

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT.

THE CONFERENCE WITH MENELAUS.

Telemachus with Pisistratus arriving at Sparta, is hospitably received by Menelaus to whom he relates the cause of his coming, and learns from him many particulars of what befell the Greeks since the destruction of Troy. He dwells more at large upon the prophecies of Proteus to him in his return; from which he acquaints Telemachus that Ulysses is detained in the island of Calypso.

In the meantime the suitors consult to destroy Telemachus on the voyage home. Penelope is apprised of this; but comforted in a dream by Pallas, in the shape of her sister Iphthima.

And now proud Sparta with their wheels resounds,
Sparta whose walls a range of hills surrounds;
At the fair dome the rapid labour ends;
Where sate Atrides 'midst his bridal friends,
With double vows invoking Hymen's power,
To bless his son's and daughter's nuptial hour.

That day, to great Achilles son resign'd,
Hermione, the fairest of her kind,
Was sent to crown the long-protracted joy,
Espoused before the final doom of Troy;
With steeds and gilded cars, a gorgeous train
Attend the nymphs to Phthia's distant reign.
Meanwhile at home, to Megapentha's bed
The virgin choir Alector's daughter led.
Brave Megapenthas From a stolen amour
To great Atrides' age his handmaid bore;
To Helen's bed the gods alone assign
Hermione, to extend the regal line;
On whom a radiant pomp oh Graces wait,
Resembling Venus in attractive state.

While this gay friendly troop the king surround,
With festival and mirth the roofs resound;
A bard amid the joyous circle sings
High airs attemper'd to the vocal strings;
Whilst warbling to the varied strain, advance
Two sprightly youths to form the bounding dance,
'Twas then, that issuing through the palace gate,
The splendid car roll'd slow in regal state:
On the bright eminence young Nestor shone,
And fast beside him great Ulysses' son;

Grave Eteoneous saw the pomp appear,
And speeding, thus address'd the royal ear;

"Two youths approach, whose semblant features prove
Their blood devolving from the source of Jove
Is due reception deign'd, or must they bend
Their doubtful course to seek a distant friend?"

"Insensate! (with a sigh the king replies,)
Too long, misjudging, have I thought thee wise
But sure relentless folly steals thy breast,
Obdurate to reject the stranger-guest;
To those dear hospitable rites a foe,
Which in my wanderings oft relieved my woe;
Fed by the bounty of another's board,
Till pitying Jove my native realm restored--
Straight be the coursers from the car released,
Conduct the youths to grace the genial feast."

The seneschal, rebuked, in haste withdrew;
With equal haste a menial train pursue:
Part led the coursers, from the car enlarged,
Each to a crib with choicest grain surcharged;
Part in a portico, profusely graced
With rich magnificence, the chariot placed;
Then to the dome the friendly pair invite,

Who eye the dazzling roofs with vast delight;
Resplendent as the blaze of summer noon,
Or the pale radiance of the midnight moon.
From room to room their eager view they bend
Thence to the bath, a beauteous pile, descend;
Where a bright damsel train attends the guests
With liquid odours, and embroider'd vests.
Refresh'd, they wait them to the bower of state,
Where, circled with his pears, Atrides sate;
Throned next the king, a fair attendant brings
The purest product of the crystal springs;
High on a massy vase of silver mould,
The burnish'd laver flames with solid gold,
In solid gold the purple vintage flows,
And on the board a second banquet rose.
When thus the king, with hospitable port;
"Accept this welcome to the Spartan court:
The waste of nature let the feast repair,
Then your high lineage and your names declare;
Say from what sceptred ancestry ye claim,
Recorded eminent in deathless fame,
For vulgar parents cannot stamp their race
With signatures of such majestic grace."

Ceasing, benevolent he straight assigns
The royal portion of the choicest chimes

To each accepted friend; with grateful haste
They share the honours of the rich repast.
Sufficed, soft whispering thus to Nestor's son,
His head reclined, young Ithacus begun:

"View'st thou unmoved, O ever-honour'd most!
These prodigies of art, and wondrous cost!
Above, beneath, around the palace shines
The sunless treasure of exhausted mines;
The spoils of elephants the roofs inlay,
And studded amber darts the golden ray;
Such, and not nobler, in the realms above
My wonder dictates is the dome of Jove."

The monarch took the word, and grave replied:
"Presumptuous are the vaunts, and vain the pride
Of man, who dares in pomp with Jove contest,
Unchanged, immortal, and supremely blest!
With all my affluence, when my woes are weigh'd,
Envy will own the purchase dearly paid.
For eight slow-circling years, by tempests toss'd,
From Cypress to the far Phoenician coast
(Sidon the capital), I stretch'd my toil
Through regions fatten'd with the flows of Nile.
Next Aethiopia's utmost bound explore,
And the parch'd borders of the Arabian shore;

Then warp my voyage on the southern gales,
O'er the warm Lybian wave to spread my sails;
That happy clime, where each revolving year
The teeming ewes a triple offspring bear;
And two fair crescents of translucent horn
The brows of all their young increase adorn:
The shepherd swains, with sure abundance blest,
On the fat flock and rural dainties feast;
Nor want of herbage makes the dairy fail,
But every season fills the foaming pail.
Whilst, heaping unwash'd wealth, I distant roam,
The best of brothers, at his natal home,
By the dire fury of a traitress wife,
Ends the sad evening of a stormy life;
Whence, with incessant grief my soul annoy'd,
These riches are possess'd, but not enjoy'd!
My wars, the copious theme of every tongue,
To you your fathers have recorded long.
How favouring Heaven repaid my glorious toils
With a sack'd palace, and barbaric spoils.
Oh! had the gods so large a boon denied
And life, the just equivalent supplied
To those brave warriors, who, with glory fired
Far from their country, in my cause expired!
Still in short intervals of pleasing woe.
Regardful of the friendly dues I owe,

I to the glorious dead, for ever dear!
Indulge the tribute of a grateful tear.
But oh! Ulysses--deeper than the rest
That sad idea wounds my anxious breast!
My heart bleeds fresh with agonizing pain;
The bowl and tasteful viands tempt in vain;
Nor sleep's soft power can close my streaming eyes,
When imaged to my soul his sorrows rise.
No peril in my cause he ceased to prove,
His labours equall'd only by my love:
And both alike to bitter fortune born,
For him to suffer, and for me to mourn!
Whether he wanders on some friendly coast,
Or glides in Stygian gloom a pensive ghost,
No fame reveals; but, doubtful of his doom,
His good old sire with sorrow to the tomb
Declines his trembling steps; untimely care
Withers the blooming vigour of his heir;
And the chaste partner of his bed and throne
Wastes all her widow'd hours in tender moan."

