foam
 Swiftly the white sails wing,
 Bearing thee on to thy goal,
 The Treason within thy gates —
 Love in her eyes, in her soul
 Death, by the doom of the Fates!

Oh for thy sweet return,
 Dear Odysseus, lord!
 Heavy the hearts are that yearn,
 Eyes are weary that ward ——

“Now as the renowned minstrel was singing to the woers . . . from her upper chamber the daughter of Icarius, wise PENELOPE, caught the glorious strain and went down the high stairs from her room. . . . Then she fell a-weeping and spake” (*appearing at top of palace steps at right, and breaking in upon the pitiful song*):

PENELOPE

Cruel, O Phemius, cruel and inhuman!
 O minstrel dear, the piteous strain give o'er.
 For never wo as this was laid on woman,
 So mighty grows my longing evermore
 For his dear head, whose fame by friend and foeman
 Is noised from windy Troy to Argos' shore.

Phemius withdraws to the Banquet Hall. Penelope descends the steps to the side of the altar and communes with herself:

Ten weary years, my boy my sole defender,
Have I, to balk the suitor train abhorred,
Matched with a woman's wife my spindle slender
Against the rude enforcement of the sword.
Now fails my heart, and with a foe so tender
I may not strive; I die without my lord.

Day-long there rises from my blood-stained valleys
The bellowed terror of the boding steer;
And night-long in my lust-polluted palace
The riot of the lords afflicts mine ear;
And, day and night enmeshéd by their malice,
I see the fatal hour of doom draw near.

A few more days, and not a kid remaineth
To flesh the insatiate hunger of the steel;
A few more nights, and wasteful revel draineth
The wine-jar last to lose the ancient seal;
Then, ere yon orb unto a crescent waneth,
The rage of thwarted passion shall I feel.

But little then will serve this light deceiving,
The fruitless labor of the barren loom,
The weary web, the weaving and unweaving;
Yet courage, heart, Odysseus' craft assume;
Better to break a-work than waste a-grieving,
Still with Laërtes' shroud delay thy doom.

Then come, my maidens, softly, softly treading,
Till safe beneath the stars ye fear no wrong;
Come bearing distaffs in your hands, and threading
The flaxen twist, the while ye steal along;

And, for the guidance of my fancy, wedding
The warp of woven steps and woof of song.

The Maidens of Penelope, bearing distaffs and strands of flax, enter right and left, in single files, moving to slow music. The right file is led by Eury-nome, the left by Adraste.

CHORUS

THE PASSAGE OF THE BANQUET HALL

EURYNOME

Hist!

ADRASTE

Hush, maidens all!

EURYNOME

Silence in chambers—

Eurycleia appears suddenly from the Banquet Hall in the center in great agitation.

EURYCLEIA

Peace in the hall;
Over the house of Odysseus, quiet.
Heavy with wine,
Weary with riot,
Suitor and server

Slumber like swine.
Wo for the blot on the palace's name!
Aï, aï, the house's shame!

MAIDENS

Aï, the shame!

EURYCLEIA

Like as a swallow,
Eaves-seeking, estrayed
The lintels within
Of shriné Apollo,
Stricken with dread,
Circles to win
Out of the hollow
Of dim, silent things
Unto the joy of the wide air's dominions;
Yet swift as her wings
Havenward hurtle,
Ay, ever she swings,
On terror-pulsed pinions
That pause not nor falter,
Backward in flight,
Her eyes quick dartle:

They see the gray altar:
The bones gleam white
Through garlands still green
And half-charred embers;
They see, and the sight
No mortal has seen,

Or, seeing, remembers,
Since death is his doom —
They see by the light
Of the sun-flooded portal,
Self-shapen from gloom,
Beautiful, bright,
And towering in glory and grandeur and might,
The godhead immortal!

So I, in error
Birdlike, darting
The suitors among
Drunken in hall,
Backward in terror
A breathing space starting,
Forward flung
Swift through them all,
As senseless they slumbered like cattle in stall;
Yet brief as I lingered,
With anguish sharp
The shame and the wrong
Were graven deep
Into my soul:
There Phemius fingered,
Nerveless, his harp
As though in mid-song
O'ertaken by sleep;
Cheek to board, lip to bowl,
His locks deep stained
In the pooléd gore
Of dark lees of wine,
Eurymachus lay like a victim supine.

Then, ere I had gainéd
 The farther door,
 Lordly, divine,
 Imperious, tall,
 Antinoüs rose in the midst of the hall
 From his seat on the throne;
 And forth from his face
 Clear cut as in stone,
 His eyes' soft langour,
 His lips' curling grace,
 The deity shone,
 For the finger of Fate sets its seal on its own;
 And nameless anger,
 And hope without name
 Smote through my soul and thrilled through my
 frame,
Aĩ, aĩ, the house's shame!

MAIDENS

Aĩ, the shame.

Penelope, wringing her hands, walks away from the maidens to the side of the court.

EURYNOME

Cease for our queen's sake, Eurycleia dear,
 Thy raven croakings of the house's shame!
 For these ring ever in her troubled ear
 And wake vain sorrow. Equally I blame
 Thy cuckoo calls of spring in winter drear;
 Why weave within the meshes of her brain
 Strands of a baseless hope to be unwrought again?

Our task is fairer, maidens, for we feign
 In endless windings, endless trickery
 Whereby our lady's craft and cunning gain
 Respite from wrong, comfort in constancy,
 And solace for the ever gnawing pain,
 The smoldering flame that in her bosom burns
 Which will not die until our lord returns.

CHORUS

THE WEAVING

STROPHE

(Eurynome and half of the maidens)

Weaving a-weaving,
 What are ye weaving
 Maidens all?

ANTISTROPHE

(Adraste and the other maidens)

Weaving a-weaving,
 A shroud are we weaving,
 Shroud and a pall.

STROPHE

Weaving a-weaving,
 Strange shroud are ye weaving
 And lordly attire
 In cloth of gold.

ANTISTROPHE

Yea, we are are weaving
A shroud for the living,
Odysseus' sire,
The gardener old.

STROPHE

Weaving a-weaving,
Why needeth the living
Garment so grim?

ANTISTROPHE

Weaving a-weaving,
For youth is he grieving;
His senses grow dim.

STROPHE

But fair is the mourning
And rich the adorning
To grieve for the past.

ANTISTROPHE

Ay, but to hoping
Through blindness and groping,
Day dawns at last.

STROPHE

No more he discerneth
The blooms that unfold,

And ever he yearneth
For smell of the mold;
No more for him breaketh
The sun-bright morn,
No more he awaketh
To scent of the thorn;
What means this derision
To age-clouded eyes —
How shall to his vision
Promise arise?

ANTISTROPHE

His eyes toward the even
Age ever turns
Where fair in the heaven
Hesperus burns:
Hesper the herald
Who brings to their rest
Sheep to the sheep-fold,
Babe to the breast;*
Who gives to the sightless
Faith stronger than sight,
Light to the lightless,
Hope in the night;
For Hesper will gather
What Eos hath strown:
The son to the father,
The prince to his own!

*These four lines are a translation of a fragment of Sappho.

EPODE

(All)

So we are weaving,
Weaving, a-weaving!
In mystical blending
An endless deceiving,
An endless believing,
A garment of guile and of hope never ending,
Weaving, a-weaving,

SONG

THE DEAD GARDENER

CHLORIS

Oh what shall we wreath for a border fair
In the good old gardener's shroud:
The blooms that blazon their beauty rare,
Or the shy little blossoms that hardly dare
To lift up their heads in a crowd?

For the stately lily and queenly rose
He watered and trellised well,
Yet he loved the tiniest flower that grows,
And only the heel-trodden daisy knows
Where the dew of his tear-drop fell!

EPODE

(All)

Wreathing, a-wreathing,
In fairest designing,

Ivy and helichryse wreathing and twining,
 Shape we the border
 In rhythmic order,
 The golden bloom and the green leaves combin-
 ing;
 And, to and fro
 As we come and go,
 Here and there a flower we strow,
 The swarthy blossom of lettered wo,
 Aī, aī, crying
 For Hyacinthus dying
 When it was stained with the purple flow
 That ebbéd in gentle breathing
 Forth from his body rare.
 So let us form our wreathing,
 Our wreathing, our wreathing,
 Of somber blooms and fair!

During the Epode the Maidens lay aside their distaffs, and, taking ivy sprays and flowers from their bosoms, scatter these about the court and on the altar.

PENELOPE

Give o'er the dance Eurynome, give o'er
 The joyful dance my maidens all, for I,
 Wearied with mighty yearning evermore,
 And fain, for lack of my dear lord, to die,
 Love not its meshéd measures as of yore.
 Give o'er the dance, my maidens dear, the joyful
 dance give o'er.

Lay by the distaffs, maidens all, lay by
The garlands gay and twists of yellow twine,
And cease the song of happy revelry,
For very heavy is this heart of mine,
And all its music tuned to a sigh.
Lay by the distaffs, maidens all, the flaxen twine
lay by.

While Penelope is speaking, the maidens, taking up their distaffs, retire, right and left, by pairs.

Come, maidens, tread the solemn dance divine,
In joyless measures suited to my wo.
Let trailing wreaths of sacrifice be thine,
Swayed in soft cadence, sorrowful and slow,
And hung devoted on Athene's shrine.
Come, tread the dance, my maidens all, the solemn
dance divine.

The maidens re-enter with long green sprays.

Bow, maidens, at Athene's shrine, bow low;
Before the mighty godhead bend the knee,
And pray her in Odysseus' name to show
A token of her graciousness to me,
That truly of my lord's dear life I know.
Bow low before Athene's shrine, my maidens all, bow
low.

PANTOMINE

THE INVOCATION

At the close the maidens retire, two by two, right and left, leaving Penelope alone.

PENELOPE

Peace-bearing night, whose truce I trouble nightly,
 Bring rest from longing with the homing dove.
 O Wind of Night, that landward lifteth lightly
 The flapping sail, O beacon star above
 The low-hung mists of even burning brightly,
 Draw homeward to my heart the man I love!

O Moon, that viewest in thy three-fold vision
 All things that in the heavens high are done,
 On the broad earth, in darkling fields Elysian,
 To whom the secrets of the searching sun
 And subtle sea are bared, aid my decision;
 Bring me true tidings of my faithful one!

O Earth, and thou, Earth Mother, dear Demeter,
 Who for thy daughter troubled gods and men
 Till Dis resigned, for her dark hiding sweeter,
 His stolen flower — oh, by that rapture when
 Thou with glad day and greening earth did greet her,
 Give o'er my dear one to these arms again!

Kneeling before the altar.

Athene, child of Zeus, his aegis o'er thee,
 Girt with his wisdom, maiden weariless,
 If ever thine Odysseus burnt before thee
 His choicest kine, look on his queen's distress.
 Unto her weary eyes grant, I implore thee,
 A vision of his loving faithfulness!

Sinks in slumber on steps at right of altar.

Interlude

THE VISIONS OF PENELOPE

Darkness. Morpheus enters on the left in ghostly attire. He speaks:

NOW the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, made a phantom, and fashioned it after the likeness of a woman, Iphthime, daughter of great-hearted Icarus, and she sent it to the house of divine Odysseus to bid Penelope amid her sorrow to cease from her weeping and lamentation. So the phantom. . . . stood above her head and spake unto her, saying:

Enter Iphthime. Pantomime between Iphthime and Penelope, as Morpheus continues:

“Sleepest thou, Penelope, stricken at heart? Take courage and be not so sorely afraid. For lo! such a friend as all men pray to stand by them, for that she hath the power, Pallas Athene pitieth thee in thy sorrow, and hath sent me forth to speak to thee.”

Then wise Penelope made her answer as she slumbered very softly at the gate of dreams:

“If thou art indeed a god, and hast heard the word of a god, come, I pray thee, and tell me tidings concerning that ill-fated man, whether perchance he is yet alive and sees the light of sun, or hath already died, and is a dweller in the house of Hades.”

And the dim phantom answered her and said:

“Concerning him I will not tell thee all the tale, but thine own eyes shall behold many of the perils he hath passed, striving to win his own life and the return of his company, and thine own ears shall hear him recount his adventures.”

