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STAGEDBOOKS · READING EDITION

The Odyssey · Book I

Homer · c. 700 BC

The complete text, as performed. With the cast, the atlas, and the notes from the margin. No pictures.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ODYSSEUS
the man of many devices · ten years gone

ZEUS
the cloud-gatherer · father of gods and men

ATHENA
the flashing-eyed goddess · as Mentes of the Taphians

POSEIDON
the earth-shaker · who rages against Odysseus

TELEMACHUS
son of Odysseus · sad at heart among the wooers

PENELOPE
daughter of Icarius · wife of Odysseus

ANTINOUS
son of Eupeithes · a wooer

EURYMACHUS
son of Polybus · a wooer

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The whole of Book I, every word, in A. T. Murray's 1919 prose translation. Nothing is cut or modernised; the Greek names are Murray's.

ATLAS



Athena goes down from Olympus to Ithaca



The voyage Athena bids him make

pondering many things in mind; and with him, bearing blazing torches, went true-hearted Eurycleia, daughter of Ops[32], son of Peisenor. Her long ago Laertes had bought with his wealth, when she was in her first youth, and gave for her the price of twenty oxen; and he honored her even as he honored his faithful wife in his halls, but he never lay with her in love, for he shunned the wrath of his wife. She it was who bore for Telemachus the blazing torches; for she of all the handmaids loved him most, and had nursed him when he was a child. He opened the doors of the well-built chamber, sat down on the bed, and took off his soft tunic and laid it in the wise old woman's hands. And she folded and smoothed the tunic and hung it on a peg beside the corded bedstead, and then went forth from the chamber, drawing the door to by its silver handle, and driving the bolt home with the thong[33]. So there, the night through, wrapped in a fleece of wool, he pondered in his mind upon the journey which Athena had shewn him.

32 EURYCLEIA

Odysseus's own nurse, bought by Laertes for twenty oxen, the price of a very valuable slave. She will know Odysseus by his scar in Book XIX.

33 THE BOLT AND THE THONG

A door of the Bronze Age: the bolt is shot from outside by pulling a leather strap through a hole, and opened again with a hooked key. Telemachus is locked in for the night by his nurse, and lies awake.

Homer, The Odyssey, Book I, in the English of A. T. Murray, The Odyssey with an English Translation, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press / William Heinemann, 1919), from the Perseus Digital Library's edition of that text. Public domain in the United States (published 1919); the Perseus digitisation is CC BY-SA 3.0.

Homer

The Odyssey

Book I

Tell me, O Muse[1], of the man of many devices, who wandered full many ways after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose mind he learned, aye, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades. Yet even so he saved not his comrades, though he desired it sore, for through their own blind folly they perished—fools, who devoured the kine of Helios Hyperion[2]; but he took from them the day of their returning. Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, beginning where thou wilt, tell thou even unto us.

1 THE ODYSSEY

Twenty-four books, composed in Greek hexameters in the eighth or seventh century BC and credited to Homer. This is A. T. Murray's prose translation of 1919 for the Loeb Classical Library; Book I has 444 lines.

2 THE CATTLE OF THE SUN

The crime of Book XII, told here first: the crew eat the cattle of the sun-god on Thrinacia and are drowned for it. The poem begins at the end.

Now all the rest, as many as had escaped sheer destruction, were at home, safe from both war and sea, but Odysseus alone, filled with longing for his return and for his wife, did the

dead. But I will be lord of our own house and of the slaves that goodly Odysseus won for me."

Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him: "Telemachus, this matter verily lies on the knees of the gods, who of the Achaeans shall be king in sea-girt Ithaca; but as for thy possessions, thou mayest keep them thyself, and be lord in thine own house. Never may that man come who by violence and against thy will shall wrest thy possessions from thee, while men yet live in Ithaca. But I am fain, good sir, to ask thee of the stranger, whence this man comes. Of what land does he declare himself to be? Where are his kinsmen and his native fields? Does he bring some tidings of thy father's coming, or came he hither in furtherance of some matter of his own? How he started up, and was straightway gone! Nor did he wait to be known; and yet he seemed no base man to look upon."