While thus pathetic to the prince he spoke,
From the brave youth the streaming passion broke;
Studious to veil the grief, in vain repress'd,
His face he shrouded with his purple vest.
The conscious monarch pierced the coy disguise,

And view'd his filial love with vast surprise:
Dubious to press the tender theme, or wait
To hear the youth inquire his father's fate.
In this suspense bright Helen graced the room;
Before her breathed a gale of rich perfume.
So moves, adorn'd with each attractive grace,
The silver shafted goddess of the chase!
The seat of majesty Adraste brings,
With art illustrious, for the pomp of kings;
To spread the pall (beneath the regal chair)
Of softest wool, is bright Alcippe's care.
A silver canister, divinely wrought,
In her soft hands the beauteous Phylo brought;
To Sparta's queen of old the radiant vase
Alcandra gave, a pledge of royal grace;
For Polybus her lord (whose sovereign sway
The wealthy tribes of Pharian Thebes obey),
When to that court Atrides came, caress'd
With vast munificence the imperial guest:
Two lavers from the richest ore refined,
With silver tripods, the kind host assign'd;
And bounteous from the royal treasure told
Ten equal talents of refulgent gold.
Alcandra, consort of his high command,
A golden distaff gave to Helen's hand;
And that rich vase, with living sculpture wrought,

Which heap'd with wool the beauteous Phylo brought
The silken fleece, impurpled for the loom,
Rivall'd the hyacinth in vernal bloom.
The sovereign seat then Jove born Helen press'd,
And pleasing thus her sceptred lord address'd:

"Who grace our palace now, that friendly pair,
Speak they their lineage, or their names declare?
Uncertain of the truth, yet uncontroll'd,
Hear me the bodings of my breast unfold.
With wonder wrapp'd on yonder cheek I trace
The feature of the Ulyssean race:
Diffused o'er each resembling line appear,
In just similitude, the grace and air
Of young Telemachus! the lovely boy,
Who bless'd Ulysses with a father's joy,
What time the Greeks combined their social arms,
To avenge the stain of my ill-fated charms!"

"Just is thy thought, (the king assenting cries,)
Methinks Ulysses strikes my wondering eyes;
Full shines the father in the filial frame,
His port, his features, and his shape the same;
Such quick regards his sparkling eyes bestow;
Such wavy ringlets o'er his shoulders flow
And when he heard the long disastrous store

Of cares, which in my cause Ulysses bore;
Dismay'd, heart-wounded with paternal woes,
Above restraint the tide of sorrow rose;
Cautious to let the gushing grief appear,
His purple garment veil'd the falling tear."

"See there confess'd (Pisistratus replies)
The genuine worth of Ithacus the wise!
Of that heroic sire the youth is sprung,
But modest awe hath chain'd his timorous tongue.
Thy voice, O king! with pleased attention heard,
Is like the dictates of a god revered.
With him, at Nestor's high command, I came,
Whose age I honour with a parent's name.
By adverse destiny constrained to sue
For counsel and redress, he sues to you
Whatever ill the friendless orphan bears,
Bereaved of parents in his infant years,
Still must the wrong'd Telemachus sustain,
If, hopeful of your aid, he hopes in vain;
Affianced in your friendly power alone,
The youth would vindicate the vacant throne."

"Is Sparta blest, and these desiring eyes
View my friend's son? (the king exalting cries;)
Son of my friend, by glorious toils approved,

Whose sword was sacred to the man he loved;
Mirror of constant faith, revered and mourn'd--
When Troy was ruin'd, had the chief return'd,
No Greek an equal space had ere possess'd,
Of dear affection, in my grateful breast.
I, to confirm the mutual joys we shared,
For his abode a capital prepared;
Argos, the seat of sovereign rule, I chose;
Fair in the plan the future palace rose,
Where my Ulysses and his race might reign,
And portion to his tribes the wide domain,
To them my vassals had resign'd a soil,
With teeming plenty to reward their toil.
There with commutual zeal we both had strove
In acts of dear benevolence and love:
Brothers in peace, not rivals in command,
And death alone dissolved the friendly band!
Some envious power the blissful scene destroys;
Vanish'd are all the visionary joys;
The soul of friendship to my hope is lost,
Fated to wander from his natal coast!"

He ceased; a gush of grief began to rise:
Fast streams a tide from beauteous Helen's eyes;
Fast for the sire the filial sorrows flow;
The weeping monarch swells the mighty woe;

Thy cheeks, Pisistratus, the tears bedew,
While pictured so thy mind appear'd in view,
Thy martial brother; on the Phrygian plain
Extended pale, by swarthy Memnon slain!
But silence soon the son of Nestor broke,
And melting with fraternal pity, spoke:

"Frequent, O king, was Nestor wont to raise
And charm attention with thy copious praise;
To crowd thy various gifts, the sage assign'd
The glory of a firm capacious mind;
With that superior attribute control
This unavailing impotence of soul,
Let not your roof with echoing grief resound,
Now for the feast the friendly bowl is crown'd;
But when, from dewy shade emerging bright,
Aurora streaks the sky with orient light,
Let each deplore his dead; the rites of woe
Are all, alas! the living can bestow;
O'er the congenial dust enjoin'd to shear
The graceful curl, and drop the tender tear.
Then, mingling in the mournful pomp with you,
I'll pay my brother's ghost a warrior's due,
And mourn the brave Antilochus, a name
Not unrecorded in the rolls of fame;
With strength and speed superior form'd, in fight

To face the foe, or intercept his flight;
Too early snatch'd by fate ere known to me!
I boast a witness of his worth in thee."