Iphthime casts incense on the altar, and in the smoke appear these visions, which are described in the words of Odysseus by Morpheus:

THE LOTUS EATERS

For nine whole days was I borne from Troy by ruinous winds over the teeming deep; but on the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotus-eaters, who eat a flowery food. So we stepped ashore, and straightway my company took their midday meal by the swift ships. And to us came the kindly people of the land, bearing the fruit of the lotus, which they offered us to eat. Fearing the strange food, Eurylochus, my captain, and I alone forbore to partake of it. And when the meal was ended, and I called upon the company to return to the ship and fare forward to Hellas, only Eurylochus arose with me, for whosoever doth eat of the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus hath no other wish than to abide in that land with its kindly folk, ever feeding on the lotus and forgetting the homeward way. Therefore Eurylochus and I were constrained to pull them to their feet and to hale them back to the ship with buffeting, for they went weeping and sore against their will.

THE CYCLOPS

Thence we sailed onward to the land of the Cyclopes, a froward and a lawless folk. Bidding Eurylochus to remain on the ship with half the company, I waded ashore with the rest of the comrades, carrying with us two skins of the wine of Ilios as a drink offering. Wandering along the strand we came upon a great cave opening on the sea, with a sheepfold, walled by huge stones, before it. Entering the cavern we found therein baskets laden with cheeses, and kids and lambkins in pens waiting the return of their dams from the pastures. My company besought me to take the cheeses and yeanelings and to sail away over the salt sea water. Howbeit I hearkened not (and far better would it have been), but waited to see the owner himself, and whether he would give me gifts as a stranger's due. A fire smoldered in the cave, and we mended it into a blaze, and made a burnt offering of a kid, whereof we did eat, and of the cheeses also. At dusk the bleating flock told us of the return of the shepherd, and anon he filled the cave's mouth with his vast bulk, for he was a monstrous thing, and fashioned marvellously, since he had but a single eye, and that was placed in his forehead's center, beneath one shaggy eyebrow that spanned his brow from ear to ear. He bare a grievous weight of dry wood against supper time, which he cast with a great din inside the cave. Amid the clatter we fled in great fear to the dark recesses of the cavern, but to none avail, for, after leading his flocks into the cave for the milking,

and closing the entrance with a vast doorstone, he replenished the fire, and by its light beheld us cowering.

“Strangers, who are ye?” he called. “On some trading enterprise, or at adventure do ye rove, even as sea-robbers over the brine?— for at hazard of their own lives they wander, bringing bale to alien men.”

So spake he, but as for us our hearts were broken for terror of the deep voice and monstrous shape; yet despite all I answered: “Lo, we are Achaeans, driven out of our course by evil winds on our return from Troy, that great city which our mighty chief Agamemnon hath sacked, destroying many people. Blown hither by chance, we have come as suppliants to thee, the lord of the island, so that, mayhap, thou wilt give us the stranger’s due. Have regard to the gods, I pray thee, for Zeus is the avenger of suppliants and sojourners.”

So I spake beseechingly, but he answered grimly out of his pitiless heart: “Thou art witless, stranger, or thou hast come from afar, who biddest me to fear the gods, for verily the Cyclopes are better men than they. Nor would I, to shun the enmity of Zeus, spare thee or thy company unless my spirit bade me. But tell me, where didst thou stay thy well-wrought ship on thy coming? Was it at the far end of the island, or hard by?”

And I, to save the company not yet in his clutches, answered with words of guile: “As for my ship, Poseidon, lord of the sea, brake it in pieces on the headland hard by, and it sank utterly, we being able to win the shore only with our dripping garments

and two skins of most precious wine, our share in the sack of the palace of Priam, king of Troy. This we beg you to accept as the due from strangers to the lord of the land.”

But, either mindless of the gift (or, indeed, wotting not what wine might be), and no longer withheld by fear of vengeance at the hand of our comrades, he answered me not a word out of his pitiless heart, but sprang up and, laying his hands upon two of us, lifted them on high and dashed them, as they had been whelps, to the earth, so that their brains flowed forth on the ground. Then he made ready his supper. . . .

We wept and raised our hands to Zeus, beholding the cruel deeds, and were at our wits' end.

But, after the Cyclops had filled his huge maw with human flesh, I took counsel in my heart, and went forward bearing a skin of wine, and said: “Cyclops, take wine after thy feast of man's meat, that thou mayest know what manner of drink this is that we brought thee as an offering, if haply thou mightest take pity on us and send us on our way home.”

So he grasped the skin, and drank therefrom, slowly at first, but with growing delight at the sweet wine, so that he gulped it down in great draughts till not a drop remained. Then he asked for the second skin, saying: “Give it me again of thy grace, that I may grant thee a stranger's gift. The juice of the grape I know, for often do I eat the ripe clusters, but this is the gods' own nectar.”

So I bare to him the second wine-skin, and he drained it also, and anon sank to the ground with nerveless limbs.

Seeing that the wine had got about the wits of the Cyclops, I spake to him with soft words: "Cyclops, thou askedst my renowned name, and I will declare it unto thee, and do thou grant me a stranger's gift as thou hast promised. 'Noman' is my name — so all my fellows call me."

Straightway he answered me out of his pitiless heart: "'Noman' will I eat last of his fellows: that shall be thy gift."

Therewith he sank backwards and fell with face upturned, and sleep, that conquers all men, overcame him. Then I summoned my comrades, and we took the giant's club, and, hacking with our swords, shaped it to a point, which we put in the fire till it glowed terribly. Then my comrades seized the mighty club and, lifting it on end, thrust the burning point into the eye of the Cyclops, while I stood astride of his head and turned the club around as a ship's carpenter bores a beam with a drill.

And the Cyclops raised a great and terrible cry, and we fled back in fear while he plucked forth from his eye the hissing bloody brand, and cast it from him. Then he called with loud voice on his fellow Cyclopes, who dwelt about him in the sea-caves. Gathering round the cave door they asked what ailed him that he disturbed their slumbers.

"What hath so distressed thee, Polyphemus? Thy flocks are safe, and surely no man slayeth thee by force or craft."

And strong Polyphemus spake to them again from out the cave: "My friends, Noman is slaying me by guile, nor at all by craft."

Then they laughed him to scorn as a witless man, and returned to their beds, and my heart within me laughed also to see how my cunning had beguiled them.

But Polyphemus, groaning in pain, groped with his hands, and lifted away the stone from the door of the cave, and sat in the entry with arms outstretched to catch us if we went forth with the flock — so witless, methinks, did he hope to find me.

But I counseled my fellows to bind together the rams of the flock by threes, and bade each man cling to the middle one of the three, so that they should safely pass by the Cyclops. And thus we returned to the ship with many fat and goodly fleeced sheep.

CIRCE

Thence we sailed onward glad as men saved from death, albeit we had lost dear companions. And we came to the isle Aeaean, where dwelt Circe of the braided tresses, an awful goddess of mortal speech, who was a sorceress. Dividing my company into two bands, we chose by lot which should go to entreat the ruler of the land for the stranger's due, and which should stay by the ship. To Eurylochus it fell to lead his men to the palace. In the forest glades they found the halls of Circe builded of polished stone. And all around the palace wolves and lions were roaming, yet they did not set on my men, but lo, they ramped about them and fawned on them, wagging their long tails, for they were men who had been bewitched with uncanny drugs. But my companions were affrighted

when they saw the strange and terrible creatures. So they stood at the outer gate until they heard Circe singing within in a sweet voice as she fared to and fro before a great web, imperishable, full of grace and splendour. Wiled by her song, Polites called to her, and straightway she came forth and opened the shining doors and bade them in. Only Eurylochus tarried behind watching at the gate, for he guessed that there was some treason. So Circe set Polites and the rest on high seats, and made them a mess of cheese and barley meal, and gave them in a great cup yellow honey and Pramnian wine, wherewith she secretly mixed harmful drugs. Now when they had all drunk of the cup, Circe smote them with a wand, and they were changed in form to swine, though their minds abode even as of old. So they wept when she penned them in styes and flung to them bitter acorns, and mast, and fruit of the cornel tree whereon swine do batten.

Now Eurylochus came back to the black ship a-weeping with tidings of his fellows, and of their unseemly doom. And I cast about my shoulders my silver-studded sword, a great blade of bronze, and slung my bow about me, and bade him lead me again by the way he came. But, catching me with both hands and by my knees, he besought me not to go to my doom. "For well I know thou shalt thyself return no more, nor bring anyone of all our fellowship; nay, let us flee the swifter with those that be here, for even yet we may escape the evil day."

But I answered him saying: "Eurylochus, abide for thy part by the black hollow ship; but I will go

forth, for a strong constraint is upon me.”

With that I went up from the sea-shore. But lo, in my faring through the sacred glades, Hermes, of the wingéd wand, met me, in the likeness of a young man with the first down on his lip, the time when youth is most gracious. So he clasped my hand, and hailed me: “Ah, hapless man, whither away all alone through the wolds, thou that knowest not this evil country? Thy company yonder is penned in the halls of Circe, in the guise of swine in filthy straw abiding. Is it in hope to free them that thou comest? Nay, methinks thou shalt never return, but remain with the others. Come, then, I will bring deliverance. Lo, take this herb of virtue— *moly*, the gods call it, for it is unknown to mortal eyes, growing in secret places. It will save thee from the enchantment of Circe.”

Then Hermes departed to Olympus, and I came with high heart to the house of the enchantress. I called aloud at the portals, and she presently came forth and bade me enter. So she led me in, and set me on a goodly carven chair, with studs of silver. And she made me a potion in a golden cup that I might drink, and she also put a charm therein in the evil counsel of her heart. Now when she had given it me, and I had drunk it off, she smote me with her wand and commanded me: “Go thy way now to the sty, couch thee there with the rest of thy company.”

So spake she, but I drew my sharp sword from my thigh and sprang upon Circe as one eager to slay her. But with a great cry she slipped under, and clasped my knees, and bewailing herself spake to me wingéd words:

“Who art thou of the sons of men? I marvel to see how thou hast drunk of this charm and wast nowise subdued. Thou hast, methinks, a mind within thee that may not be enchanted. Verily thou art Odysseus, ready at need, whom he of the wingéd wand full oft hath told me was to come hither on his way from Troy in his swift black ship. Nay, come, put up thy sword and let us meet in love and trust.”

So spake she, but I answered her, saying: “Nay, Circe, how canst thou bid me be gentle to thee, who hast turned my company into swine, and wouldst have done so even to me? I will not let thee go, goddess, until thou hast sworn a mighty oath that thou wilt free my company, and plan nought else of mischief to our hurt.”

So Circe swore by the awful Styx, the oath binding on the immortals, that she would do all even as I willed, and with wand in hand she passéd with me through the hall, and opened the doors of the styè, and drove my companions forth in the shape of swine. And she passed among them anointing them with another charm. Then, waving her wand above them, she commanded that they resume their former state. And lo, from the limbs the bristles dropped away, and they became men again, younger than before they were, and goodlier to behold. And they all knew me again, and each one took my hands, and wistful was their lament, so that even the cruel goddess was moved with compassion.

So she entreated me and my companions kindly; yea, she even imparted to me a secret known only to the gods, that if I would come safely home I must

first pass through the dark halls of Hades and learn there from the shade of Teiresias, the blind soothsayer, the way and measure of my path over the teeming deep.

ODYSSEUS IN HADES

So our black ship came to the limits of the world, to the deep-flowing Oceanus, which washes the land of the Cimmerians, where never shines the sun, but always deadly night is outspread over miserable mortals. There I found, as Circe had told me, the grim entrance to Hades. And when I had made supplication and poured a libation to the lordly races of the dead, and offered to Dis, the lord of Hades, a ram and a black ewe, the departed spirits gathered from out Erebus around the blood of the sacrifice. Brides and youths unwed, and old men of many and evil days there were, and men slain in battle with their bloody mail about them. And these many ghosts flocked about the trench with a wondrous cry, and pale fear gat hold on me. So I drew the sharp sword from my thigh, and sat there, suffering not the strengthless heads to draw nigh to the blood ere I had word of Teiresias. Anon came the soul of Theban Teiresias with a golden sceptre in his hand, and I suffered him to drink of the dark blood, after which he foretold the sufferings I was yet to endure. "Late shalt thou return in evil plight, with the loss of all thy company, on board the ship of strangers, and thou shalt find sorrows in thy house, even proud men that devour thy living, while they woo thy godlike wife. And even when thou hast slain the wooers in thy halls thou shalt not rest, but

must travel afar with an oar on thy shoulder till thou come to a country where men shall call it a winnowing fan, because they know naught of the sea. There fasten the oar into the earth, and sacrifice to thine enemy, Poseidon, lord of the sea, and he shall at last be pacified. And from the sea shall thine own death come, the gentlest death that may be, which shall end thee foredone with smooth old age, and thy folk shall dwell happily around thee.”

