

## BOOK VII.

### ARGUMENT.

The court of Alcinous.

The princess Nausicaa returns to the city and Ulysses soon after follows thither. He is met by Pallas in the form of a young virgin, who guides him to the palace, and directs him in what manner to address the queen Arete. She then involves him in a mist which causes him to pass invisible. The palace and gardens of Alcinous described. Ulysses falling at the feet of the queen, the mist disperses, the Phaeacians admire, and receive him with respect. The queen inquiring by what means he had the garments he then wore, he relates to her and Alcinous his departure from Calypso, and his arrival in their dominions.

The same day continues, and the book ends with the night.

The patient heavenly man thus suppliant pray'd;  
While the slow mules draws on the imperial maid;  
Through the proud street she moves, the public gaze;  
The turning wheel before the palace stays.  
With ready love her brothers, gathering round,  
Received the vestures, and the mules unbound.

She seeks the bridal bower: a matron there  
The rising fire supplies with busy care,  
Whose charms in youth her father's heart inflamed,  
Now worn with age, Eurymedusa named;  
The captive dame Phaeacian rovers bore,  
Snatch'd from Epirus, her sweet native shore  
(A grateful prize), and in her bloom bestow'd  
On good Alcinous, honor'd as a god;  
Nurse of Nausicaa from her infant years,  
And tender second to a mother's cares.

Now from the sacred thicket where he lay,  
To town Ulysses took the winding way.  
Propitious Pallas, to secure her care,  
Around him spread a veil of thicken'd air;  
To shun the encounter of the vulgar crowd,  
Insulting still, inquisitive and loud.  
When near the famed Phaeacian walls he drew,  
The beauteous city opening to his view,  
His step a virgin met, and stood before:  
A polish'd urn the seeming virgin bore,  
And youthful smiled; but in the low disguise  
Lay hid the goddess with the azure eyes.

"Show me, fair daughter (thus the chief demands),  
The house of him who rules these happy lands

Through many woes and wanderings, do I come  
To good Alcinous' hospitable dome.  
Far from my native coast, I rove alone,  
A wretched stranger, and of all unknown!"

The goddess answer'd: "Father, I obey,  
And point the wandering traveller his way:  
Well known to me the palace you inquire,  
For fast beside it dwells my honour'd sire:  
But silent march, nor greet the common train  
With question needless, or inquiry vain;  
A race of ragged mariners are these,  
Unpolish'd men, and boisterous as their seas  
The native islanders alone their care,  
And hateful he who breathes a foreign air.  
These did the ruler of the deep ordain  
To build proud navies, and command the main;  
On canvas wings to cut the watery way;  
No bird so light, no thought so swift as they."

Thus having spoke, the unknown celestial leads:  
The footsteps of the duty he treads,  
And secret moves along the crowded space,  
Unseen of all the rude Phaeacian race.  
(So Pallas order'd, Pallas to their eyes  
The mist objected, and condensed the skies.)

The chief with wonder sees the extended streets,  
The spreading harbours, and the riding fleets;  
He next their princes' lofty domes admires,  
In separate islands, crown'd with rising spires;  
And deep entrenchments, and high walls of stone.  
That gird the city like a marble zone.  
At length the kingly palace-gates he view'd;  
There stopp'd the goddess, and her speech renew'd;

"My task is done: the mansion you inquire  
Appears before you: enter, and admire.  
High-throned, and feasting, there thou shalt behold  
The sceptred rulers. Fear not, but be bold:  
A decent boldness ever meets with friends,  
Succeeds, and even a stranger recommends  
First to the queen prefer a suppliant's claim,  
Alcinous' queen, Arete is her name.  
The same her parents, and her power the same.  
For know, from ocean's god Nausithous sprung,  
And Peribaea, beautiful and young  
(Eurymedon's last hope, who ruled of old  
The race of giants, impious, proud, and bold:  
Perish'd the nation in unrighteous war,  
Perish'd the prince, and left this only heir),  
Who now, by Neptune's amorous power compress'd,  
Produced a monarch that his people bless'd,