"Young and mature! (the monarch thus rejoins,
In thee renew'd the soul of Nestor shines;
Form'd by the care of that consummate sage,
In early bloom an oracle of age.
Whene'er his influence Jove vouchsafes to shower,
To bless the natal and the nuptial hour;
From the great sire transmissive to the race,
The boon devolving gives distinguish'd grace.
Such, happy Nestor! was thy glorious doom,
Around thee, full of years, thy offspring bloom.
Expert of arms, and prudent in debate;
The gifts of Heaven to guard thy hoary state.
But now let each becalm his troubled breast,
Wash, and partake serene the friendly feast.
To move thy suit, Telemachus, delay,
Till heaven's revolving lamp restores the day."

He said, Asphalion swift the laver brings;
Alternate, all partake the grateful springs;
Then from the rites of purity repair,
And with keen gust the savoury viands share.
Meantime, with genial joy to warm the soul,

Bright Helen mix'd a mirth inspiring bowl;
Temper'd with drugs of sovereign use, to assuage
The boiling bosom of tumultuous rage;
To clear the cloudy front of wrinkled Care,
And dry the tearful sluices of Despair;
Charm'd with that virtuous draught, the exalted mind
All sense of woe delivers to the wind.
Though on the blazing pile his parent lay.
Or a loved brother groan'd his life away.
Or darling son, oppress'd by ruffian force,
Fell breathless at his feet, a mangled corse;
From morn to eve, impassive and serene,
The man entranced would view the dreadful scene
These drugs, so friendly to the joys of life.
Bright Helen learn'd from Thone's imperial wife;
Who sway'd the sceptre, where prolific Nile
With various simples clothes the fatten'd soil.
With wholesome herbage mix'd, the direful bane
Of vegetable venom taints the plain;
From Paeon sprung, their patron-god imparts
To all the Pharian race his healing arts.
The beverage now prepared to inspire the feast,
The circle thus the beauteous queen addressed:

"Throned in omnipotence, supremest Jove
Tempers the fates of human race above;

By the firm sanction of his sovereign will,
Alternate are decreed our good and ill.
To feastful mirth be this white hour assign'd.
And sweet discourse, the banquet of the mind
Myself, assisting in the social joy,
Will tell Ulysses' bold exploit in Troy,
Sole witness of the deed I now declare
Speak you (who saw) his wonders in the war.

"Seam'd o'er with wounds, which his own sabre gave,
In the vile habit of a village slave,
The foe deceived, he pass'd the tented plain,
In Troy to mingle with the hostile train.
In this attire secure from searching eyes,
Till happily piercing through the dark disguise,
The chief I challenged; he, whose practised wit
Knew all the serpent mazes of deceit,
Eludes my search; but when his form I view'd
Fresh from the bath, with fragrant oils renew'd,
His limbs in military purple dress'd,
Each brightening grace the genuine Greek confess'd.
A previous pledge of sacred faith obtain'd,
Till he the lines and Argive fleet regain'd,
To keep his stay conceal'd; the chief declared
The plans of war against the town prepared.
Exploring then the secrets of the state,

He learn'd what best might urge the Dardan fate;
And, safe returning to the Grecian host,
Sent many a shade to Pluto's dreary coast.
Loud grief resounded through the towers of Troy,
But my pleas'd bosom glow'd with secret joy:
For then, with dire remorse and conscious shame
I view'd the effects of that disastrous flame.
Which, kindled by the imperious queen of love,
Constrain'd me from my native realm to rove:
And oft in bitterness of soul deplored
My absent daughter and my dearer lord;
Admired among the first of human race,
For every gift of mind and manly grace."

"Right well (replied the king) your speech displays
The matchless merit of the chief you praise:
Heroes in various climes myself have found,
For martial deeds and depth of thought renown'd;
But Ithacus, unrivall'd in his claim,
May boast a title to the loudest fame:
In battle calm he guides the rapid storm,
Wise to resolve, and patient to perform.
What wondrous conduct in the chief appear'd,
When the vast fabric of the steed we rear'd!
Some demon, anxious for the Trojan doom,
Urged you with great Deiphobus to come,

To explore the fraud; with guile opposed to guile.
Slow-pacing thrice around the insidious pile,
Each noted leader's name you thrice invoke,
Your accent varying as their spouses spoke!
The pleasing sounds each latent warrior warm'd,
But most Tydides' and coy heart alarm'd:
To quit the steed we both impatient press
Threatening to answer from the dark recess.
Unmoved the mind of Ithacus remain'd;
And the vain ardours of our love restrain'd;
But Anticlus, unable to control,
Spoke loud the language of his yearning soul:
Ulysses straight, with indignation fired
(For so the common care of Greece required),
Firm to his lips his forceful hands applied,
Till on his tongue the fluttering murmurs died.
Meantime Minerva, from the fraudulent horse,
Back to the court of Priam bent your course."