Then the soul of my mother dead, Anticleia, whom I left alive when I departed for sacred Troy, drew nigh and drank the dark blood, whereupon she knew me, and bewailing herself spake to me wingéd words: “Dear child, how didst thou once come beneath the darkness, thou that art a living man? Art thou come hither in thy long wanderings from Troy, or hast thou reached Ithaca, and seen thy wife in thy halls?”

And I answered her and said: “Not yet have I set foot on mine own country, but have been wandering evermore in affliction from the day that I went with goodly Agamemnon to Troy. But come, declare me: What doom overcame thee with death? Was it a slow disease or did Artemis slay thee with her sudden shafts? And tell me of my father and son; doth my honour yet abide with them, or hath another already taken it, while they say that I shall come home no more? And tell me of my wedded wife, doth she abide with her son and keep all secure, or hath she already wedded the best of the Achaeans?”

And my lady mother answered: “Yea, verily, she abideth with steadfast spirit in thy halls, and wearily for her the nights wane always, and the days, in shed-

ding of tears. And the fair honour that is thine no man hath taken; and Telemachus sits at peace on his demesne. But thy father abides in the field, sorrowing and nursing his mighty grief, for long desire of thy return, and old age withal comes heavy upon him. Yea, and even so did I perish. It was not the archer goddess who slew me, nor did any sickness come upon me; it was my sore longing for thee that reft me of life.”

So spake she, and I would fain have embraced my mother dead. Thrice I sprang towards her, and was minded to embrace her; thrice she flitted from my hands as a shadow, or even as a dream, and grief waxed ever the sharper at my heart.

THE SIRENS

Then our good ship came to the island of the Sirens twain. And I stopped with wax the ears of all my men that they should not hear the beguiling song of these awful goddesses. But because I would listen to the sweet song that none other mortal had heard and not followed to his doom, I bade my company bind me, hand and foot, upright to the mast-head. And when they had done this, they sat down on the benches and smote the grey sea-water with their long oars. Then, when the ship was within the sound of a man's shout from the land, we fleeing lightly on our way, the Sirens espied the swift ship, and raised their clear-toned song:

“Hither, come hither, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans, here stay thy barque, that thou

mayest listen to the voice of us twain. For none hath ever driven by this way in his black ship till he hath heard from our lips the voice sweet as the honey-comb, and hath had joy thereof and gone on his way the wiser. For lo, we know all things, all the travail that in wide Troy-land the Argives and Trojans bare by the gods' design, yea, and we know all that shall hereafter be on the fruitful earth.''

So spake they uttering a sweet voice, and my heart was fain to listen, and I bade my company unbind me, nodding at them with a frown, but they bent to their oars and rowed on.

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

We soon came to the fair islands where fed the goodly kine, broad of brow, of Helios Hyperion. And against my will, for Teiresias had warned me of the evils that should befall the deed, my men, being a hungered, slaughtered the sacred kine of the Sun-God. And he, who overseeth and overheareth all things, when we embarked sent a shrilling storm from the West, which snapped our mast and swept all our gear away. And the mast in falling all-to brake the skull of our pilot. Then Zeus thundered, and struck the ship with his bolt, so that it was filled with choking sulphur, whereat my company leaped into the sea. Like sea-gulls they were borne round the black ship upon the billows, and the god reft them of returning.

So I was left alone on the ship, since I only had taken no part in the slaughter of the sacred kine. And the tempest ceased, yet I joyed not thereat; since in its stead a fair south wind sprang up which bore

me on toward the dread cliff of Scylla and the whirling pool of Charybdis, feared of all mariners. Leaning mightily on the helm, I 'scaped the ragged rock, but only to find my ship sucked down into the circling surge. But, ere it sank, I leaped on high and grasped a fig-tree growing on the cliff, whereto I clung like a bat until the broken hull was vomited forth again. And then I let myself drop down hands and feet, and plunged heavily in the midst of the shattered wreck. Grasping the keel timber, I climbed upon it, and rowed hard with my hands until I came safely out of the swirl of waters into the calm sea.

CALYPSO

Thence for nine days was I borne, and on the tenth night the gods brought me nigh to the isle of Ortygia, where dwells Calypso of the braided tresses, an awful goddess of mortal speech, who took me in and entreated me kindly.

There dwelt I many days consuming my heart in longing for my home and native land, despite the loving regard of the goddess who would have kept me forever as her consort, for she had the power to confer immortality on whom she would. And when at last she saw that my misery came not to an end, but grew ever greater until I was like to perish of grief, to me she came, as I sat on the strand gazing toward Ithaca over the wide sea, and spake wingéd words: "Lovest thou so thy Penelope? Truly indeed must she be worthy of thee, and I a goddess would be not a whit less great of soul than a mortal woman. Behold, I

grant thee thy wish to get thee home to thine own dear country even in this hour.”

So she gave me a great axe of bronze, double-edged, and she led me where tall trees grew, alder and poplar, and the pine that reacheth to heaven. And when I had felled a score of the lordly trees, she gave me a polished adze, and augers, and I built me a raft with a mast, for which Calypso wove and shaped a sail. And the goddess placed on board a skin of dark wine and a skin of clear water, and corn, too, in a wallet. And, instructing me in the guidance of the stars, she helped me with her divine hands to launch the great raft, and made a warm and gentle wind to blow, which bore me forward on my way.

INO

Now when I had come nigh the goodly land of the Phaeacians, mine enemy divine, Poseidon, lord of the sea, saw me, as he returned from sojourning among the blameless Ethiopians, and was wroth at whatsoever god had opposed his fell purpose toward me. Grasping his trident, he roused all storms of all manner of winds, and he shrouded in clouds the land and sea. And a great wave smote upon my raft, so that I lost the helm from my hand and was swept beneath the dark waters. Nor could I rise speedily from beneath the rush of the mighty wave, for the garments hung heavy which Calypso had given me. But at last I came up, spueing forth the bitter salt water, and sprang forward in the dark wave after the raft, and clutched it, and sat in the midst thereof, avoiding the issues of death. And the great wave swept the raft

hither and thither along the stream, for the storm had reft it of helm and mast and sail.

But the daughter of Cadmus marked me, Ino, of the fair ankles, who, though in time past a maiden of mortal speech, did now in the depths of the salt sea get proper share in worship of the gods. Taking pity on me in my travail, she rose, like a sea-gull on the wing, from the depth of the mere, and sat upon the well-bound raft, and spake, saying: "Hapless one, wherefore is Poseidon, shaker of the earth, so wroth with thee? Yet shall he not make a full end of thee for all his desire. Do even as I tell thee. Cast off these garments, and leave the raft to drift before the winds, but do thou swim with thine hands and win a footing on the coast of the Phaeacians, whither it is decreed thou shalt escape. Here, take this veil immortal and wind it about thy breast; so is there no fear that thou perish. But when thou hast laid hold of the mainland with thy hands, loose the veil from off thee, and cast it into the wine-dark deep far from the land, and thyself turn away."

With that the goddess gave the veil, and dived back into the heaving deep, like a sea-gull; and the dark wave closed over her. And I, too, casting off my garments and winding the veil about me, plunged into the sea.

NAUSICAA

A great wave bore me to the rugged shore, adown whose rocks a brook fell foaming into the sea. And all my bones would have been broken had not Athene put a thought into my heart. I sprang forward of

,the wave with all my strength, and grasped a rock, and clung thereto with hands and knees, till the surge beat against my back, sorely crushing me, but not loosing my grasp. And, ere it returned, I clambered upon the rock and crawled to the green shore beyond.

And when my breath returned, I loosed from my bruised limbs the sodden veil of the sea-goddess, and hurled it with all the strength left in me far out upon the billow. And I turned ere it alighted, and fell upon the earth, and kissed it, the grain-giver, and gave thanks to the kindly goddess who had braved the wrath of her overlord and saved me from the sea.

Then, because I was naked, I dragged my weary limbs into a thick coppice near a pool in the brook, and I fell into slumber, long and deep.

Now Nausicaa, princess of that land, came with her maidens to the pool to wash the soiled linen of the palace. And, when they had cleansed all the stains, they spread the cloths on the green bank to dry, and fell to playing at ball in the fair meadow beyond. And the goddess Athene put it in the heart of the princess to throw the ball at one of her company, so that it fell into the pool where the current was pouring over the rocks into the sea. And all the maidens raised a piercing cry to see the end of their pleasure, so that I awoke. Glad was I to hear the sound of human voices, and, breaking a leafy bough from the thick wood, and holding it athwart my body to hide my nakedness, I stepped from the coppice fain to draw nigh to the fair-tressed maidens. But I was terrible in their eyes, being marred with the salt sea, and they fled cowering. And the daughter of

Alcinoüs alone stood firm, for Athene gave her courage of heart and took away all trembling from her limbs. So she halted and stood over against me.

And I thought within myself that it were better to stand apart and beseech her with smooth words lest the maiden should be angered with me if I touched her knees in supplication. So I spake a sweet and cunning word: "I supplicate thee, O queen, whether thou art a goddess or a mortal! If thou art indeed of them that keep the wide heaven, to Artemis would I liken thee for beauty and stature and shapeliness; but if thou art of the daughters of earth, thrice blessed are thy father and lady mother and thy brethern. Surely their souls glow with gladness each time they see thee entering the dance, so fair a flower of maidens! But he is of heart blessed beyond all others who shall prevail with gifts of wooing, and lead thee to his home. Yesterday I escaped after many perils from the wine-dark deep to this shore, where I know no man. Naked, and wounded sore by the waves, I beseech thee to give me a wrap from thy store of linen, and show me the way to the town where I may obtain succour. And may the gods grant thee all thy heart's desire: a noble husband and a home, and a mind at one with his — a good gift, for there is nothing nobler than when man and wife are of one mind in a house, a great joy to their friends, though their own hearts know it best."

Then Nausicaa of the white arms answered me, and said: "Stranger, forasmuch as thou seemest no evil man nor foolish — and it is Zeus that giveth or withholdeth weal as he will — now that thou hast come to

our land, thou shalt not lack raiment, or aught else that is the due of a hapless suppliant. And I will show thee the town, and name the name of the people: the Phaeacians hold this city and land, and I am the daughter of Alcinoüs, great of heart, on whom all the might and welfare of the Phaeacians depend.”

Then she called to her maidens, and bade them fetch me raiment and olive-oil for the anointing of my bruises. And when they had brought them, I bade the maidens to stand apart, while I bathed in the pool and anointed my body with the oil, and put on the garment. And Athene made me great and mighty to behold, causing from my head deep curling locks to flow like the hyacinth flower, so that, when I stepped forth among the maidens, the princess marvelled at me, and said to her maidens: “Would that such an one might be called my husband, and that it might please him here to abide! But come, give the stranger meat and drink.”

And when I was refreshed, the princess brought me to the goodly house of her father, where I abode many days honoured as I had been a god who came in the guise of a stranger guest.

Day after day we spent in hunting the wild beasts and in many games, but ever did I turn my head to the splendour of the sun, being fain to hasten its setting. And when my longing to return to my native land became too strong to be overcome, Alcinoüs gave me lordly gifts, and sent me on my way to Ithaca in a tall ship with many rowers.

And Nausicaa, dowered with beauty by the gods, bade me farewell, saying sadly: “When thou comest

into thine own country, noble Odysseus, bethink thee at times, I pray thee, of the maid who met thee kindly when thou camest in thy need to the Phaeacian shore.”