Father and prince of the Phaeacian name;  
From him Rhexenor and Alcinous came.  
The first by Phoebus' hurtling arrows fired,  
New from his nuptials, hapless youth! expired.  
No son survived; Arete heir'd his state,  
And her, Alcinous chose his royal mate.  
With honours yet to womankind unknown.  
This queen he graces, and divides the throne;  
In equal tenderness her sons conspire,  
And all the children emulate their sire.  
When through the streets she gracious deigns to move  
(The public wonder and the public love),  
The tongues of all with transport sound her praise,  
The eyes of all, as on a goddess, gaze.  
She feels the triumph of a generous breast;  
To heal divisions, to relieve the oppress'd;  
In virtue rich; in blessing others, bless'd.  
(to then secure, thy humble suit prefer  
And owe thy country and thy friends to her."

With that the goddess deign'd no longer stay,  
But o'er the world of waters wing'd her way;  
Forsaking Scheria's ever-pleasing shore,  
The winds to Marathon the virgin bore:  
Thence, where proud Athens rears her towery head,  
With opening streets and shining structures spread,

She pass'd, delighted with the well-known seats;  
And to Erectheus' sacred dome retreats.

Meanwhile Ulysses at the palace waits,  
There stops, and anxious with his soul debates,  
Fix'd in amaze before the royal gates.  
The front appear'd with radiant splendours gay,  
Bright as the lamp of night, or orb of day,  
The walls were massy brass: the cornice high  
Blue metals crown'd in colours of the sky,  
Rich plates of gold the folding doors incase;  
The pillars silver, on a brazen base;  
Silver the lintels deep-projecting o'er,  
And gold the ringlets that command the door.  
Two rows of stately dogs, on either hand,  
In sculptured gold and labour'd silver stood  
These Vulcan form'd with art divine, to wait  
Immortal guardians at Alcinous' gate;  
Alive each animated frame appears,  
And still to live beyond the power of years,  
Fair thrones within from space to space were raised,  
Where various carpets with embroidery blessed,  
The work of matrons: these the princes press'd.  
Day following day, a long-continued feast,  
Refulgent pedestals the walls surround,  
Which boys of gold with illuming torches crown'd;

The polish'd oar, reflecting every ray,  
Blazed on the banquets with a double day.  
Full fifty handmaids form the household train;  
Some turn the mill, or sift the golden grain;  
Some ply the loom; their busy fingers move  
Like poplar-leaves when Zephyr fans the grove.  
Not more renown'd the men of Scheria's isle  
For sailing arts and all the naval toil,  
Than works of female skill their women's pride,  
The flying shuttle through the threads to guide:  
Pallas to these her double gifts imparts,  
Incentive genius, and industrious arts.

Close to the gates a spacious garden lies,  
From storms defended and inclement skies.  
Four acres was the allotted space of ground,  
Fenced with a green enclosure all around.  
Tall thriving trees confess'd the fruitful mould:  
The reddening apple ripens here to gold.  
Here the blue fig with luscious juice o'erflows,  
With deeper red the full pomegranate glows;  
The branch here bends beneath the weighty pear,  
And verdant olives flourish round the year,  
The balmy spirit of the western gale  
Eternal breathes on fruits, unthought to fail:  
Each dropping pear a following pear supplies,

On apples apples, figs on figs arise:  
The same mild season gives the blooms to blow,  
The buds to harden, and the fruits to grow.

Here order'd vines in equal ranks appear,  
With all the united labours of the year;  
Some to unload the fertile branches run,  
Some dry the blackening clusters in the sun,  
Others to tread the liquid harvest join:  
The groaning presses foam with floods of wine  
Here are the vines in early flower descried,  
Here grapes discolour'd on the sunnyside,  
And there in autumn's richest purple dyed,

Beds of all various herbs, for ever green,  
In beauteous order terminate the scene.