"Inclement fate! (Telemachus replies,)
Frail is the boasted attribute of wise:
The leader mingling with the vulgar host,
Is in the common mass of matter lost!
But now let sleep the painful waste repair
Of sad reflection and corroding care."
He ceased; the menial fair that round her wait,

At Helen's beck prepare the room of state;
Beneath an ample portico they spread
The downy fleece to form the slumberous bed;
And o'er soft palls of purple grain unfold
Rich tapestry, stiff with interwoven gold:
Then, through the illumined dome, to balmy rest
The obsequious herald guides each princely guest;
While to his regal bower the king ascends,
And beauteous Helen on her lord attends.
Soon as the morn, in orient purple dress'd,
Unbarr'd the portal of the roseate east,
The monarch rose; magnificent to view,
The imperial mantle o'er his vest he threw;
The glittering zone athwart his shoulders cast,
A starry falchion low-depending graced;
Clasp'd on his feet the embroidered sandals shine;
And forth he moves, majestic and divine,
Instant to young Telemachus he press'd;
And thus benevolent his speech addressed:

"Say, royal youth, sincere of soul report
Whit cause hath led you to the Spartan court?
Do public or domestic care constrain
This toilsome voyage o'er the surgy main?"

"O highly-flavour'd delegate of Jove!

(Replies the prince) inflamed with filial love,
And anxious hope, to hear my parent's doom,
A suppliant to your royal court I come:
Our sovereign seat a lewd usurping race
With lawless riot and misrule disgrace;
To pamper'd insolence devoted fall
Prime of the flock, and choicest of the stall:
For wild ambition wings their bold desire,
And all to mount the imperial bed aspire.
But prostrate I implore, O king! relate
The mournful series of my father's fate:
Each known disaster of the man disclose,
Born by his mother to a world of woes!
Recite them; nor in erring pity fear
To wound with storied grief the filial ear.
If e'er Ulysses, to reclaim your right,
Avow'd his zeal in council or in fight,
If Phrygian camps the friendly toils attest,
To the sire's merit give the son's request."

Deep from his inmost soul Atrides sigh'd,
And thus, indignant, to the prince replied:
"Heavens! would a soft, inglorious, dastard train
An absent hero's nuptial joys profane!
So with her young, amid the woodland shades,
A timorous hind the lion's court invades,

Leaves in the fatal lair the tender fawns,
Climbs the green cliff, or feeds the flowery lawns:
Meantime return'd, with dire remorseless sway,
The monarch-savage rends the trembling prey.
With equal fury, and with equal fame,
Ulysses soon shall reassert his claim.
O Jove supreme, whom gods and men revere!
And thou! to whom 'tis given to gild the sphere!
With power congenial join'd, propitious aid
The chief adopted by the martial maid!
Such to our wish the warrior soon restore,
As when contending on the Lesbian shore
His prowess Philomelidies confess'd,
And loud-acclaiming Greeks the victor bless'd;
Then soon the invaders of his bed and throne
Their love presumptuous shall with life atone.
With patient ear, O royal youth, attend
The storied labour of thy father's friend:
Fruitful of deeds, the copious tale is long,
But truth severe shall dictate to my tongue:
Learn what I heard the sea-born seer relate,
Whose eye can pierce the dark recess of fate.

"Long on the Egyptian coast by calms confined,
Heaven to my fleet refused a prosperous wind;
No vows had we preferr'd, nor victims slain!

For this the gods each favouring gale restrain
Jealous, to see their high behests obey'd;
Severe, if men the eternal rights evade.
High o'er a gulfy sea, the Pharian isle
Fronts the deep roar of disemboing Nile:
Her distance from the shore, the course begun
At dawn, and ending with the setting sun,
A galley measures; when the stiffer gales
Rise on the poop, and fully stretch the sails.
There, anchor'd vessels safe in harbour lie,
Whilst limpid springs the failing cask supply.

"And now the twentieth sun, descending, laves
His glowing axle in the western waves:
Still with expanded sails we court in vain
Propitious winds to waft us o'er the main;
And the pale mariner at once deplores
His drooping vigour and exhausted stores.
When lo! a bright cerulean form appears,
Proteus her sire divine. With pity press'd,
Me sole the daughter of the deep address'd;
What time, with hunger pined, my absent mates
Roam the wide isle in search of rural cates,
Bait the barb'd steel, and from the fishy flood
Appease the afflictive fierce desire of food."

"Whoe'er thou art (the azure goddess cries)
Thy conduct ill-deserves the praise of wise:
Is death thy choice, or misery thy boast,
That here inglorious, on a barren coast,
Thy brave associates droop, a meagre train,
With famine pale, and ask thy care in vain?"
"Struck with the loud reproach, I straight reply:
'Whate'er thy title in thy native sky,
A goddess sure! for more than moral grace
Speaks thee descendant of ethereal race;
Deem not that here of choice my fleet remains;
Some heavenly power averse my stay constrains:
O, piteous of my fate, vouchsafe to show
(For what's sequester'd from celestial view?)
What power becalms the innavigable seas?
What guilt provokes him, and what vows appease?"

"I ceased, when affable the goddess cried:
'Observe, and in the truths I speak confide;
The oracular seer frequents the Pharian coast,
From whose high bed my birth divine I boast;
Proteus, a name tremendous o'er the main,
The delegate of Neptune's watery reign.
Watch with insidious care his known abode;
There fast in chains constrain the various god;
Who bound, obedient to superior force,

Unerring will prescribe your destined course.
If, studious on your realms, you then demand
Their state, since last you left your natal land,
Instant the god obsequious will disclose
Bright tracts of glory or a cloud of woes.'

"She ceased; and suppliant thus I made reply:
'O goddess I on thy aid my hopes rely;
Dictate propitious to my duteous ear,
What arts can captivate the changeful seer;
For perilous the assay, unheard the toil,
To elude the prescience of a god by guile.'