Then wise Telemachus answered him: "Eurymachus, surely my father's home-coming is lost and gone. No longer do I put trust in tidings, whencesoever they may come, nor reck I of any prophecy which my mother haply may learn of a seer, when she has called him to the hall. But this stranger is a friend of my father's house from Taphos. He declares that he is Mentes, son of wise Anchialus, and he is lord over the oar-loving Taphians." So spoke Telemachus, but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess.

Now the wooers turned to the dance and to gladsome song, and made them merry, and waited till evening should come; and as they made merry dark evening came upon them. Then they went, each man to his house, to take their rest. But Telemachus, where his chamber was built in the beautiful court, high, in a place of wide outlook, thither went to his bed,

halls. Prepare you other feasts, eating your own substance and changing from house to house. But if this seems in your eyes to be a better and more profitable thing, that one man's livelihood should be ruined without atonement, waste ye it. But I will call upon the gods that are forever, if haply Zeus may grant that deeds of requital may be wrought. Without atonement, then, should ye perish within my halls."

So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marvelled at Telemachus, for that he spoke boldly.

Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes[30], answered him: "Telemachus, verily the gods themselves are teaching thee to be a man of vaunting tongue, and to speak with boldness. May the son of Cronos never make thee king in sea-girt Ithaca, which thing is by birth thy heritage[31]."

30 ANTINOUS AND EURYMACHUS
The two leaders of the wooers, the first insolent and the second smooth. Both die by Odysseus's bow in Book XXII, Antinous first, with a cup at his lips.

31 KINGSHIP IN ITHACA
Antinous grants that the kingship is Telemachus's by birth, and hopes Zeus will deny it. Telemachus answers that there are other kings in Ithaca: the island has many lords and no settled crown.

Then wise Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, wilt thou be wroth with me for the word that I shall say? Even this should I be glad to accept from the hand of Zeus. Thinkest thou indeed that this is the worst fate among men? Nay, it is no bad thing to be a king. Straightway one's house grows rich and oneself is held in greater honor. However, there are other kings of the Achaeans full many in seagirt Ithaca, both young and old. One of these haply may have this place, since goodly Odysseus is

queenly nymph Calypso[3], that bright goddess, keep back in her hollow caves, yearning that he should be her husband. But when, as the seasons revolved, the year came in which the gods had ordained that he should return home to Ithaca, not even there was he free from toils, even among his own folk. And all the gods pitied him save Poseidon[4]; but he continued to rage unceasingly against godlike Odysseus until at length he reached his own land.

3 CALYPSO
The nymph of the island Ogygia, who has kept Odysseus seven years. Her name means 'she who hides'.

4 POSEIDON
God of the sea and earthquakes, Zeus's brother. His grudge is explained a few lines on: the blinding of his son the Cyclops.

Howbeit Poseidon had gone among the far-off Ethiopians—the Ethiopians who dwell sundered in twain, the farthermost of men, some where Hyperion sets and some where he rises, there to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams[5], and there he was taking his joy, sitting at the feast; but the other gods were gathered together in the halls of Olympian Zeus. Among them the father of gods and men was first to speak, for in his heart he thought of noble Aegisthus, whom far-famed Orestes, Agamemnon's son, had slain[6]. Thinking on him he spoke among the immortals, and said:

5 THE ETHIOPIANS
For Homer the 'burnt-faced' people at the two edges of the world, where the sun rises and sets, whom the gods visit for feasts. Poseidon's absence lets the council act.

6 AEGISTHUS AND ORESTES

Aegisthus seduced Clytemnestra and killed her husband Agamemnon on his return from Troy; their son Orestes killed Aegisthus. The poem holds the story up as a mirror for Telemachus throughout.