And I answered her from the fullness of my heart: “Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinoüs, if Zeus grant me to reach my home, there shall I worship thee as a goddess all my days forevermore, for thou has given me my life.”

THE LANDING OF ODYSSEUS AT ITHACA

There is in the land of Ithaca a certain haven of Phorcys. Now at the harbour's head is a long-leaved olive tree, and hard by is a pleasant cave and shadowy, sacred to the nymphs that are called the Naiads. Thither did the Phaeacian seamen let drive their ship; and now the vessel in full course ran ashore, half her keel's length high. Howbeit, I was asleep. So they alighted from the benchéd ship upon the land, and first they lifted me from out the hollow ship, all as I was in a sheet of linen and the bright rug, and laid me yet heavy with slumber on the sand. And then they brought forth the goods which great-hearted Alcinoüs had given me on my homeward way, and set them in hiding within an olive copse a little aside from the strand lest some wayfaring man, before I awakened, should come and spoil them. Then the seamen departed to fair Phaeacia with gently moving oars.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ODYSSEUS

Then Athene came nigh me in the guise of a herdsman, a young man most delicate, such as are the

sons of kings. And she had a well-wrought mantle that fell in two folds about her shoulders, and a javelin in her hand.

And she did touch me sleeping with her spear, so that I started up. And I spake to the stranger wingéd words, yet did not utter the truth, but wrested my words into guile. Well I wot that I was in Ithaca, for looking about I saw the cave and harbour, dear to my boyhood. So I dissembled and said: "Friend, since thou art the first I have chanced on in this land, hail to thee! Tell me truly what land is this, what men dwell therein?"

And the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered: "Thou art witless, stranger, or thou art come from afar, if indeed thou askest of this land; since the deeds of its prince Odysseus have made it famed even unto the far land of Troy."

And I was glad at the words of the herdsman, yet still dissembled. "Of Ithaca have I heard tell, even in broad Crete, whence I have been outlawed for slaying (though it was by sad mishap) the dear son of Idomeneus, king of that country. I fled to a Phoenician ship in the harbour about to sail for Carthage. Driven by a storm we landed on these strange shores, where we rested our worn bodies with sweet sleep. Fearing, perchance, that I was bringing on them the anger of the gods, they have stolen away while I remained in slumber. Look! there is their ship in the offing!"

So I spake, and the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, smiled, and caressed me with her hand; and straight-way she changed to the semblance of a woman, fair

and tall. And uttering her voice she spake to me wingéd words:

“Crafty must he be who would outdo thee in all manner of guile, even if it were a god encountered thee! So thou wast not even in thine own country to cease from thy sleights and knavish words, which thou lovest from the bottom of thy heart! Yet thou knewest not me, Pallas Athene, who am always by thee and guard thee in all thy adventures. And now I am come hither to contrive a plot with thee. For thou hast still to endure much sorrow, submitting thee to the despite of men. In thine absence many powerful lords sue for the hand of thy wife, saying that thou art dead. But she remains true to thee, and awaits thy coming, deceiving the wooers with a guile worthy of thee her husband. Come, let me disguise thee, that none shall know thee while thou waitest in the hut of faithful Eumaeus, the swineherd, until I summon to thine aid thy dear son Telemachus.”

Therewith Athene touched me with her wand. My fair flesh she withered on my supple limbs, and made waste my yellow hair from off my head, and over all my limbs she cast the skin of an old man, and dimmed my two eyes, erewhile so fair. And she changed my raiment to a vile wrap and a doublet, torn garments and filthy, stained with foul smoke. And over all she clad me with the great bald hide of a swift stag, and she gave me a staff and a mean tattered scrip, and a cord therewith to hang it.

ARGOS

And when I came to the swineherd's hut, lo! a

hound raised up his head from where he lay, and pricked his ears — Argos, the watch-dog which of old myself had bred. Now was his master gone and he lay out in the deep dung of mules and kine full of vermin. Yet even now when he saw me, standing by in the beggar's guise as I was, he wagged his tail and dropped both his ears, but nearer to me he had not the strength to draw.

I looked aside and wiped away a tear. But upon Argos came the fate of black death even in the hour that he beheld me, his dear master, again in the twentieth year.

Act II

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SUITORS

As the last vision is fading away Penelope starts up from her trance, and holds out her hands toward the place where Odysseus had appeared. The morning light increases.

PENELOPE

O DYSSEUS, my lord, 'tis I — oh stay,
Odysseus! — Penelope, who calls,
Thy loving wife! Oh, let us flee away
Together from the horror of these halls!
Ah, no, 'tis but another fantasy —
Again the cruel gods are mocking me.

Again they mock — yet hold, my heart, be still!
Never before have all my broken dreams
Been threaded through with his unfaltering will —
My lord's brave spirit! Vision true it seems,
As if his soul had bended heaven and hell
The tidings of his coming home to tell.

Oft have I seen him in my troubled sleep
Upon the field of battle wounded sore,
Or sinking in the unfathomable deep,
Or naked cast upon a desert shore,
Yet ne'er till now, wherever he might roam,
So plainly coming ever nearer home.

Home, home at last! yet oh, so worn and old!

So weary, worn and old, and piteous poor!
My husband, let my loving arms enfold

Thy dear gray head, my toil-worn fingers cure
Thy bruises, and thy tattered garments mend;
My weak limbs walk with thine until the end.

For I would flee out of this troubled land

To quiet shores; surely the gods will smile
To see us wander hand in loving hand,

And lay aside their wrath a little while,
Granting to us, poor beggars twain, surcease
Of sorrow that we close our lives in peace.

Peace? nay, not such would my Odysseus crave;

Shame on my woman's weakness! Let the wife
Be worthy of her husband, ne'er so brave

As in disaster; let me rule my life
By his hereafter. Well his word I know:

"Prepare ye for my hand my spear and bow."

Penelope claps her hands. Enter Eurynome and Eurycleia.

PENELOPE

To Eurynome:

Go, fetch my maidens.

EURYNOME

With their distaffs?

PENELOPE

Nay;

The time of spinning has forever passed;
 Know that for me the inevitable day

Has dawned — the day to choose my lord — at last,
 Yet ill it is to yield without a fight;
 So bring the maids for mimic war bedight.

And do thou fetch with thee the mighty spear
 Odysseus left with me, when forth to Troy
 He fared; whose sight made all his foemen fear
 Its wielder's prowess. Haply its employ
 E'en now with dread may chill the suitor throng.
 Go, bid thy maidens raise the hunting song.

*Exit Eurynome.**To Eurycleia:*

My duty calls me hence. I shall prepare,
 Dear Eurycleia, for a fray more stern;
 Thou knowest well what labor is my care,
 And with me wilt conspire. Till my return
 The maidens mocking battle to prolong,
 Summon thine ancient lore of tale and song.

Often, dear nurse, hast thou the story told
 How, ere I knew him, young Odysseus went
 To see Autolyceus, his grandsire old,
 And with his uncles twain clomb the ascent
 Of high Parnassus, hunting the wild boar
 Within its brakes. Recount the tale once more.

Exit Penelope.

Enter Eurynome in the guise of a huntress, bearing the great spear of Odysseus, with Maidens, begirt for the chase, and equipped with lesser spears.

Eurynome gives the spear to Eurycleia.

CHORUS

THE HUNTING OF THE BOAR

EURYCLEIA

On the mountain side
 Overlooking the meadows,
 The cornlands fair,
 The peopled shore —
 The fields of his ravage —
 Where thick boughs hide
 His gray form in shadows,
 He maketh his lair:
 The robber hoar,
 The foe of the farmer, the mighty, the savage —

MAIDENS

Boar, the wild boar!

EURYCLEIA

In silence profound
 He keepeth his watch;
 Like red coals gleaming
 His small eyes are;
 His prickt ears catch
 The distant sound;

He snuffeth the gale
With scent of men streaming
Up from the vale —
The wild boar alert, ever ready for war!

MAIDENS

The boar, the boar; he is ready for war!

EURYCLEIA

Anon he descrieth
Foes on his track!
The boarhounds bay;
Beaters are tramping
Through thickets dense;
A huntsman crieth
“Halloo!” while a whistle
Soundeth “Aback!”
The wild boar awaiteth the fray:
His white teeth are champing;
His muscles tense
Set all abristle
His ridgéd chine;
With fierce rage of battle his red eyes shine.

MAIDENS

Beware, beware,
When the boar's teeth champ,
And his fierce eyes shine!
Take care, take care,
When you see, as a sign

Of his rage, the ridged bristles
Arise on his spine!

EURYCLEIA

The dogs ring round
The coppice dread;
To enter they fear —
Afresh burn their olden
Scars at the sight.
Fierce challenge they sound.
The beaters draw near
With timorous tread
And clubs forward holden
Ready for flight,
Awaiting a spearman to lead to the fight.

MAIDENS

Who cometh, who cometh
With spear keen and bright,
Faint hearts to embolden
With courage to fight?

EURYCLEIA

A youth debonair!
Forward springing
The beaters' line through,
The hounds in loud cry
Aside he spurneth,
And faceth the wild boar's lair.
Backward flinging

His chlamys blue,
He lifteth on high,
Till bright in the sun the bronze point burneth,
This spear, that I hardly can raise —
Where is the man who can wield it
In these degenerate days?

MAIDENS

Odysseus! him dost thou praise.
None other could wield
In forest or field
The weapon thou hardly canst raise.

EURYCLEIA

Stir in the bushes,
A peal of ire!
The wild boar emergeth
Battle to wage —
He knoweth his peer!
Frothed are his tushes;
His eyes flash fire;
His whole body surgeth
With war's fell rage.
He rusheth upon the spear.
What weapon shall stay
The furious charge of a wild boar at bay?

MAIDENS

The wild boar at bay!
What man without fear

To oppose will essay
 The fury that urgeth
 A boar to the fray?

EURYCLEIA

Odysseus unfearing
 Awaiteth the charge;
 At the boar's side
 He aimeth a blow;
 But slight is the wound,
 For tough to the spearing
 As a warrior's targe
 Is the lean beast's hide,
 And the boar, driving on at his foe,
 Beareth him down to the ground.

MAIDENS

Aï, aï, the maddening wound!
 If the great spear fail
 The hero brave
 In the wild boar's rush,
 What might shall avail,
 What godhead save
 From the fierce beast's tush
 Odysseus borne to the ground?

EURYCLEIA

The raging boar
 In headlong career
 With sharp tusk rippeth

Odysseus' knee;
It breaketh no bone,
But the blood runneth free.
At sight of the gore
Aloud cry the huntsmen in fear.
Odysseus giveth no groan,
But only more tightly he grippeth
The haft of his great boar-spear.

MAIDENS

The man without fear!
Though overthrown,
Though wounded sore,
He maketh no moan,
But to his feet leapeth,
And, grasping his spear,
Again he awaiteth the boar.

EURYCLEIA

The wild beast, burning
With rage and pain,
His course sharply turning,
Rusheth amain
Again to the fight;
But ready his foe is;
Odysseus lungeth
With his full might;
His great spear he plungeth
Deep in the boar's head.
So piercing the blow is

It reacheth the brain,
And felleth the fierce beast dead.

MAIDENS

The boar falleth dead
Transfixed by the spear!
Never again
Shall he ravage the plain,
Holding the farmers in fear.
Hail to the hero who banished their dread,
For deeds like this ever dear!

EURYCLEIA

Autolyceus' sons
Run swift to his side;
Their garments tearing,
They staunch at once
The black blood's tide;
Then, in arms upbearing
The youth aswound,
Still to the spear clinging,
A chant they raise,
Handed down from the former days,
That healeth the huntsman's wound;
And home they bear him with singing.

MAIDENS

They bear along
The youth with song
The blood's dark flow congealing.

Oh, who shall sound
For our country's wound
The ancient chant of healing?

EURYCLEIA

In our fair land,
Ithaca old,
Since the lord of it,
Odysseus brave,
To the war departed,
The wild beasts raven
In fruitful field,
In teeming fold,
For lack of a hand
His spear to wield,
For want of a wit
His scepter to hold,
His realm to save —
Robbers, boar-hearted,
Insolent, craven
Since none their force may defy;
Spoilers swine-souled,
Who make of our palace a sty.