"Thus to the goddess mild my suit I end.
Then she: 'Obedient to my rule attend:
When through the zone of heaven the mounted sun
Hath journeyed half, and half remains to run;
The seer, while zephyrs curl the swelling deep,
Basks on the breezy shore, in grateful sleep,
His oozy limbs. Emerging from the wave,
The Phocas swift surround his rocky cave,
Frequent and full; the consecrated train
Of her, whose azure trident awes the main;
There wallowing warm, the enormous herd exhales
An oily steam, and taints the noontide gales.
To that recess, commodious for surprise,

When purple light shall next suffuse the skies,
With me repair; and from thy warrior-band
Three chosen chiefs of dauntless soul command;
Let their auxiliar force befriend the toil;
For strong the god, and perfected in guile.
Strech'd on the shelly shore, he first surveys
The flouncing herd ascending from the seas;
Their number summ'd, reposed in sleep profound
The scaly charge their guardian god surround;
So with his battening flocks the careful swain
Abides pavilion'd on the grassy plain.
With powers united, obstinately bold,
Invade him, couch'd amid the scaly fold;
Instant he wears, elusive of the rape,
The mimic force of every savage shape;
Or glides with liquid lapse a murmuring stream,
Or, wrapp'd in flame, he glows at every limb.
Yet, still retentive, with redoubled might,
Through each vain passive form constrain his flight
But when, his native shape renamed, he stands
Patient of conquest, and your cause demands;
The cause that urged the bold attempt declare,
And soothe the vanquish'd with a victor's prayer.
The bands releas'd, implore the seer to say
What godhead interdicts the watery way.
Who, straight propitious, in prophetic strain

Will teach you to repass the unmeasured main.
She ceased, and bounding from the shelfy shore,
Round the descending nymph the waves resounding roar.

"High wrapp'd in wonder of the future deed,
with joy impetuous to the port I speed:
The wants of nature with repast suffice,
Till night with grateful shade involved the skies,
And shed ambrosial dews. Fast by the deep,
Along the tented shore, in balmy sleep,
Our cares were lost. When o'er the eastern lawn,
In saffron robes, the daughter of the dawn
Advanced her rosy steps, before the bay
Due ritual honours to the gods I pay;
Then seek the place the sea-born nymph assign'd,
With three associates of undaunted mind.
Arrived, to form along the appointed strand
For each a bed, she scoops the hilly sand;
Then, from her azure cave the finny spoils
Of four vast Phocae takes, to veil her wiles;
Beneath the finny spoils extended prone,
Hard toil! the prophet's piercing eye to shun;
New from the corse, the scaly frauds diffuse
Unsavoury stench of oil, and brackish ooze;
But the bright sea-maid's gentle power implored,
With nectar'd drops the sickening sense restored.

"Thus till the sun had travell'd half the skies,
Ambush'd we lie, and wait the bold emprise;
When, thronging quick to bask in open air,
The flocks of ocean to the strand repair;
Couch'd on the sunny sand, the monsters sleep;
Then Proteus, mounting from the hoary deep,
Surveys his charge, unknowing of deceit;
(In order told, we make the sum complete.)
Pleased with the false review, secure he lies,
And leaden slumbers press his drooping eyes.
Rushing impetuous forth, we straight prepare
A furious onset with the sound of war,
And shouting seize the god; our force to evade,
His various arts he soon resumes in aid;
A lion now, he curls a surgy mane;
Sudden our hands a spotted paid restrain;
Then, arm'd with tusks, and lightning in his eyes,
A boar's obscener shape the god belies;
On spiry volumes, there a dragon rides;
Here, from our strict embrace a stream he glides.
At last, sublime, his stately growth he rears
A tree, and well-dissembled foliage wears.
Vain efforts with superior power compress'd,
Me with reluctance thus the seer address'd;
'Say, son of Atreus, say what god inspired

This daring fraud, and what the boon desired?'
I thus: 'O thou, whose certain eye foresees
The fix'd event of fate's remote decrees;
After long woes, and various toil endured,
Still on this desert isle my fleet is moor'd,
Unfriended of the gales. All-knowing, say,
What godhead interdicts the watery way?
What vows repentant will the power appease,
To speed a prosperous voyage o'er the seas.'

"To Jove (with stern regard the god replies)
And all the offended synod of the skies,
Just hecatombs with due devotion slain,
Thy guilt absolved, a prosperous voyage gain.
To the firm sanction of thy fate attend!
An exile thou, nor cheering face of friend,
Nor sight of natal shore, nor regal dome,
Shalt yet enjoy, but still art doom'd to roam.
Once more the Nile, who from the secret source
Of Jove's high seat descends with sweepy force,
Must view his billows white beneath thy oar,
And altars blaze along his sanguine shore.
Then will the gods with holy pomp adored,
To thy long vows a safe return accord.'

"He ceased: heart wounded with afflictive pain,

(Doom'd to repeat the perils of the main,
A shelfy track and long!) 'O seer' I cry,
'To the stern sanction of the offended sky
My prompt obedience bows. But deign to say
What fate propitious, or what dire dismay,
Sustain those peers, the relics of our host,
Whom I with Nestor on the Phrygian coast
Embracing left? Must I the warriors weep,
Whelm'd in the bottom of the monstrous deep?
Or did the kind domestic friend deplore
The breathless heroes on their native shore?

"Press not too far,' replied the god: 'but cease
To know what, known, will violate thy peace;
Too curious of their doom! with friendly woe
Thy breast will heave, and tears eternal flow.
Part live! the rest, a lamentable train!
Range the dark bounds of Pluto's dreary reign.
Two, foremost in the roll of Mars renown'd,
Whose arms with conquest in thy cause were crown'd,
Fell by disastrous fate: by tempests toss'd,
A third lives wretched on a distant coast.

"By Neptune rescued from Minerva's hate,
On Gyrae, safe Oilean Ajax sate,
His ship o'erwhelm'd; but, frowning on the floods,

Impious he roar'd defiance to the gods;
To his own prowess all the glory gave:
The power defrauding who vouchsafed to save.
This heard the raging ruler of the main;
His spear, indignant for such high disdain,
He launched; dividing with his forky mace
The aerial summit from the marble base:
The rock rush'd seaward, with impetuous roar
Ingulf'd, and to the abyss the boaster bore.