"Look you now, how ready mortals are to blame the gods. It is from us, they say, that evils come, but they even of themselves, through their own blind folly, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained. Even as now Aegisthus, beyond that which was ordained, took to himself the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, and slew him on his return, though well he knew of sheer destruction, seeing that we spake to him before, sending Hermes, the keen-sighted Argeiphontes[7], that he should neither slay the man nor woo his wife; for from Orestes shall come vengeance for the son of Atreus when once he has come to manhood and longs for his own land. So Hermes spoke, but for all his good intent he prevailed not upon the heart of Aegisthus; and now he has paid the full price of all."

7 ARGEIPHONTES

A title of Hermes, read in antiquity as 'slayer of Argus', the hundred-eyed watchman; its real meaning is uncertain.

Then the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, answered him: "Father of us all, thou son of Cronos[8], high above all lords, aye, verily that man lies low in a destruction that is his due; so, too, may any other also be destroyed who does such deeds. But my heart is torn for wise Odysseus, hapless man, who far from his friends has long been suffering woes in a sea-girt isle, where is the navel of the sea[9]. 'Tis a wooded isle, and therein dwells a goddess, daughter of Atlas of baneful mind, who knows the depths of every sea, and himself holds the tall pillars which keep earth and heaven apart. His daughter it is that keeps back that

ween, is to blame, who gives to men that live by toil, to each one as he will. With this man no one can be wroth if he sings of the evil doom of the Danaans; for men praise that song the most which comes the newest to their ears. For thyself, let thy heart and soul endure to listen; for not Odysseus alone lost in Troy the day of his return, but many others likewise perished. Nay, go to thy chamber, and busy thyself with thine own tasks, the loom and the distaff, and bid thy handmaids ply their tasks; but speech shall be for men[29], for all, but most of all for me; since mine is the authority in the house." She then, seized with wonder, went back to her chamber, for she laid to heart the wise saying of her son. Up to her upper chamber she went with her handmaids, and then bewailed Odysseus, her dear husband until flashing-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids. But the wooers broke into uproar throughout the shadowy halls, and all prayed, each that he might lie by her side. And among them wise Telemachus was the first to speak:

28 HELLAS AND MID-ARGOS

In Homer 'Hellas' is a district of Thessaly and 'Argos' the Peloponnese; together they mean all Greece, north and south.

29 SPEECH SHALL BE FOR MEN

Telemachus's first act of authority, learned that afternoon from Athena. Penelope wonders at it; the Greek has her 'lay the wise saying of her son to heart'.

"Wooers of my mother, overweening in your insolence, for the present let us make merry with feasting, but let there be no brawling; for this is a goodly thing, to listen to a minstrel such as this man is, like to the gods in voice. But in the morning let us go to the assembly and take our seats, one and all, that I may declare my word to you outright that you depart from these

return of the Achaeans—the woeful return from Troy which Pallas Athena laid upon them[26]. And from her upper chamber the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, heard his wondrous song, and she went down the high stairway from her chamber, not alone, for two handmaids attended her. Now when the fair lady had come to the wooers, she stood by the door-post of the well-built hall[27], holding before her face her shining veil; and a faithful handmaid stood on either side of her. Then she burst into tears, and spoke to the divine minstrel:

25 AS A BIRD
The Greek says only that she went like a bird; later readers made it a sea-eagle. Telemachus understands from it that his guest was a god.

26 THE RETURNS
The Nostoi, the returns of the heroes from Troy, were a cycle of songs in their own right; the Odyssey is the greatest of them. Phemius sings the new song, and the house's own grief.

27 PENELOPE
Her first appearance: veiled, between two handmaids, at the door-post, weeping. She speaks and is sent back upstairs by her son.

"Phemius, many other things thou knowest to charm mortals, deeds of men and gods which minstrels make famous. Sing them one of these, as thou sittest here, and let them drink their wine in silence. But cease from this woeful song which ever harrows the heart in my breast, for upon me above all women has come a sorrow not to be forgotten. So dear a head do I ever remember with longing, even my husband, whose fame is wide through Hellas and mid-Argos[28]." Then wise Telemachus answered her: "My mother, why dost thou begrudge the good minstrel to give pleasure in whatever way his heart is moved? It is not minstrels that are to blame, but Zeus, I

wretched, sorrowing man; and ever with soft and wheedling words she beguiles him that he may forget Ithaca. But Odysseus, in his longing to see were it but the smoke leaping up from his own land, yearns to die. Yet thy heart doth not regard it, Olympian. Did not Odysseus beside the ships of the Argives offer thee sacrifice without stint in the broad land of Troy? Wherefore then didst thou conceive such wrath against him, O Zeus?"