MAIDENS

Ouai!
With hearts of boars
Our prayers they scorn;
They trample all day
Our standing corn,
Since none there is to withstay;

With souls of swine
 They enter our doors,
 And nightlong wallow in wine.

EURYCLEIA

With fields uprooted,
 His land laid waste,
 Our prince is shaméd,
 Telemachus young,
 In brave heart royal,
 Though maiden his sword.
 In palace polluted
 Our queen is disgraced —
 Penelope faméd
 Where'er praise is sung
 Of wifehood loyal
 To a lost lord.
 With song alone to defend her,
 In this her day of surrender,
 Come, let us our solace afford.

MAIDENS

The comfort that women tender
 May give, shall her maidens afford;
 The help in our hearts we shall lend her
 In the hour she chooseth her lord.
 Mayhap our love
 At last shall prove
 A mighty shield to defend her,
 Our song a sharp sword.

SONG*

THE WOMAN'S KINGDOM

CHLORIS

When the age of the soul began
God gave the earth to man
 To subdue it with strength and will
According to His plan —
 And the world is a man's world still:
 A sad world, a mad world —
 It never will be a glad world
Till time the purpose fulfil.

To strengthen him in the strife
God gave the man a wife
 To do what he might ask,
To center in him her life —
 This still is the woman's task:
 A drear lot, severe lot,
 And yet withal a dear lot
Since Love wears Service' mask.

The land, the sea, the air
To conquer is man's care
 With plow and keel and plane;
Small is the woman's share,
 The home is her domain:
 A mean rule, unseen rule,
 Yet here she may as queen rule
O'er man in Spirit's reign.

*This may be omitted, if deemed too modern in tone. Its moral is that of the succeeding chorus.

With courage does she gird
 Her lord as with a sword;
 With helm of honor bright
 And shield of loyal word
 She arms him in her might:
 Though tearful and fearful
 At heart, with bearing cheerful
 She sends him forth to fight.

And when man's work is done,
 His war with nature won,
 Then shall the woman shine
 Enthronéd in the sun —
 Her soul of faith the shrine:
 Her spirit inherit
 The rule of earth, to share it
 With man in Love divine!

*Penelope enters in the guise of Artemis, and takes
 the spear of Odysseus from Eurycleia.*

CHORUS

THE WEAPON OF THE SPIRIT

PENELOPE

The soul of the spear
 Is the soul of its bearer,
 The warrior dread;
 Its strength is his strength,
 Its purpose his will;
 His spirit shines clear

In radiant terror
From bronze-pointed head;
The ash-shafted length
With his rage is a-thrill,
The blood-lust of battle, the passion to kill.

MAIDENS

The spear, the spear!
Though dread it appear,
'Tis the spirit behind it
That points it with fear.

PENELOPE

The long, level line
Of spearmen surges
Like a glittering wave
Assaulting the strand;
Resistless in might
The keen points shine,
And the foemen brave,
Though his high heart urges
Him stoutly to stand,
Betakes him to flight,
And bloodless the spear is borne back from the fight.

MAIDENS

The spear, the spear!
The weapon of fear,
Returns from the quarrel
With point gleaming clear.

The spear, the spear!
It is never so dear
As when, wreathed in laurel,
No blood doth appear.

PENELOPE

A weapon strong
Is man that the Spirit
Hath shaped to her hand;
Thrilled are we through
With her purpose as flame,
The hosts of Wrong
Know it and fear it;
Will gives the command,
Hers is the due,
Yet Strength reaps the fame,
Or, failing, he casts upon Spirit the blame.

MAIDENS

We welcome the blame;
Be Spirit's the shame
If she point not the weapon
The tyrant to tame.

PENELOPE

The spirit of man
Is regnant in Woman;
Her mind is its throne,
Her heart is the shrine
Of its sacred fire.

The Soul of the Clan,
She flies on the foeman
Protecting her own —
A vision divine
And portent dire
Courage to hearten and fear to inspire.

MAIDENS

We burn with the fire;
The spear of his sire
To Telemachus give;
We his soul would inspire.

There is an uproar in the central hall, and Telemachus in princely attire enters, accompanied by Odysseus in the garb of a beggar. At the sight of the latter Penelope is dazed for a moment, and then, recalling the vision in which her husband appeared in the same guise, she starts forward as if to throw herself at his feet, and cries:

My lord!

Odysseus frowns warningly, and Penelope turns to Telemachus as if it were he whom she has addressed, and continues:

My son, for thou shalt take the place
To-day of him who was my spirit's prop,
Whose soul e'en now is shining in thy face,
Come, play thy father; take this weapon —

TELEMACHUS

in lordly manner:

Stop,

Impetuous woman! though my time is near
It has not come; give to our guest the spear,

For, worn with wandering he hath no staff,
A warrior old, his hand is weaponless;

Penelope hands the spear to Odysseus.

He is athirst; the wine-cup let him quaff.

Penelope looks at Eurynome inquiringly, who shakes her head in a gesture of negation which Penelope sadly repeats to Telemachus.

Bring water, then, for sore is his distress,
Water in ewer as well as cup, to lave
His soiled feet. He was a comrade brave

Of great Odysseus, when the Trojan wall
He breached with guile; a fellow of his band
Of bold sea-rovers, who on Ilium's fall
Sought with stout hearts to win their native land
Against the purpose of Poseidon fell.
Refreshed, our guest the moving tale shall tell.

PENELOPE

Nay, son (if still with me some empire lies
O'er woman's realm), I would thy charge amend:
Let him not bare his scars to curious eyes;
A reverent hand his bruised feet shall tend

Within my chamber. As an honored guest,
 Yes, as my lord himself, there shall he rest.

Eurynome comes forward to conduct Odysseus to Penelope's chamber. Penelope objects:

Not thine, housemistress, though for ready zeal
 We hold thee dear, shall be this sacred task.

She addresses Odysseus.

If thou wouldst deign to elder eyes reveal
 Thy limbs, let me —

Odysseus frowns in dissent at the idea of her performing the service, and she adroitly turns the reference.

— old Eurycleia ask

Odysseus nods assent.

To do this service, once accounted sweet
 When eve brought bedward little dusty feet.

For when Odysseus ran a romping boy,
 Or as a youth came wounded from the chase,
 She was his nurse. Still she recounts with joy
 His features fair and lithe young body's grace;
 For, though with creeping age her eyes are dim,
 Her memory holds him clear in line and limb —

Ay, every mark upon his body white
 Of marring mole or ridgéd ruddy sear.

Wearied of life, she prays but for the sight
 Of her dear master coming from the war,
 That she once more may lave his feet, and kiss
 His ancient wounds, and so may die in bliss.

Go then, good Eurycleia, and attend
 Our guest, as if he were indeed thy lord,
 Mayhap the gods, who see us thus befriend
 The needy stranger, may their grace accord
 That other hearts be softened to entreat
 Our wanderer with charity as sweet.

Eurycleia conducts from the scene the limping Odysseus who pauses to hand the spear to Penelope, as the occasion of addressing her a few words inaudible to all save herself. After his departure Penelope addresses the house-mistress:

And thou Eurynome, to cheer the heart
 Of my shamed son, who for his mother's sake
 Foregoes desire to play a prince's part
 And lead his folk against their spoilers, take
 Thy maidens fair, and a new dance array:
 The Race of Atalanta let them play.

CHORUS

THE FOOT RACE

EURYNOME

What slender youth
 His body bareth
 To enter the race,

The arduous toil
Of the circling track?
Strong is he, in sooth,
Though the aspect he weareth,
In beardless face,
In hairless breast,
In smooth-muscled back,
Still of a boy.

Telemachus advances, and throwing off his cloak, stands nude, save for his sandals and a loin-cloth. He assumes the pose of "Mercury Belvedere."

MAIDENS

Eia, iavoi!
We hail with joy
And welcome warm
The runner whose form
Hath the strength of a man
And the grace of a boy —
Eia, iavoi!

EURYNOME

To prepare for the task
He taketh the flask
That athletes aye bear,
And with oil doth anoint
Each muscle and joint
With sedulous care;
Then he kneadeth the skin
Till the oil is rubbed in,

And his body gleameth
 With the healthy glow
 Of the blood's quickened flow,
 Till a young god he seemeth
 In beauty rare —
 Hermes the fair,
 The herald slender,
 Swift in the race.

Telemachus takes from the folds of his cloaks an oil-flask and anoints his body, kneading it thereafter. At the close he assumes the pose of the bronze Mercury in the Naples gallery.

MAIDENS

Io, io!
 The athlete tender,
 In form and in face
 Lithe Hermes appeareth.
 Immortal grace
 As a nimbus he weareth;
 Like to a god doth he show.
Io!

EURYNOME

With strigil of steel,
 Curvéd to fit
 The muscles' slope,
 He scrapeth the oil
 From each supple limb.
 New strength doth he feel;

His face is alit
 With victory's hope;
 For the course's toil
 With purpose grim
 He testeth each thew.

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!

Telemachus goes to his cloak, and replacing therein the oil-flask, takes from it a strigil, with which he scrapes his body, at the end assuming the pose of "The Athlete with the Strigil." Replacing the strigil in the cloak, he then exercises the muscles of his limbs, breast, and back, ending with the pose of the "Farnese Hercules." He then practises the running stride, ending with the pose of the "Flying Mercury."

EURYNOME

Who is it advanceth
 To vie with the youth
 In the contest of speed?
 From the cheek's brown tan
 From the strength displayed
 As forward she pranceth,
 Ye would call her, in sooth,
 A rival to heed,
 Fit match for a man,
 This muscled maid;
 An athlete true!

Dymas hastens forward in a running stride, in the guise of Atalanta. Her robe is begirt for running. She assumes the pose of "Diana in the Vatican."

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!
 As the champion good
 Of the hardihood
 Of our sex doth she show
Io!

EURYNOME

Atalanta the swift,
 Ever victorious!
 What man will compete
 With womanhood's pride?
 Who dareth aspire
 To conquer the maid?
 See Hippomenes smile,
 Serene, unafraid,
 Since the golden gift
 Of Cypris glorious,
 The apples sweet
 Of fond desire,
 In his hands he doth hide
 The maiden to wile.

Telemachus takes from his cloak two golden apples which he holds in his hands.

MAIDENS

No fear doth he know,
 Trusting the while
 In the gift of Cypris
 The maid to beguile.

Dymas advances toward Telemachus. Both stand before the altar, and make obeisance to the goddess Artemis.

EURYNOME

Obeisance due
 To Dian they make,
 Patron divine
 To both of them dear.

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!
 With Dian, we, too,
 No favor would show,
Io! io!

The contestants advance to the starting line and stand side by side.

EURYNOME

Their places they take
 At the starting line,
 Nor heed they our cheer,
 To their purpose true.

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!

EURYNOME

He is crouching to speed
 At my word, but no heed
 Taketh the may,
 Her rival scorning;
 Then *One!* for the warning,
Two, Three, and away!

MAIDENS

Io! oe!

The contestants spring forward, Telemachus in the lead.

EURYNOME

Forward they spring;
 The man in the lead is
 By a stride's length,
 His impulse like
 To the start of a swallow;
 As a hawk taketh wing
 Slower her speed is;
 She saveth her strength
 Till the time to strike,
 Yet close doth she follow;
 Forth from the court do they fly.

During this recitation the runners disappear from the scene at the left of the stage.

MAIDENS

Oa, ouai!

We cannot descry
The course o'er the white sea sand.
Eurynome dear,
Climb the steps high
And picture to us the swift race.
From thee let us hear,
Let us see in thy face,
How the runners appear —
Still are they speeding apace?

Eurynome ascends the steps, and gazes after the runners. In the course of her following description she turns her gaze gradually from the left front of the stage around by the central front to the right.

EURYNOME

Swift is the man,
Hippomenes strong;
With mighty stride
On the maiden gaining,
He forgeth ahead;
She, as she began,
Runneth along,
In graceful glide
Her strength restraining
Till his shall have sped —
The champion sly!

MAIDENS

Oa, ouai!