"By Juno's guardian aid, the watery vast,
Secure of storms, your royal brother pass'd,
Till, coasting nigh the cape where Malen shrouds
Her spiry cliffs amid surrounding clouds,
A whirling gust tumultuous from the shore
Across the deep his labouring vessel bore.
In an ill-fated hour the coast he gain'd,
Where late in regal pomp Thyestes reigned;
But, when his hoary honours bow'd to fate,
Aegysthus govern'd in paternal state,
The surges now subside, the tempest ends;
From his tall ship the king of men descends;
There fondly thinks the gods conclude his toil:
Far from his own domain salutes the soil;
With rapture oft the urge of Greece reviews,
And the dear turf with tears of joy bedews.

Him, thus exulting on the distant stand,
A spy distinguish'd from his airy stand;
To bribe whose vigilance, Aegysthus told
A mighty sum of ill-persuading gold:
There watch'd this guardian of his guilty fear,
Till the twelfth moon had wheel'd her pale career;
And now, admonish'd by his eye, to court
With terror wing'd conveys the dread report.
Of deathful arts expert, his lord employs
The ministers of blood in dark surprise;
And twenty youths, in radiant mail incased,
Close ambush'd nigh the spacious hall he placed.
Then bids prepare the hospitable treat:
Vain shows of love to veil his felon hate!
To grace the victor's welcome from the wars,
A train of coursers and triumphal cars
Magnificent he leads: the royal guest,
Thoughtless of ill, accepts the fraudulent feast.
The troop forth-issuing from the dark recess,
With homicidal rage the king oppress!
So, whilst he feeds luxurious in the stall,
The sovereign of the herd is doomed to fall,
The partners of his fame and toils at Troy,
Around their lord, a mighty ruin, lie:
Mix'd with the brave, the base invaders bleed;
Aegysthus sole survives to boast the deed."

He said: chill horrors shook my shivering soul,
Rack'd wish convulsive pangs in dust I roll;
And hate, in madness of extreme despair,
To view the sun, or breathe the vital air.
But when, superior to the rage of woe,
I stood restored and tears had ceased to flow,
Lenient of grief the pitying god began:
'Forget the brother, and resume the man.
To Fate's supreme dispose the dead resign,
That care be Fate's, a speedy passage thine
Still lives the wretch who wrought the death deplored,
But lives a victim for thy vengeful sword;
Unless with filial rage Orestes glow,
And swift prevent the meditated blow:
You timely will return a welcome guest,
With him to share the sad funereal feast."

"He said: new thoughts my beating heart employ,
My gloomy soul receives a gleam of joy.
Fair hope revives; and eager I address'd
The prescient godhead to reveal the rest:
'The doom decreed of those disastrous two
I've heard with pain, but oh! the tale pursue;
What third brave son of Mars the Fates constrain
To roam the howling desert of the main;

Or, in eternal shade of cold he lies,
Provoke new sorrows from these grateful eyes.'

"That chief (rejoin'd the god) his race derives
From Ithaca, and wondrous woes survives;
Laertes' son: girt with circumfluous tides,
He still calamitous constraint abides.
Him in Calypso's cave of late! view'd,
When streaming grief his faded cheek bedow'd.
But vain his prayer, his arts are vain, to move
The enamour'd goddess, or elude her love:
His vessel sunk, and dear companions lost,
He lives reluctant on a foreign coast.
But oh, beloved by Heaven! reserved to thee
A happier lot the smiling Fates decree:
Free from that law, beneath whose mortal sway
Matter is changed, and varying forms decay,
Elysium shall be thine: the blissful plains
Of utmost earth, where Rhadamanthus reigns.
Joys ever young, unmix'd with pain or fear,
Fill the wide circle of the eternal year:
Stern winter smiles on that auspicious clime:
The fields are florid with unfading prime;
From the bleak pole no winds inclement blow,
Mould the round hail, or flake the fleecy snow;
But from the breezy deep the blest inhale

The fragrant murmurs of the western gale.
This grace peculiar will the gods afford
To thee, the son of Jove, and beauteous Helen's lord.'

"He ceased, and plunging in the vast profound,
Beneath the god and whirling billows bound.
Then speeding back, involved in various thought,
My friends attending at the shore I sought,
Arrived, the rage of hunger we control
Till night with silent shade invests the pole;
Then lose the cares of life in pleasing rest.
Soon as the morn reveals the roseate east,
With sails we wing the masts, our anchors weigh,
Unmoor the fleet, and rush into the sea.
Ranged on the banks, beneath our equal oars
White curl the waves, and the vex'd ocean roars
Then, steering backward from the Pharian isle,
We gain the stream of Jove-descended Nile;
There quit the ships, and on the destined shore
With ritual hecatombs the gods adore;
Their wrath atoned, to Agamemnon's name
A cenotaph I raise of deathless fame.
These rites to piety and grief discharged,
The friendly gods a springing gale enlarged;
The fleet swift tilting o'er the surges flew,
Till Grecian cliffs appear'd a blissful view!

"Thy patient ear hath heard me long relate
A story, fruitful of disastrous fate.
And now, young prince, indulge my fond request;
Be Sparta honoured with his royal guest,
Till, from his eastern goal, the joyous sun
His twelfth diurnal race begins to run.
Meantime my train the friendly gifts prepare,
The sprightly coursers and a polish'd car;
With these a goblet of capacious mould,
Figured with art to dignify the gold
(Form'd for libation to the gods), shall prove
A pledge and monument of sacred love."

"My quick return (young Ithacus rejoin'd),
Damps the warm wishes of my raptured mind;
Did not my fate my needful haste constrain,
Charm'd by your speech so graceful and humane,
Lost in delight the circling year would roll,
While deep attention fix'd my listening soul.
But now to Pyle permit my destined way,
My loved associates chide my long delay:
In dear remembrance of your royal grace,
I take the present of the promised vase;
The coursers, for the champaign sports retain;
That gift our barren rocks will render vain:

Horrid with cliffs, our meagre land allows
Thin herbage for the mountain goat to browse,
But neither mead nor plain supplies, to feed
The sprightly courser, or indulge his speed:
To sea-surrounded realms the gods assign
Small tract of fertile lawn, the least to mine."