8 SON OF CRONOS
Zeus overthrew his father Cronos and the Titans; Athena, born from Zeus's head, is the daughter who addresses him most freely.

9 THE NAVEL OF THE SEA
Ogygia, Calypso's island, is placed at the sea's centre and nowhere on a map; ancient and modern guesses range from Malta to the Atlantic.

Then Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, answered her and said: "My child, what a word has escaped the barrier of thy teeth? How should I, then, forget godlike Odysseus, who is beyond all mortals in wisdom, and beyond all has paid sacrifice to the immortal gods, who hold broad heaven? Nay, it is Poseidon, the earth-enfolder, who is ever filled with stubborn wrath because of the Cyclops, whom Odysseus blinded of his eye[10]— even the godlike Polyphemus, whose might is greatest among all the Cyclopes; and the nymph Thoosa bore him, daughter of Phorcys who rules over the unresting sea; for in the hollow caves she lay with Poseidon. From that time forth Poseidon, the earth-shaker, does not indeed slay Odysseus, but makes him a wanderer from his native land. But come, let us who are here all take thought of his return, that he may come home; and Poseidon will let go his anger, for he will in no wise be able,

against all the immortal gods and in their despite, to contend alone." Then the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, answered him: "Father of us all, thou son of Cronos, high above all lords, if indeed this is now well pleasing to the blessed gods, that the wise Odysseus should return to his own home, let us send forth Hermes, the messenger, Argeiphontes, to the isle Ogygia[11], that with all speed he may declare to the fair-tressed nymph our fixed resolve, even the return of Odysseus of the steadfast heart, that he may come home. But, as for me, I will go to Ithaca, that I may the more arouse his son, and set courage in his heart to call to an assembly the long-haired Achaeans, and speak out his word to all the wooers, who are ever slaying his thronging sheep and his sleek kine of shambling gait. And I will guide him to Sparta and to sandy Pylos[12], to seek tidings of the return of his dear father, if haply he may hear of it, that good report may be his among men."

10 POLYPHEMUS
The one-eyed giant of Book IX, son of Poseidon and the nymph Thoosa. Odysseus put out his eye with a heated stake to escape his cave.

11 HERMES TO OGYGIA
Zeus's order is carried out in Book V, after Telemachus's journey: the poem follows the son for four books before it reaches the father.

12 PYLOS AND SPARTA
Nestor's kingdom on the west coast of the Peloponnese and Menelaus's in the south: the two old comrades of Odysseus who got home. Telemachus's voyage fills Books II–IV.

So she spoke, and bound beneath her feet her beautiful sandals[13], immortal, golden, which were wont to bear her both over the waters of the sea and over the boundless land swift as the blasts of the wind. And she took her mighty spear, tipped

22 TWENTY ROWERS
A small ship; the great warships of the Iliad carry fifty. Athena provides the ship and crew herself in Book II.

23 NESTOR AND MENELAUS
The oldest of the Greek lords at Troy and the husband of Helen. Menelaus was the last to reach home, after seven years wandering in Egypt.

24 ORESTES AGAIN
The second time in the book. Athena sets Orestes before Telemachus as the son who avenged his father; the Oresteia of Aeschylus would make a different story of it three centuries later.

Then wise Telemachus answered her: "Stranger, in truth thou speakest these things with kindly thought, as a father to his son, and never will I forget them. But come now, tarry, eager though thou art to be gone, in order that when thou hast bathed and satisfied thy heart to the full, thou mayest go to thy ship glad in spirit, and bearing a gift costly and very beautiful, which shall be to thee an heirloom from me, even such a gift as dear friends give to friends."