The maiden, disdain
 With confident pride
 Her rival, is feigning:
 Her strength doth she hide.

EURYNOME

Though strong yet in limb,
 Hippomenes tireth;
 His features drawn
 His failing breath show;
 But his purpose grim
 His heart anew fireth
 Ere its power hath gone,
 And, enduring the strain,
 Still on doth he go.

MAIDENS

Io!

When mind takes the rein
 The body its master doth know.

EURYNOME

Atalanta fleet,
 Hippomenes after,
 As the stride he doth slack,
 Forward is bounding
 Like the lithe pard
 With swiftness and grace

O'ertaking a deer.
At the sound of her feet,
Or her lips' low laughter,
He glanceth back,
Then, onward pounding,
Though still breathing hard,
He speedeth his pace,
Running by will-power sheer.

MAIDENS

Eia! we cheer
The heart that ne'er faileth for fear.

EURYNOME

Now the man hath she passed,
The maiden swift,
With eyes on the goal;
But, upraising his hand,
Doth Hippomenes cast
A Paphian gift:
Gleaming an apple doth roll
Before her along the white strand,
Till aside from the course it doth lie.

MAIDENS

Oa, ouai!
Fain would we the act understand:
He letteth a fair apple fly
Before her to bound on the sand;
Eurynome, pray tell us why?

EURYNOME

The maiden observeth
 The tempting sight,
 And in her heart leapeth
 Desire uncontrolled.
 A quick turn making,
 Her stride she swerveth
 Toward the sphere bright;
 In her hand she upsweepeth
 The apple of gold,
 With joy the gift taking
 As a prize for her might,
 Before her by Artemis rolled.

MAIDENS

Iau, iavoi!
 She taketh with joy
 As a gift from above
 The apple of love
 That too oft doth a maiden destroy.

EURYNOME

The apple hiding
 Her girdle within,
 To the course she returneth;
 Though far in the lead
 Is Hippomenes striding,
 Yet trust still to win
 In her heart high burneth;
 She reneweth her speed.

MAIDENS

Maiden, have heed!
Atalanta, take care!
The passion of greed
Is the high gods' gin
Wherein they ensnare
Souls that by pride have been led into sin.
Victory's meed
We wish now thy rival to wear.

EURYNOME

The maiden, urging
Her strength to the strain,
Her hot blood surging
Through every vein,
With quickening stride
In burst of speed
The man hath o'er taken,
And side by side
They fight for the lead.
Now off he is shaken!
Once more
She forgeth her rival before.
The goal they draw nigh —

MAIDENS

Oa, ouai!
In sorrow we cry,
Hippomenes vanquished
To victory nigh!

EURYNOME

Nay, get for him bays,
Palm branches bring.

Adraste goes out.

Once more his hand doth he raise,
And hurleth, like stone from a sling,
In front of the maiden fleet
The apple of gold
That still he doth hold;
It boundeth along at her feet.

The contestants enter the scene from the right, Dymas running in front, with the apple bounding along by her side.

Again desire,
Passion impure,
Her heart doth fire,
The apple to catch
At her feet that doth roll.
The golden lure
She stoopeth to snatch —
And Hippomenes crosseth the goal!

The contestants take the position of Atalanta and Hippomenes in Poynter's painting of the race. In the meantime Adraste has returned with palm-leaves and laurels, which she distributes to the Maidens. Waving the palm leaves they cry:

MAIDENS

Io, evoi!
We shout in our joy,
Hippomenes winneth the race!
Yet we cry *eleleu!*
For our champion too —
Our sex hath not suffered disgrace,
So let both in the victory share.
With wreath of bay
His head we adorn,
And to Cypris we pray
That the apples, borne
In the bosom fair
Of the maiden chaste,
True Love shall inspire
Till Greed's desire
And the passion of Pride are effaced.

Telemachus and Dymas kneel before the altar, the latter placing the apples in her bosom. Eurynome crowns Telemachus with a wreath of laurel. The Maidens then in pantomime invoke Aphrodite.

SONG

ODE TO APHRODITE

By Sappho

PERSE

Thronéd in splendor, immortal one, and mighty
Daughter of Zeus, wile-weaving Aphrodite,

Let not thy wrath with terror's pangs affray me,
Nor weariness o'erweigh me.

Come to me now, if ever in the olden
Days thou didst hearken afar, and from the golden
Halls of thy father come with all speeding
Unto my pleading.

Down through mid aether from heaven's highest
regions,
Yoking thy ear, upborne by lovely legions
Of fluttering sparrows, clouding with their pinions
Earth's broad dominions,

Swiftly thou camest, and, blessed one, with smiling
Countenance immortal my heavy heart beguiling,
Askedst the cause of my pitiful condition —
Why my petition?

What most I craved in brain-bewildered yearning?
Whom would I win, winsome in her spurning?
“Who is the maiden, evilly requiting
Fond love with slighting?

“She now who flies soon shall turn pursuing,
Cold now to love, weary thee with wooing,
Gifts that she spurned with other gifts reclaiming
Unto her shaming.”

Come thus again; from cruel care deliver;
Of all that my heart wills graciously be giver —
Greatest of gifts, thy loving self and tender
To be my defender.

TELEMACHUS

For the heart-cheering dance, my mother dear,
I thank thee. May it soon an omen prove
Of Ithaca redeemed, when song and cheer
Shall woes supplant, and strife shall end in love.
But now dismiss the maids for play more bold,
For with thee would I secret converse hold

On martial themes.

PENELOPE

Go then, Eurynome,
And fit thy maidens for a sterner dance;
The Battle of the Bowmen would we see;
Let them as archers to the fray advance,
Preparing us for contest grim and great
That now I plainly see shall save the state.

Exit Eurynome and Maidens.

Now that none other may our secret share
That in thine eyes already cries aloud,
The message of thy swelling heart declare
To me, the gladdest of all mothers proud.
Joy conquers pain as when thy life began;
Again I cry, "I have brought forth a man!"
Penelope hands the spear to Telemachus.

TELEMACHUS

In the early watch of yester night there came
To me, as bound in slumber deep I lay,

Athene, in her battle-garb aflame,
And bade me instant rise, and take my way
To the house of our good keeper of the swine,
Eumaeus. I obeyed the dream divine,

And sought the hut with mingled hope and dread
Which soon were tinged with sadness, for I found
Before the door old Argos lying dead,
My boyhood's playmate, Father's favorite hound,
Which ever mourned his absence. "Ah, at last,"
I sighed, "for thee the days of grief are passed.

"Athene, let this prove an omen good,
That to myself and mother it portend
My shaméd state and her long widowhood
And our joint sorrow near a welcome end."
With beating heart I softly tried the door
And slipped within, and sank upon the floor,

And sat there breathless in the hovel's gloom
Unnoted by the swineherd or his guest,
The wanderer here, who stood within the room
And told the story of the wondrous quest
Of great Odysseus through many a land
To win his home in safety with his band,

Of which the stranger said he was the least,
A common archer, who had lost his bow
In that great storm whose rage but late has ceased,
Which all save him had hurled to depths below.
A well-wrought tale, yet its too perfect craft
Wrought such fond hope within me that I laughed,

And at the sound there turned to me — my sire!
Mother, thou startest not!

PENELOPE

My clever son,
Thy father's mind in thee I much admire
But thinkest thou thy heart could mine outrun?
Nay, ere thou didst him in the hut divine,
I knew his coming. Lo, of this the sign!

She holds up the spear.

For ready to his hand I brought this spear,
And with my hand its point I burnished bright;
And bade my maids with lances light appear
To raise our spirits to heroic height
So that we might our cup of courage pour
Into my lord's full soul that it run o'er.

Then from the armory in stealth I brought
Odysseus' mail, that, donned in youthful pride,
He wore what time my father's court he sought
And wooed and won me as a willing bride —
Cuirass and greaves and helm, with cunning made
Of brass and gold — and in my chamber laid

The rich array, and burnished bright its sheen;
With them I set his great bow, waxen well,
And quiver of long arrows, true and keen,
And newly fledgéd for their mission fell.
To none till now, save Eurycleia old,
Leal and discreet, have I my purpose told.

TELEMACHUS

Athene, patron goddess of our line,
Hath surely granted thee her prescient grace,
Since all thine actions with the deep design
Of wise Odysseus have run apace,
For he hath fixed his mind this very day
With bow and spear the suitor band to slay.

E'en now the temper of their souls we tried,
And found them evil all, save Phemius blind.
Odysseus, with Eumaeus as his guide,
Came to the feast that he perchance might find
Pity that oft in rudest breasts hath room,
And so might save the kindly hearts from doom.

I went before, and, when within the hall
There limped the beggar by the swineherd led,
Braving the wrath my princely actions call
From the proud suitors on my youthful head,
I prayed them grant the needy stranger's right,
And bade him beg from each a portion slight.

And, as from bench to bench Odysseus passed
With humble mien among that evil crew,
Antinoüs at his head an ox-hoof cast,
Saying in jest, "There, stranger, take thy due."
Lightly Odysseus from it leaped aside,
And, "Thee I shall repay the first," replied;

Whereat with rage the hall grew clamorous;
Above the din Eurymachus' voice I caught;

“Despicable beggar, wouldst thou threaten us?
 By whom wast thou to bait us hither brought?—
 Telemachus?” “Nay, from his sire I come
 To taste the welcome men who stayed at home

“Give to the heroes who return from war,”
 My sire replied: whereat the giant wode
 Hurl'd at his head a mighty earthen jar,
 Which burst against the wall. The red wine flow'd
 In pools upon the floor. “A guilty sign,
 Eurymachus; thy blood shall flow like wine.”

Then to my father's side I quickly flew;
 Odysseus uprais'd his godlike form
 To its full height, and back the suitors drew
 Behind the benches, whence they sent a storm
 Of bones and joints, with wine-jars in their train;
 “You shower on us meat and drink like rain,”

Odysseus cried, “and, in your courtesies
 Your places at the table giving o'er,
 Would burden us with hospitality;
 Such generous hosts I have not met before.
 Prince, let us hence, that we may counsel take
 For this great kindness fit return to make.”

So from the Banquet Hall into this court
 We backward drew with faces to the foe
 Resolv'd to repay their savage sport
 With mortal vengeance of the spear and bow.
 So let thy maids in martial rank advance
 To spur my spirit with the bowman's dance.

Penelope claps her hands. Enter Eurynome and Maidens, the former bearing a lance with a red pennon, and the latter small bows and dainty quivers filled with little arrows. The Maidens are in boyish costume.

CHORUS

THE ARCHERS

EURYNOME

Warriors maiden
 In mimic marches
 We move to the battle
 With shout of joy.

MAIDENS

Evoi! evoi!

EURYNOME

Our hands are laden
 With tiny arches;
 Our gay quivers rattle
 With arrows toy.

MAIDENS

Evoi! evoi!
 The weapons men bear
 With labor and care
 In sport we employ.

EURYNOME

As children enhancing
Life's vigor with play,
With shouting and dancing,
In battle array
Retreating, advancing,
We figure the fray
Of our archers at Troy.

MAIDENS

Evoi! evoi!
Let us mock the fierce fray
Of the bowmen at Troy,
Awaiting the day
When the world shall be mended,
And men, their strife ended,
Shall join with the children in play.
Evoi!

Enter Eurycleia.

EURYCLEIA

Eurynome, I bid thee cease the dance.

She addresses Penelope.

By higher power than thine, my mistress dear,
I charge thee stop this play, Let the light lance
Vail its bright pennon to the mighty spear,
The girlish arch to warrior's bow give place;
Know, maidens, I have seen him, face to face!

By emotive gestures and ejaculations Eurynome and the Maidens express questioning wonder, and Penelope and Telemachus similarly show consternation at what may be a premature disclosure of the return of Odysseus. Eurycleia addresses mother and son:

Well wot ye whom I mean. When I disclose
 To all these eager ears the secret sweet
 Which close you guard against our crafty foes,
 Fear not; I know the maidens are discreet
 Nor will betray the tidings of great joy
 I bring. Know that the man returned from Troy —

Is even Odysseus, our belovéd lord!

Eurynome and the Maidens silently express in emotive gestures and expression their joy at the revelation, mingled, however, with incredulity.