His hand the king with tender passion press'd,
And, smiling, thus the royal youth address'd:
"O early worth! a soul so wise, and young,
Proclaims you from the sage Ulysses sprung.
Selected from my stores, of matchless price,
An urn shall recompense your prudent choice;
By Vulcan's art, the verge with gold enchased.
A pledge the sceptred power of Sidon gave,
When to his realm I plough'd the orient wave."

Thus they alternate; while, with artful care,
The menial train the regal feast prepare.
The firstlings of the flock are doom'd to die:
Rich fragrant wines the cheering bowl supply;
A female band the gift of Ceres bring;
And the gilt roofs with genial triumph ring.

Meanwhile, in Ithaca, the suitor powers
In active games divide their jovial hours;

In areas varied with mosaic art,
Some whirl the disk, and some the javelin dart,
Aside, sequester'd from the vast resort,
Antinous sole spectator of the sport;
With great Eurymachus, of worth confess'd,
And high descent, superior to the rest;
Whom young Noemon lowly thus address'd:--

"My ship, equipp'd within the neighboring port,
The prince, departing for the Pylia court,
Requested for his speed; but, courteous, say
When steers he home, or why this long delay?
For Elis I should sail with utmost speed.
To import twelve mares which there luxurious feed,
And twelve young mules, a strong laborious race,
New to the plow, unpractised in the trace."

Unknowing of the course to Pyle design'd,
A sudden horror seized on either mind;
The prince in rural bower they fondly thought,
Numbering his flocks and herds, not far remote.
"Relate (Antinous cries), devoid of guile,
When spread the prince his sale for distant Pyle?
Did chosen chiefs across the gulfy main
Attend his voyage, or domestic train?
Spontaneous did you speed his secret course,

Or was the vessel seized by fraud or force?"

"With willing duty, not reluctant mind
(Noemon cried), the vessel was resign'd,
Who, in the balance, with the great affairs
Of courts presume to weigh their private cares?
With him, the peerage next in power to you;
And Mentor, captain of the lordly crew,
Or some celestial in his reverend form,
Safe from the secret rock and adverse storm,
Pilot's the course; for when the glimmering ray
Of yester dawn disclosed the tender day,
Mentor himself I saw, and much admired,"
Then ceased the youth, and from the court retired.

Confounded and appall'd, the unfinish'd game
The suitors quit, and all to council came.
Antinous first the assembled peers address'd.
Rage sparkling in his eyes, and burning in his breast

"O shame to manhood! shall one daring boy
The scheme of all our happiness destroy?
Fly unperceived, seducing half the flower
Of nobles, and invite a foreign power?
The ponderous engine raised to crush us all,
Recoiling, on his head is sure to fall.

Instant prepare me, on the neighbouring strand,
With twenty chosen mates a vessel mann'd;
For ambush'd close beneath the Samian shore
His ship returning shall my spies explore;
He soon his rashness shall with life atone,
Seek for his father's fate, but find his own."

With vast applause the sentence all approve;
Then rise, and to the feastful hall remove;
Swift to the queen the herald Medon ran,
Who heard the consult of the dire divan:
Before her dome the royal matron stands,
And thus the message of his haste demands;

"What will the suitors? must my servant-train
The allotted labours of the day refrain,
For them to form some exquisite repast?
Heaven grant this festival may prove their last!
Or, if they still must live, from me remove
The double plague of luxury and love!
Forbear, ye sons of insolence! forbear,
In riot to consume a wretched heir.
In the young soul illustrious thought to raise,
Were ye not tutor'd with Ulysses' praise?
Have not your fathers oft my lord defined,
Gentle of speech, beneficent of mind?"

Some kings with arbitrary rage devour,
Or in their tyrant-minions vest the power;
Ulysses let no partial favours fall,
The people's parent, he protected all;
But absent now, perfidious and ingrate!
His stores ye ravage, and usurp his state."

He thus: "O were the woes you speak the worst!
They form a deed more odious and accursed;
More dreadful than your boding soul divines;
But pitying Jove avert the dire designs!
The darling object of your royal care
Is marked to perish in a deathful snare;
Before he anchors in his native port,
From Pyle re-sailing and the Spartan court;
Horrid to speak! in ambush is decreed
The hope and heir of Ithaca to bleed!"

Sudden she sunk beneath the weighty woes,
The vital streams a chilling horror froze;
The big round tear stands trembling in her eye,
And on her tongue imperfect accents die.
At length in tender language interwove
With sighs, she thus expressed her anxious love;
"Why rarely would my son his fate explore,
Ride the wild waves, and quit the safer shore?"

Did he with all the greatly wretched, crave
A blank oblivion, and untimely grave?"

"Tis not (replied the sage) to Medon given
To know, if some inhabitant of heaven
In his young breast the daring thought inspired
Or if, alone with filial duty fired,
The winds end waves he tempts in early bloom,
Studious to learn his absent father's doom."

The sage retired: unable to control
The mighty griefs that swell her labouring soul
Rolling convulsive on the floor is seen
The piteous object of a prostrate queen.
Words to her dumb complaint a pause supplies,
And breath, to waste in unavailing cries.
Around their sovereign wept the menial fair,
To whom she thus address'd her deep despair:

"Behold a wretch whom all the gods consign
To woe! Did ever sorrows equal mine?
Long to my joys my dearest lord is lost,
His country's buckler, and the Grecian boast;
Now from my fond embrace, by tempests torn,
Our other column of the state is borne;
Nor took a kind adieu, nor sought consent!--

Unkind confederates in his dire intent!
Ill suits it with your shows of duteous zeal,
From me the purposed voyage to conceal;
Though at the solemn midnight hour he rose,
Why did you fear to trouble my repose?
He either had obey'd my fond desire,
Or seen his mother pierced with grief expire.
Bid Dolius quick attend, the faithful slave
Whom to my nuptial train Icarius gave
To tend the fruit groves: with incessant speed
He shall this violence of death decreed
To good Laertes tell. Experienced age
May timely intercept the ruffian rage.
Convene the tribes the murderous plot reveal,
And to their power to save his race appeal."