Two plenteous fountains the whole prospect crown'd  
This through the gardens leads its streams around  
Visits each plant, and waters all the ground;  
While that in pipes beneath the palace flows,  
And thence its current on the town bestows:  
To various use their various streams they bring,  
The people one, and one supplies the king.

Such were the glories which the gods ordain'd,



To grace Alcinous, and his happy land.  
E'en from the chief whom men and nations knew,  
The unwonted scene surprise and rapture drew;  
In pleasing thought he ran the prospect o'er,  
Then hasty enter'd at the lofty door.  
Night now approaching, in the palace stand,  
With goblets crown'd, the rulers of the land;  
Prepared for rest, and offering to the god  
Who bears the virtue of the sleepy rod,  
Unseen he glided through the joyous crowd,  
With darkness circled, and an ambient cloud.  
Direct to great Alcinous' throne he came,  
And prostrate fell before the imperial dame.  
Then from around him dropp'd the veil of night;  
Sudden he shines, and manifest to sight.  
The nobles gaze, with awful fear oppress'd;  
Silent they gaze, and eye the godlike guest.

"Daughter of great Rhexenor! (thus began,  
Low at her knees, the much-enduring man)  
To thee, thy consort, and this royal train,  
To all that share the blessings of your reign,  
A suppliant bends: oh pity human woe!  
'Tis what the happy to the unhappy owe.  
A wretched exile to his country send,  
Long worn with griefs, and long without a friend

So may the gods your better days increase,  
And all your joys descend on all your race;  
So reign for ever on your country's breast,  
Your people blessing, by your people bless'd!"

Then to the genial hearth he bow'd his face,  
And humbled in the ashes took his place.  
Silence ensued. The eldest first began,  
Echeneus sage, a venerable man!  
Whose well-taught mind the present age surpass'd,  
And join'd to that the experience of the last.  
Fit words attended on his weighty sense,  
And mild persuasion flow'd in eloquence.

"Oh sight (he cried) dishonest and unjust!  
A guest, a stranger, seated in the dust!  
To raise the lowly suppliant from the ground  
Befits a monarch. Lo! the peers around  
But wait thy word, the gentle guest to grace,  
And seat him fair in some distinguish'd place.  
Let first the herald due libation pay  
To Jove, who guides the wanderer on his way:  
Then set the genial banquet in his view,  
And give the stranger-guest a stranger's due."

His sage advice the listening king obeys,

He stretch'd his hand the prudent chief to raise,  
And from his seat Laodamas removed  
(The monarch's offspring, and his best-beloved);  
There next his side the godlike hero sate;  
With stars of silver shone the bed of state.  
The golden ewer a beauteous handmaid brings,  
Replenish'd from the cool translucent springs,  
Whose polish'd vase with copious streams supplies  
A silver layer of capacious size.  
The table next in regal order spread,  
The glittering canisters are heap'd with bread:  
Viands of various kinds invite the taste,  
Of choicest sort and savour, rich repast!  
Thus feasting high, Alcinous gave the sign,  
And bade the herald pour the rosy wine;  
"Let all around the due libation pay  
To Jove, who guides the wanderer on his way."

He said. Pontonous heard the king's command;  
The circling goblet moves from hand to hand;  
Each drinks the juice that glads the heart of man.  
Alcinous then, with aspect mild, began:

"Princes and peers, attend; while we impart  
To you the thoughts of no inhuman heart.  
Now pleased and satiate from the social rite