Upon his knee I have beheld the scar
 Made by the wild boar's tusk, so deeply gored
 In his young flesh that it remains to mar
 His manly form which else were blemishless —
 A blot that once I mourned, but now I bless.

Again my master's limbs I have arrayed
 In armor of his youth, whose princely sheen
 Gleams bright as when he donned it first, the maid
 Of Sparta's court to woo and win as queen,
 Penelope, then fair as Helen famed —
 For virtue now above all women named.

Within his hand I placed the mighty bow
 Which to his yearning youth a traveller gave
 In pledge of common spirit. Long ago
 The giver met his doom — Iphitus brave,
 Whom Heracles his host in envy slew
 For deeds that he had done and yet might do.

And so Odysseus, when he went to Troy,
 Laid by the weapon as a sacred thing,
 Memorial of sadness mixt with joy —
 That deathless love which death alone can bring —
 And on his back I girt with leathern thong
 A quiver full of arrows, keen and long.

Then over all his beggar's cloak I threw —
 The shining mail, the arrows winged with death —
 Lo, here he comes.

*Enter Odysseus, still enveloped in the beggar's
 cloak.*

Hail him, ye maidens true,
 But only with glad eyes and bated breath,
 Dear lord, we bend obedient to thy will
 Like bows that with the archer's purpose thrill.

*All bow before Odysseus who takes his place in the
 center upon the steps with Penelope and Telemachus
 on either side.*

Ay, and as weapons tried and true impart
 Sense of sure mastery to the wielding hand,

We shall return the impulse to thy heart,
 And guide thine arm to do thy will's command.
 Dip, then, thy shafts in venom of our hate,
 And each shall fly to its doomed target straight.

CHORUS

THE ORIGIN OF THE BOW

EURYCLEIA

Hermes, lover
 Of wastrels winning,
 Scamps big and little,
 Patron smiling
 Of cunning and craft,
 To us discover
 The bow's beginning,
 What herd-boy with whittle
 His idlesse whiling
 First formed arch and shaft.

MAIDENS

What godhead, man ever beguiling,
 Looked down on the mischief and laughed.

EURYCLEIA

Of a fir bough he formed
 The supple arch; .
 A reed of the mere
 The arrow afforded;
 Cedar bark did he twist
 For the cord of his bow.

That men with it armed
To battle would march
Against the dread spear
Unshielded, unsworded,
The boy never wist,
E'en the gods did not know.

MAIDENS

To the engine of war
That strikes from afar,
By Hermes designed,
Only contempt was accorded.
By none save him,
Not Ares grim
Nor Athene the wise,
Was the war-bow divined
That out of the plaything should rise
Till over all weapons it lorded.

EURYCLEIA

Long as a child
Its kindred among,
The war-spear bright
And lance arm-flung,
The bow remained.
By death undefiled,
By blood unstained,
For play alone was it strung.
Yet the play was to fight,
To conquer, to kill! —

The passion of man, old and young,
For power is ever his will.

MAIDENS

To slay, to spill
Blood, to destroy
Life, is man's joy.
His pastime still
As it was when a boy,
And shall be until
The spirit of woman
His heart shall illumine
And drive from its lair
The beast that lurks there,
And render our race wholly human.

EURYCLEIA

The small bird singing
On the bough swinging,
The lizard sunning
His length on the wall;
These were the lad's quarry,
Now crouching, now running
Creeping and gliding
Through grasses tall
His movements hiding,
He made his foray.

MAIDENS

Let us mimic in dance
The childish play:

The stealthy advance
Of the boy with the bow
And blunt-headed arrow
Stalking his prey
That feared not the foe —
The lizard lithe and the sparrow.

EURYCLEIA

From the dart weakly sped,
The quick lizard glided
A cranny within.
Away the bird flew
And, singing, derided
The weapon new.
The boy hung his head;
Deep was his chagrin
That the pert sparrow laughed
In scorn at the craft
On which himself he had prided.

MAIDENS

Boy-like, the blame
He casts for the shame
On the bow in whose strength he confided.

EURYCLEIA

With head elate
And forkt tongue hissing
Inveterate hate
At our heeléd race,

A coiléd snake,
In the roadside dust
Invited attack.
With fear aquake
The boy drew back
A stride's short space;
Then into his heart
Came courage, new trust
In his weapon's strength;
And, fitting a dart,
He drew to its length
The bow, and shot without missing!

MAIDENS

With clubbéd bow
He kills the stunned foe,
And home bears the coil
As a warrior's spoil
To his mother dear,
Who shudders in fear,
Yet still rewards him with kissing.

EURYCLEIA

What deity dread
The daring deed
Of the lad inspired?
What godhead fired
With courage his heart,
His weak arm nerving
To send unswerving
The feeble dart

At the serpent's head?
From his seat of splendor
The god of the sun,
Hyperion,
Of man defender,
Looked down and took heed.
He saw within
The heart of the boy
Man's spirit defending
With primal joy
The Race from its foe,
The serpent's seed,
The symbol of Sin —
A contest portending,
The struggle with Wrong;
And to the lad lending
The will to win,
His arm he made strong.

MAIDENS

Apollo, the glorious
Spirit of light,
Sent him victorious
Home from the fight,
Presaging the triumph of Right.

ODYSSEUS

Thanks, Euryeleia, for the simple tale
That thou wast wont to tell me when, a boy,
I leaned against thy knee, and grew, now pale
When hissed the serpent, and now flushed with joy

When he lay writhing. Proud was I to know
A boy like me had made the primal bow.

But late I heard the legend in new guise
Perhaps more pleasing to a maiden's mind,
For to romance the girlish fancy flies
When childhood's wonderland is left behind;
Her heart is by a hero never won
If he come not in splendor of the sun.

While in Alcinoüs' court I was a guest
Thither there came a wandering minstrel. Young
And godlike fair he was, with youthful zest
For bold adventure. Enviously he sung
Heroic deeds, to which his soul inclined
Alas! in vain — the gods had made him blind.

With meaner envy was my bosom stirred,
With jealousy I own it to my shame,
For all had hung upon my slightest word —
Matron and maiden — ere the minstrel came
To win them from me with his magic song.
From morn till eve about me would they throng

To hear such stories as a warrior rude,
A plain, sea-faring man, could baldly tell
Of his adventures strange by field and flood,
True tales, pardie, since all do know full well
Marvels a many must the sailor meet:
Harpies with women's breasts and taloned feet,

Gorgons whom hissing serpents serve for hair,
Witches whose potions make of man a beast,
Fish-tailéd sirens that with song ensnare
The passing seamen on whose flesh they feast,
Grim giants, grislier made by one lone eye:
Wonders too great for the enlarging lie.

But he, this boyish bard they call "the Blind,"
Made all these marvels seem but fancies fond
Matched with the wondrous visions in his mind;
His soul's eye pierced into the world beyond
The senses' ken, and, daring, did he tell
Secrets of highest heaven and deepest hell.

The gods, I think, for this presumption bold
Blasted his body's sight, since even they
The prescience of the soul may not withhold;
So to appease their wrath he made essay
By flattering them most grossly in his song,
Doing in this to mortals grievous wrong.

Athene, bear me witness that whate'er
Of craft and courage lies within my heart
To impute to thee has ever been my care;
Yet in my deeds I claim the doer's part.
But to the gods the fawning poet tribe
Both mortal act and impulse must ascribe.

Myself and all my fellow warriors brave
This cozening bard with seeming praise maligned,
Since the whole credit for our deeds he gave
To gods unseen save by his subtle mind.

'Twas they who aimed the Achaean hero's blow,
And snatched the Trojan coward from the foe.

So, too, the nameless heroes of our race

Whose thought and toil its ancient triumphs won,
With gods and demigods he did replace:

Prometheus stole fire from the sun;
Bacchus taught men with wine their thirst to slake;
Apollo with the bow first quelled the snake.

This deed of Phoebus that the poet sang

Had that uncanny charm the serpent wields;
The women, thrilled with the ecstatic pang

Of terror which the sense of danger yields,
Would flee like birds, then flutter back again.
Would you, too, taste the sweetness of its pain?

MAIDENS

We fear, yet are fain
The legend to hear
Of the foe of our race,
The serpent, slain
By Phoebus Apollo,
To maidens dear
For beauty and grace.
Like the cliff swallow
Who findeth a snake
Coiled in her nest's hollow
Our hearts are aquake;
We tremble, and yet we would follow
Each movement the Python may make.

SLAUGHTER OF THE SUITORS

RECITATION

THE SLAYING OF THE PYTHON

From Ovid

ODYSSEUS

When passed the Age of Gold, that knew not gold
Save in the flowery mintage of the mead,
The honey dripping from the oak-tree old,
The grain that ripened from the self-sown seed;
After the Age of Silver, too, had flown,
When gains were reckoned in earth's fruits alone;

There came the Ages of the metals base,
Gross Brass and grosser Iron, which men wrought
To war's fell use, and evil grew apace;
For land and goods brother with brother fought,
And all the earth was drenched with blood and tears,
So that the high gods fled to kindlier spheres.

Then Zeus was wroth, and in his righteous ire
He sent a flood to drown the evil brood;
All were o'erwhelmed, save him, our race's sire,
Deucalion just, and Pyrrha, mother good,
Who dwelt alone upon Parnassus' height.
Then, when on earth the sun again shone bright,

Its god Apollo downward cast his eyes,
And saw, engendered from the noisome slime,
A spawn of horrid crawling monsters rise,
Incarnate forms of every sin and crime

That had possessed the word ere it was drowned;
Chief of them all, that King of Evil crowned,

The serpent Python, enemy of man.

Lifting his head against the race redeemed,
Ay, against Zeus, his foe since time began,

His eyes with hideous fascination gleamed,
Drawing to their destruction with strange lure
The folk created by our parents pure.

Uprose great Phoebus; with one foot advanced

He grasped his bow, and hailed his arrows keen
Upon the snake. Within the sun they glanced

Like beams that through the rifted clouds are seen;
Smiting the Foe of Man in his flat head,
Through every coil, they laid the monster dead.

While Odysseus is describing the killing of the Python, Telemachus instinctively steps forward to the center of the stage, and takes the pose of the "Apollo Belvedere," the while the Maidens by emotive gestures express the fascination of horror, terminated by the relief of joy.

So, in memorial of the mighty deed

The Pythian festival the god ordained,
The contests keen of manly strength and speed

That the Hellenic youths have since maintained —
The bloodless strife which links the hearts of men
In love, to bring the Golden Age again.

PANTOMIME

THE PYTHIAN GAMES

The Maidens enact the Pythian Games, Telemachus taking various athletic poses of Greek statuary, such as the "Discus Thrower."

ODYSSEUS

Forbear the games; the archer's dance resume;
 One contest lies before us, ere in joy
 We celebrate the evil Python's doom.
 Nemesis' symbol once again employ:
 The far-flung arrow hurtling on the foe.
 Maidens, enact the Vengeance of the Bow.

Eurynome and the Maidens take up their bows and arrows, and in pantomime illustrate the action described by Odysseus (who bears the great bow) in his following narrative, and express the emotions aroused thereby. In particular they assume the poses of the Niobe group of sculptures.

For well I know within my mind and soul
 The day has come when our fell foes shall fall;
 Smitten by Fate, down in the dust shall roll
 Antinoüs fair, Eurymachus, yea all
 The suitors proud, presumptuous in their sin —
 The gates of Hades yawn to let them in

In bloody shoals. So come, my tale attend,
 And learn from it that Nemesis ne'er nods:
 The story of the Theban queen's sad end,
 Slain mid her sons and daughters by the gods,
 Latona's twins, for her unholy pride.
 Listen how Niobe and her children died.

RECITATION

THE FATE OF NIOBE

From Meleager and Ovid

ODYSSEUS

It was upon the Phoebean Festival,
 When all the Theban folk together came,
 Each brow bedecked with leafy coronal,
 Each hand fulfilled with incense for the flame
 Upon the altar of the Heavenly Twins,
 To pray for purging of the people's sins,

That Niobe, their beauteous mother queen,
 Proud of her stalwart sons and daughters fair,
 Cried to the crowd: "What folly this, unseen
 Beings to worship, when in beauty rare,
 Ay, greater than in sun and moon doth shine,
 My children stand before you. Pay divine

"Honors to me then, who the brood did bear;
 Sevenfold am I the goddess Leto is,
 For she is mother to a single pair
 And fourteen perfect children crown my bliss;

If I of some by Fortune be bereft
Greater than Leto shall I still be left."