Then the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, answered him: "Stay me now no longer, when I am eager to be gone, and whatsoever gift thy heart bids thee give me, give it when I come back, to bear to my home, choosing a right beautiful one; it shall bring thee its worth in return."

So spoke the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, and departed, flying upward as a bird[25]; and in his heart she put strength and courage, and made him think of his father even more than aforetime. And in his mind he marked her and marvelled, for he deemed that she was a god; and straightway he went among the wooers, a godlike man. For them the famous minstrel was singing, and they sat in silence listening; and he sang of the

hast[22], and go to seek tidings of thy father, that has long been gone, if haply any mortal may tell thee, or thou mayest hear a voice from Zeus, which oftenest brings tidings to men. First go to Pylos and question goodly Nestor[23], and from thence to Sparta to fair-haired Menelaus; for he was the last to reach home of the brazen-coated Achaeans. If so be thou shalt hear that thy father is alive and coming home, then verily, though thou art sore afflicted, thou couldst endure for yet a year. But if thou shalt hear that he is dead and gone, then return to thy dear native land and heap up a mound for him, and over it pay funeral rites, full many as is due, and give thy mother to a husband. Then when thou hast done all this and brought it to an end, thereafter take thought in mind and heart how thou mayest slay the wooers in thy halls whether by guile or openly; for it beseems thee not to practise childish ways, since thou art no longer of such an age. Or hast thou not heard what fame the goodly Orestes won among all mankind[24] when he slew his father's murderer, the guileful Aegisthus, for that he slew his glorious father? Thou too, my friend, for I see that thou art comely and tall, be thou valiant, that many an one of men yet to be born may praise thee. But now I will go down to my swift ship and my comrades, who, methinks, are chafing much at waiting for me. For thyself, give heed and have regard to my words."

21 EPHYRE AND THE POISON

Odysseus once sailed to Ephyre for arrow-poison and was refused it by Ilus, who feared the gods; Mentes's father gave it. A glimpse of Odysseus the pirate before Troy.

with sharp bronze, heavy and huge and strong, wherewith she vanquishes the ranks of men—of warriors, with whom she is wroth, she, the daughter of the mighty sire. Then she went darting down from the heights of Olympus, and took her stand in the land of Ithaca at the outer gate of Odysseus, on the threshold of the court. In her hand she held the spear of bronze, and she was in the likeness of a stranger, Mentes, the leader of the Taphians[14]. There she found the proud wooers. They were taking their pleasure at draughts in front of the doors, sitting on the hides of oxen which they themselves had slain; and of the heralds and busy squires, some were mixing wine and water for them in bowls, others again were washing the tables with porous sponges and setting them forth, while still others were portioning out meats in abundance.

13 THE GOLDEN SANDALS

The same lines describe Hermes's sandals in Book V; the poem reuses its formulas, which is how it was composed and remembered.

14 MENTES OF THE TAPHIANS

The Taphians were sea-traders and pirates of the islands off Acarnania, north of Ithaca. Athena chooses a guest-friend of the family whom no one in the house has seen.

Her the godlike Telemachus was far the first to see, for he was sitting among the wooers, sad at heart, seeing in thought his noble father, should he perchance come from somewhere and make a scattering of the wooers in the palace, and himself win honor and rule over his own house. As he thought of these things, sitting among the wooers, he beheld Athena, and he went straight to the outer door; for in his heart he counted it shame that a stranger should stand long at the gates. So, drawing near, he clasped her right hand, and took from her the

spear of bronze; and he spoke, and addressed her with winged words:

"Hail, stranger[15]; in our house thou shalt find entertainment and then, when thou hast tasted food, thou shalt tell of what thou hast need." So saying, he led the way, and Pallas Athena followed. And when they were within the lofty house, he bore the spear and set it against a tall pillar in a polished spear-rack, where were set many spears besides, even those of Odysseus of the steadfast heart. Athena herself he led and seated on a chair, spreading a linen cloth beneath—a beautiful chair, richly-wrought, and below was a footstool for the feet. Beside it he placed for himself an inlaid seat, apart from the others, the wooers, lest the stranger, vexed by their din, should loathe the meal, seeing that he was in the company of overweening men; and also that he might ask him about his father that was gone. Then a handmaid brought water for the hands in a fair pitcher of gold, and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash[16], and beside them drew up a polished table. And the grave housewife brought and set before them bread, and therewith dainties in abundance, giving freely of her store. And a carver lifted up and placed before them platters of all manner of meats, and set by them golden goblets, while a herald ever walked to and fro pouring them wine.