Repair we to the blessings of the night;  
But with the rising day, assembled here,  
Let all the elders of the land appear,  
Pious observe our hospitable laws,  
And Heaven propitiate in the stranger's cause;  
Then join'd in council, proper means explore  
Safe to transport him to the wished-for shore  
(How distant that, imports us not to know,  
Nor weigh the labour, but relieve the woe).  
Meantime, nor harm nor anguish let him bear  
This interval, Heaven trusts him to our care  
But to his native land our charge resign'd,  
Heaven's is his life to come, and all the woes behind.  
Then must he suffer what the Fates ordain;  
For Fate has wove the thread of life with pain?  
And twins, e'en from the birth, are Misery and Man!  
But if, descended from the Olympian bower,  
Gracious approach us some immortal power;  
If in that form thou comest a guest divine:  
Some high event the conscious gods design.  
As yet, unbid they never graced our feast,  
The solemn sacrifice call'd down the guest;  
Then manifest of Heaven the vision stood,  
And to our eyes familiar was the god.  
Oft with some favour'd traveller they stray,  
And shine before him all the desert way;

With social intercourse, and face to face,  
The friends and guardians of our pious race.  
So near approach we their celestial kind,  
By justice, truth, and probity of mind;  
As our dire neighbours of Cyclopean birth  
Match in fierce wrong the giant-sons of earth."

"Let no such thought (with modest grace rejoin'd  
The prudent Greek) possess the royal mind.  
Alas! a mortal, like thyself, am I;  
No glorious native of yon azure sky:  
In form, ah how unlike their heavenly kind!  
How more inferior in the gifts of mind!  
Alas, a mortal! most oppress'd of those  
Whom Fate has loaded with a weight of woes;  
By a sad train of Miseries alone  
Distinguish'd long, and second now to none!  
By Heaven's high will compell'd from shore to shore;  
With Heaven's high will prepared to suffer more.  
What histories of toil could I declare!  
But still long-wearied nature wants repair;  
Spent with fatigue, and shrunk with pining fast,  
My craving bowels still require repast.  
Howe'er the noble, suffering mind may grieve  
Its load of anguish, and disdain to live,  
Necessity demands our daily bread;

Hunger is insolent, and will be fed.  
But finish, oh ye peers! what you propose,  
And let the morrow's dawn conclude my woes.  
Pleased will I suffer all the gods ordain,  
To see my soil, my son, my friends again.  
That view vouchsafed, let instant death surprise  
With ever-during shade these happy eyes!"

The assembled peers with general praise approved  
His pleaded reason, and the suit he moved.  
Each drinks a full oblivion of his cares,  
And to the gifts of balmy sleep repairs,  
Ulysses in the regal walls alone  
Remain'd: beside him, on a splendid throne,  
Divine Arete and Alcinous shone.  
The queen, an nearer view, the guest survey'd,  
Rob'd in the garments her own hands had made,  
Not without wonder seen. Then thus began,  
Her words addressing to the godlike man:

"Camest thou hither, wondrous stranger I say,  
From lands remote and o'er a length of sea?  
Tell, then, whence art thou? whence, that princely air?  
And robes like these, so recent and so fair?"

"Hard is the task, O princess! you impose

(Thus sighing spoke the man of many woes),  
The long, the mournful series to relate  
Of all my sorrows sent by Heaven and Fate!  
Yet what you ask, attend. An island lies  
Beyond these tracts, and under other skies,  
Ogygia named, in Ocean's watery arms;  
Where dwells Calypso, dreadful in her charms!  
Remote from gods or men she holds her reign,  
Amid the terrors of a rolling main.  
Me, only me, the hand of fortune bore,  
Unblest! to tread that interdicted shore:  
When Jove tremendous in the sable deeps  
Launch'd his red lightning at our scattered ships;  
Then, all my fleet and all my followers lost.  
Sole on a plank on boiling surges toss'd,  
Heaven drove my wreck the Ogygian Isle to find,  
Full nine days floating to the wave and wind.  
Met by the goddess there with open arms,  
She bribed my stay with more than human charms;  
Nay, promised, vainly promised, to bestow  
Immortal life, exempt from age and woe;  
But all her blandishments successful prove,  
To banish from my breast my country's love.  
I stay reluctant seven continued years,  
And water her ambrosial couch with tears,  
The eighth she voluntary moves to part,