And so the silly folk enwreathed with bays
Her children, and to them the incense burned,
And sang the hymn prepared for Leto's praise
To Niobe as better by her earned,
Latona, thus in sight of mortals shamed,
And of the gods, with anger was inflamed,

And, calling her children from their seats afar,
Apollo, dazzling as his orb at noon,
Dian, whose beauty pales the evening star,
She said, "I, who brought forth the Sun and Moon,
Am flouted by a mortal mother. Go,
Visit her with the vengeance of the bow."

Down through the air the heavenly archers sped,
And on the Theban towers took their place.
Before the gates a broad champaign there spread
Whereon the city's youth with skill and grace
Pursued their sports, the chiefest of the throng
Niobe's princely sons. Urging along

His foaming steeds, Ismenos, eldest born,
With mastering art his gilded chariot drave;
Him the first arrow struck. With cry forlorn
From out the car he fell, yet still he clave
Unto the reins. The steeds with maddened bound
His lifeless body dragged along the ground.

His brother, then, as strong and fair of form,
The next in birth, hearing the bow-twang loud,
As when a boatman sees the gathering storm,
And all his sails to make the port doth crowd,
Gave his steeds rein the wingéd death to escape.
Him the next arrow on his neck's fair nape

Struck and felled prone. Two sons (but lads they
were)

Wrestled upon the green with limbs locked fast;
One arrow pierced them through their bodies fair;
One cry they gave, together breathed their last.
Two elder brothers, hastening to their side,
By arrows twain o'ertaken fell and died.

Remained of all the brothers one alone;
Lifting his supplicating hands to heaven,
Witless whose hand the deadly shafts had thrown,
"Spare me, ye gods!" he cried. Last of the seven,
Him Phoebus would have saved, but ah, the dart
Had left the bow; it pierced him to the heart.

The other youths fled to the town aghast
And to the queen the woful tidings told.
Forth to the field came Niobe running fast,
And when she saw her dear sons' corpses cold
She knelt and kissed them o'er and o'er again.
And yet her spirit, proud for all her pain,

Defiance breathed against the goddess high
Who well she wist had wrought the bloody deed.
"Gloat, cruel Latona, o'er mine agony,

And full your rage upon mine anguish feed,
 But yet recall, when to their graves I follow
 My seven sons, thou hast but thine Apollo

“And Artemis, while seven daughters still
 Remain of the fair children that I bore.
 Lo, here they come. Exult, then, an thou will,
 Richer am I than thou, my conqueror!”
 Boldly she spoke, for her excess of grief
 In her old wont of boasting found relief.

Then, as the sisters ran with piteous cries
 Upon the field, and bent with woful mien
 Over their brothers dead, down from the skies
 There rained another storm of arrows keen,
 Which slew the mourning maidens where they stood,
 Mingling their own with their dear brothers' blood.

One girl sank on the corse which she bewailed;
 One died, her mother seeking to console;
 One turned to flee, and was by death assailed;
 One hid in vain beneath her ample stole;
 A fifth faced shuddering the coming blow;
 A sixth in utter terror crouchéd low;

The last the mother sheltered with her form,
 “Spare me but one, my youngest,” Niobe cried;
 But even as she spake the heart-blood warm
 Gushed o'er her bosom from the daughter's side.
 Then stirless, speechless, with her dead alone
 She stood, till grief transformed her into stone.

* * * * *

A time there was for dancing; it has passed.

A time for ancient legends; it is gone.
The hour for action stern has struck at last;
The day of duty now is at its dawn.
Come, son, and learn with me what mighty odds
They have who fight with favor of the gods.

Odysseus and Telemachus descend the steps of the palace, and stand in an attitude of worship before the altar.

INVOCATION

THE PRAYER TO THE GODS

ODYSSEUS

Apollo, first I pay thee honors due;
Long have I felt thine enmity divine,
And to the end my error shall I rue,
My comrades' slaughter of thy sacred kine.
I know thou wilt forgive the old offence
And grant me power to prove my penitence,

For on a mission like thine own we go
To slay the Python in our halls that lies;
And so to thee I dedicate my bow;
Grant that it prove a pleasing sacrifice.
To thee this quiver, gracious Artemis,
Its darts, like thine, devote to Nemesis.

Poseidon, take for thine this toil-worn frame,
For oft hath it been wreckage of the sea;
Granting it power first to cleanse the shame
That blots my palace — then I give it thee,

And I shall go beyond the Ocean's end
To do thy bidding, and my sin amend.

Athene, patron dear, my mind and heart
To thee devoted were in days of old;
Grant me no favors; I shall play my part;
But to my son lend thou thy spirit bold,
Thy wisdom great. Let his be honor higher
Than mine — the son be hailed above the sire.

Odysseus and Telemachus ascend the steps. They embrace Penelope. Odysseus suddenly kicks and thrusts open the valved door leading into the Banquet Hall, and then, throwing off his cloak and drawing his bow, followed by Telemachus pointing forward his spear, he rushes within. During the ensuing scene a great tumult arises, with mingled shouts of anger, contempt and dismay. Penelope, standing on the steps and looking through the doors, reports to the Maidens the scene within the Banquet Hall, the Maidens expressing in pantomime their emotions.

CHORUS

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SUITORS

PENELOPE

In shining mail
That his cloak had concealéd,
Our lord standeth grim,
A god in seeming,
Apollo divine!

The suitors quail;
 At their foe revealéd;
 Their senses swim;
 Each stareth, as dreaming,
 O'ercome with wine.

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!
 On the startled view
 Of the suitors supine,
 Odysseus, gleaming
 In armor, doth shine.
 A deity dread are they deeming
 The man whom as beggar they knew.
Eleleu!

PENELOPE

Antinoüs tall
 To his lips hath uplift
 A brimming chalice,
 Twy-eared, of gold
 Richly enwrought.
 He doth not recall
 His fateful gift
 To the beggar in malice,
 Nor the answer bold —
 Far from his thought
 Is death, I trow.

MAIDENS

Eia, io!
 The hoof of horn

Hurléd in scorn,
 Our lord shall requite
 By right and by might,
 Repaying the blow with a blow.

PENELOPE

For who would dare,
 Think they in their pride,
 One man 'gainst a host,
 (What worth is the youth?)
 Beard princes great
 Gathered at board?
 For howsoe'er
 In his cause he confide,
 In his strength he boast,
 Or courage, in sooth
 He would meet black fate
 On the point of the sword!

MAIDENS

Oua, ouai!
 When a man doth defy
 Singly a horde
 Too oft doth he meet
 With mortal defeat;
 Zeus, save from this fate our dear lord!

PENELOPE

Our lord letteth drive
 A bitter shaft

From his bow good
At Antinoüs smiling
With high-raised head.
His throat it doth rive,
And the wine he hath quaffed
Spurteth out with the blood,
The food defiling
On the table outspread.

MAIDENS

The dart his neck smiteth
As the proud prince doth smile;
The beggar requiteth
The insult vile;
And the haughty lord
Lieth dead on the board
In the hall that his deeds did defile.

PENELOPE

The wooers are raising
A cry of fear;
From their seats high
They leap to their feet,
On each other they call;
Around are they gazing,
For shield and spear,
But none do they spy —
Some servant discreet
Hath hidden them all!

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!

The swine-herd true
 Their arms hath removéd
 Out of the hall,
 Lest to his lord lovéd
 Harm should befall.

PENELOPE

Flameth each heart
 With anger vain.
 In impotent fear,
 In terror craven,
 Our lord they threaten
 With utter doom.
 "Know, stranger, thy dart
 Our leader hath slain,
 A prince without peer.
 For this shall the raven
 Upon thy flesh batten,
 The wolf shall thy marrow consume."

MAIDENS

With confidence clear
 The menace we hear;
 Word breaketh no bone;
 The coward alone
 At his foeman doth jeer.

PENELOPE

Odysseus high
 Uplifteth his head

Clear his words ring:
 "Ye dogs, that did steal
 The house within
 Whose lord was away,
 His goods to waste,
 Know, then, it is I,
 The man ye thought dead,
 Ithaca's king,
 Returnéd, to deal
 Vengeance: in sin
 Your souls to slay.
 Death ye shall taste."

MAIDENS

Io, io!
 Death shall they know;
 For our slaughtered kine
 And our wasted wine
 Their blood shall flow.
Io!

PENELOPE

The suitors turn
 To Eurymachus strong
 In mute appeal
 To quell the foe.
 With a bone for his blade
 At our lord he leapeth.
 But Odysseus stern
 A shaft, yard-long,
 Pointed with steel,

Speedeth, and low
 The giant is laid.
 Death over him creepeth.

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!
 He hath got his due;
 The promise made
 By the beggar is paid;
 Sponged out is the score;
 He lieth in gore;
 Our lord his word keepeth.

PENELOPE

Careless our lord is!
 On him unaware
 Amphinomus stealeth
 With trencher-knife bright
 To strike from the rear.
 But the stealthy step heard is
 By Telemachus fair.
 Quick the lad wheeleth
 And the man doth he smite
 With bronze-pointed spear.

MAIDENS

Io, io!
 Now plainly we know
 The son doth inherit
 The sire's own spirit —
 'Twas Pallas that guided the blow.

PENELOPE

In terror sore
 Like rats in a cage
 The suitors are running
 Around the wall
 Escape to find.
 But Eumæus shrewd
 His prudence hath provéd:
 Barred is the door.
 Wild is their rage
 At the swineherd's cunning.
 'Neath the tables they crawl,
 The benches behind.
 Only Phemius good
 Sitteth unmovéd,
 No fear doth he show.

MAIDENS

Ao, ao!
 On the minstrel blind
 Thy mercy bestow,
 Odysseus kind,
 By him wert thou ever belovéd.

PENELOPE

The blind bard sparing,
 His anger fierce
 On the suitors wreaking,
 Them singly he smiteth.
 His arrows long,

Through the wooden shields tearing,
 Their bodies pierce,
 Their base hearts seeking.
 Thus he requiteth
 The shame and the wrong.
 Blow hath he rendered for blow!

MAIDENS

Io!
 Our wrongs hath he righted,
 Our shame hath requited,
 And given us gladness for wo.

PENELOPE

From his high throne
 The minstrel dear
 Riseth; with joy
 His face is a gleam;
 His harp doth he smite,
 List, maids, to its tone.
 His song ringeth clear:
 Our lord come from Troy,
 The land to redeem,
 The reign restoring of Right!

MAIDENS

Io, eleleu!
 The poet true,
 In faith that is stronger than sight,
 With inward light

The end ever knew.
 Now let him complete
 His broken song,
 For sad hearts too sweet
 In the evil days long —
 Return of the Hero whose feet
 Shall trample the Serpent of Wrong.

Phemius emerges from within the Banquet Hall, and, standing on the porch, sings to the accompaniment of his harp:

SONG

ASTRAEA REDUX

PHEMIUS

Hail, for thy sweet return
 Dear Odysseus, lord!
 Glad are the hearts that did yearn,
 Ended our eyes' weary ward;

Sorrow is turned into joy,
 Darkness is lifted in light;
 The years since thou left us for Troy
 Are passed as a watch in the night,

A troubled dream ere the dawn,
 Yea, as a tale that is told,
 Like to a mist have they gone
 That morning has oceanward rolled.

With peace let our purposes run,
 With justice our freedom make sure,
 And gladness that rose with the sun
 Shall to his setting endure.

*Odysseus in shining armor and Telemachus emerge
 from the Banquet Hall upon the porch of the palace.*

He comes with Telemachus brave,
 Victorious over our foe;
 Maidens, your palm-branches wave,
 Odysseus, *oa, io!*

MAIDENS

*Waving palm-branches, and repeating the former
 Dance of Triumph.*

Oa, io!

CURTAIN