15 THE STRANGER

The law of hospitality: a stranger is fed and seated before he is asked his name. Telemachus does it rightly, and the poem notes it; the wooers, who are guests, break it daily.

20 THE ISLANDS

Same is Cephalonia, Zacynthus is Zante; Dulichium has never been identified. The wooers number a hundred and eight, Book XVI will say.

Then, stirred to anger, Pallas Athena spoke to him: "Out on it! Thou hast of a truth sore need of Odysseus that is gone, that he might put forth his hands upon the shameless wooers. Would that he might come now and take his stand at the outer gate of the house, with helmet and shield and two spears, such a man as he was when I first saw him in our house drinking and making merry, on his way back from Ephyre, from the house of Ilus, son of Mermerus[21]. For thither, too, went Odysseus in his swift ship in search of a deadly drug, that he might have wherewith to smear his bronze-tipped arrows; yet Ilus gave it not to him, for he stood in awe of the gods that are forever; but my father gave it, for he held him strangely dear. Would, I say, that in such strength Odysseus might come amongst the wooers; then should they all find swift destruction and bitterness in their wooing. Yet these things verily lie on the knees of the gods, whether he shall return and wreak vengeance in his halls, or whether he shall not; but for thyself, I bid thee take thought how thou mayest thrust forth the wooers from the hall. Come now, give ear, and hearken to my words. On the morrow call to an assembly the Achaean lords, and speak out thy word to all, and let the gods be thy witnesses. As for the wooers, bid them scatter, each to his own; and for thy mother, if her heart bids her marry, let her go back to the hall of her mighty father, and there they will prepare a wedding feast, and make ready the gifts full many—aye, all that should follow after a well-loved daughter. And to thyself will I give wise counsel, if thou wilt hearken. Man with twenty rowers the best ship thou

thee in time to come, seeing that Penelope bore thee such as thou art. But come, tell me this and declare it truly. What feast, what throng is this? What need hast thou of it? Is it a drinking bout, or a wedding feast? For this plainly is no meal to which each brings his portion, with such outrage and overweening do they seem to me to be feasting in thy halls. Angered would a man be at seeing all these shameful acts, any man of sense who should come among them." Then wise Telemachus answered her: "Stranger, since indeed thou dost ask and question me of this, our house once bade fair to be rich and honorable, so long as that man was still among his people. But now the gods have willed otherwise in their evil devising, seeing that they have caused him to pass from sight as they have no other man. For I should not so grieve for his death, if he had been slain among his comrades in the land of the Trojans, or had died in the arms of his friends, when he had wound up the skein of war. Then would the whole host of the Achaeans have made him a tomb, and for his son, too, he would have won great glory in days to come. But as it is, the spirits of the storm have swept him away and left no tidings: he is gone out of sight, out of hearing, and for me he has left anguish and weeping; nor do I in any wise mourn and wail for him alone, seeing that the gods have brought upon me other sore troubles. For all the princes who hold sway over the islands—Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus[20]—and those who lord it over rocky Ithaca, all these woo my mother and lay waste my house. And she neither refuses the hateful marriage, nor is she able to make an end; but they with feasting consume my substance: ere long they will bring me, too, to ruin."

16 THE HAND-WASHING

The feast scene in its fixed order: water for the hands, bread from the housekeeper, meat from the carver, wine from the herald. It recurs with the same words through the poem.