Then Euryclea thus: "My dearest dread;
Though to the sword I bow this hoary head,
Or if a dungeon be the pain decreed,
I own me conscious of the unpleasing deed;
Auxiliar to his flight, my aid implored,
With wine and viands I the vessel stored;
A solemn oath, imposed, the secret seal'd,
Till the twelfth dawn the light of day reveal'd.
Dreading the effect of a fond mother's fear,
He dared not violate your royal ear.

But bathe, and, in imperial robes array'd,
Pay due devotions to the martial maid,
And rest affianced in her guardian aid.
Send not to good Laertes, nor engage
In toils of state the miseries of age:
Tis impious to surmise the powers divine
To ruin doom the Jove-descended line;
Long shall the race of just Arcesius reign,
And isles remote enlarge his old domain."

The queen her speech with calm attention hears,
Her eyes restrain the silver-streaming tears:
She bathes, and robed, the sacred dome ascends;
Her pious speed a female train attends:
The salted cakes in canisters are laid,
And thus the queen invokes Minerva's aid;

"Daughter divine of Jove, whose arm can wield
The avenging bolt, and shake the dreadful shield
If e'er Ulysses to thy fane preferr'd
The best and choicest of his flock and herd;
Hear, goddess, hear, by those oblations won;
And for the pious sire preserve the son;
His wish'd return with happy power befriend,
And on the suitors let thy wrath descend."

She ceased; shrill ecstasies of joy declare
The favouring goddess present to the prayer;
The suitors heard, and deem'd the mirthful voice
A signal of her hymeneal choice;
Whilst one most jovial thus accosts the board:

"Too late the queen selects a second lord;
In evil hour the nuptial rite intends,
When o'er her son disastrous death impends."
Thus he, unskill'd of what the fates provide!
But with severe rebuke Antinous cried:

"These empty vaunts will make the voyage vain:
Alarm not with discourse the menial train:
The great event with silent hope attend,
Our deeds alone our counsel must commend."
His speech thus ended short, he frowning rose,
And twenty chiefs renowned for valour chose;
Down to the strand he speeds with haughty strides,
Where anchor'd in the bay the vessel rides,
Replete with mail and military store,
In all her tackle trim to quit the shore.
The desperate crew ascend, unfurl the sails
(The seaward prow invites the tardy gales);
Then take repast till Hesperus display'd
His golden circlet, in the western shade.

Meantime the queen, without reflection due,
Heart-wounded, to the bed of state withdrew:
In her sad breast the prince's fortunes roll,
And hope and doubt alternate seize her soul.
So when the woodman's toil her cave surrounds,
And with the hunter's cry the grove resounds,
With grief and rage the mother-lion stung.
Fearless herself, yet trembles for her young
While pensive in the silent slumberous shade,
Sleep's gentle powers her drooping eyes invade;
Minerva, life-like, on embodied air
Impress'd the form of Iphthima the fair;
(Icarius' daughter she, whose blooming charms
Allured Eumelus to her virgin arms;
A sceptred lord, who o'er the fruitful plain
Of Thessaly wide stretched his ample reign:)
As Pallas will'd, along the sable skies,
To calm the queen, the phantom sister flies.
Swift on the regal dome, descending right,
The bolted valves are pervious to her flight.
Close to her head the pleasing vision stands,
And thus performs Minerva's high commands

"O why, Penelope, this causeless fear,
To render sleep's soft blessing unsincere?"

Alike devote to sorrow's dire extreme
The day-reflection, and the midnight-dream!
Thy son the gods propitious will restore,
And bid thee cease his absence to deplore."

To whom the queen (whilst yet in pensive mind
Was in the silent gates of sleep confined):
"O sister to my soul forever dear,
Why this first visit to reprove my fear?
How in a realm so distant should you know
From what deep source ceaseless sorrows flow?
To all my hope my royal lord is lost,
His country's buckler, and the Grecian boast;
And with consummate woe to weigh me down,
The heir of all his honours and his crown,
My darling son is fled! an easy prey
To the fierce storms, or men more fierce than they;
Who, in a league of blood associates sworn,
Will intercept the unwary youth's return."

"Courage resume (the shadowy form replied);
In the protecting care of Heaven confide;
On him attends the blue eyed martial maid:
What earthly can implore a surer aid?
Me now the guardian goddess deigns to send,
To bid thee patient his return attend."

The queen replies: "If in the blest abodes,
A goddess, thou hast commerce with the gods;
Say, breathes my lord the blissful realm of light,
Or lies he wrapp'd in ever-during night?"

"Inquire not of his doom, (the phantom cries,)
I speak not all the counsel of the skies;
Nor must indulge with vain discourse, or long,
The windy satisfaction of the tongue."

Swift through the valves the visionary fair
Repass'd, and viewless mix'd with common air.
The queen awakes, deliver'd of her woes;
With florid joy her heart dilating glows:
The vision, manifest of future fate,
Makes her with hope her son's arrival wait.

Meantime the suitors plough the watery plain,
Telemachus in thought already slain!
When sight of lessening Ithaca was lost
Their sail directed for the Samian coast
A small but verdant isle appear'd in view,
And Asteris the advancing pilot knew;
An ample port the rocks projected form,
To break the rolling waves and ruffling storm:

That safe recess they gain with happy speed,
And in close ambush wait the murderous deed.