Or urged by Jove, or her own changeful heart.  
A raft was formed to cross the surging sea;  
Herself supplied the stores and rich array,  
And gave the gales to waft me on my way,  
In seventeen days appear'd your pleasing coast,  
And woody mountains half in vapours lost.  
Joy touched my soul; my soul was joy'd in vain,  
For angry Neptune roused the raging main;  
The wild winds whistle, and the billows roar;  
The splitting raft the furious tempest tore;  
And storms vindictive intercept the shore.  
Soon as their rage subsides, the seas I brave  
With naked force, and shoot along the wave,  
To reach this isle; but there my hopes were lost,  
The surge impell'd me on a craggy coast.  
I chose the safer sea, and chanced to find  
A river's mouth impervious to the wind,  
And clear of rocks. I fainted by the flood;  
Then took the shelter of the neighbouring wood.  
'Twas night, and, covered in the foliage deep,  
Jove plunged my senses in the death of sleep.  
All night I slept, oblivious of my pain:  
Aurora dawned and Phoebus shined in vain,  
Nor, till oblique he sloped his evening ray,  
Had Somnus dried the balmy dews away.  
Then female voices from the shore I heard:



A maid amidst them, goddess-like appear'd;  
To her I sued, she pitied my distress;  
Like thee in beauty, nor in virtue less.  
Who from such youth could hope considerate care?  
In youth and beauty wisdom is but rare!  
She gave me life, relieved with just supplies  
My wants, and lent these robes that strike your eyes.  
This is the truth: and oh, ye powers on high!  
Forbid that want should sink me to a lie."

To this the king: "Our daughter but express'd  
Her cares imperfect to our godlike guest.  
Suppliant to her, since first he chose to pray,

Why not herself did she conduct the way,  
And with her handmaids to our court convey?"

"Hero and king (Ulysses thus replied)  
Nor blame her faultless nor suspect of pride:  
She bade me follow in the attendant train;  
But fear and reverence did my steps detain,  
Lest rash suspicion might alarm thy mind:  
Man's of a jealous and mistaken kind."

"Far from my soul (he cried) the gods efface  
All wrath ill-grounded, and suspicion base!

Whate'er is honest, stranger, I approve,  
And would to Phoebus, Pallas, and to Jove,  
Such as thou art, thy thought and mine were one,  
Nor thou unwilling to be called my son.  
In such alliance couldst thou wish to join,  
A palace stored with treasures should be thine.  
But if reluctant, who shall force thy stay?  
Jove bids to set the stranger on his way,  
And ships shall wait thee with the morning ray.  
Till then, let slumber cross thy careful eyes:  
The wakeful mariners shall watch the skies,  
And seize the moment when the breezes rise:  
Then gently waft thee to the pleasing shore,  
Where thy soul rests, and labour is no more.  
Far as Euboea though thy country lay,  
Our ships with ease transport thee in a day.  
Thither of old, earth's giant son to view,  
On wings of wind with Rhadamanth they flew;  
This land, from whence their morning course begun,  
Saw them returning with the setting sun.  
Your eyes shall witness and confirm my tale,  
Our youth how dexterous, and how fleet our sail,  
When justly timed with equal sweep they row,  
And ocean whitens in long tracks below."

Thus he. No word the experienced man replies,

But thus to heaven (and heavenward lifts his eyes):

"O Jove! O father! what the king accords  
Do thou make perfect! sacred be his words!  
Wide o'er the world Alcinous' glory shine!  
Let fame be his, and ah! my country mine!"

Meantime Arete, for the hour of rest,  
Ordains the fleecy couch, and covering vest;  
Bids her fair train the purple quilts prepare,  
And the thick carpets spread with busy care.  
With torches blazing in their hands they pass'd,  
And finish'd all their queen's command with haste:  
Then gave the signal to the willing guest:  
He rose with pleasure, and retired to rest.  
There, soft extended, to the murmuring sound  
Of the high porch, Ulysses sleeps profound!  
Within, released from cares, Alcinous lies;  
And fast beside were closed Arete's eyes.