Then in came the proud wooers, and thereafter sat them down in rows on chairs and high seats. Heralds poured water over their hands, and maid-servants heaped by them bread in baskets, and youths filled the bowls brim full of drink; and they put forth their hands to the good cheer lying ready before them. Now after the wooers had put from them the desire of food and drink, their hearts turned to other things, to song and to dance; for these things are the crown of a feast. And a herald put the beautiful lyre in the hands of Phemius[17], who sang perforce among the wooers; and he struck the chords in prelude to his sweet lay.

17 PHEMIUS

The household bard, who sings 'perforce', under compulsion of the wooers. Homer's own trade, shown from inside; he will be spared in the slaughter of Book XXII.

But Telemachus spoke to flashing-eyed Athena, holding his head close, that the others might not hear: "Dear stranger, wilt thou be wroth with me for the word that I shall say? These men care for things like these, the lyre and song, full easily, seeing that without atonement they devour the livelihood of another, of a man whose white bones, it may be, rot in the rain as they lie upon the mainland, or the wave rolls them in the sea. Were they to see him returned to Ithaca, they would all pray to be swifter of foot, rather than richer in gold and in raiment. But now he has thus perished by an evil doom, nor for us is there any comfort, no, not though any one of men upon the earth should

say that he will come; gone is the day of his returning. But come, tell me this, and declare it truly. Who art thou among men, and from whence? Where is thy city and where thy parents? On what manner of ship didst thou come, and how did sailors bring thee to Ithaca? Who did they declare themselves to be? For nowise, methinks, didst thou come hither on foot. And tell me this also truly, that I may know full well, whether this is thy first coming hither, or whether thou art indeed a friend of my father's house. For many were the men who came to our house as strangers, since he, too, had gone to and fro among men."

Then the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, answered him: "Therefore of a truth will I frankly tell thee all. I declare that I am Mentes, the son of wise Anchialus, and I am lord over the oar-loving Taphians. And now have I put in here, as thou seest, with ship and crew, while sailing over the wine-dark sea to men of strange speech, on my way to Temese for copper[18]; and I bear with me shining iron. My ship lies yonder beside the fields away from the city, in the harbor of Rheithron, under woody Neion. Friends of one another do we declare ourselves to be, even as our fathers were, friends from of old. Nay, if thou wilt, go and ask the old warrior Laertes[19], who, they say, comes no more to the city, but afar in the fields suffers woes attended by an aged woman as his handmaid, who sets before him food and drink, after weariness has laid hold of his limbs, as he creeps along the slope of his vineyard plot. And now am I come, for of a truth men said that he, thy father, was among his people; but lo, the gods are thwarting him of his return. For not yet has goodly Odysseus perished on the earth, but still, I ween, he lives and is held back on the broad sea in a sea-girt isle, and cruel men keep

him, a savage folk, that constrain him, haply sore against his will. Nay, I will now prophesy to thee, as the immortals put it in my heart, and as I think it shall be brought to pass, though I am in no wise a soothsayer, nor one versed in the signs of birds. Not much longer shall he be absent from his dear native land, no, not though bonds of iron hold him. He will contrive a way to return, for he is a man of many devices. But come, tell me this and declare it truly, whether indeed, tall as thou art, thou art the son of Odysseus himself. Wondrously like his are thy head and beautiful eyes; for full often did we consort with one another before he embarked for the land of Troy, whither others, too, the bravest of the Argives, went in their hollow ships. But since that day neither have I seen Odysseus, nor he me."

18 TEMESE FOR COPPER
A trading voyage: iron carried out, copper brought back. Temese may be Tamassos in Cyprus, the copper island; Mentes's story is made of plausible details.

19 LAERTES
Odysseus's father, who has withdrawn to his farm in grief and appears in person only in the last book.

Then wise Telemachus answered her: "Therefore of a truth, stranger, will I frankly tell thee all. My mother says that I am his child; but I know not, for never yet did any man of himself know his own parentage. Ah, would that I had been the son of some blest man, whom old age overtook among his own possessions. But now of him who was the most ill-fated of mortal men they say that I am sprung, since thou askest me of this."

Then the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, answered him: "Surely, then, no nameless lineage have the gods appointed for