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ULYSSES' TALE
OF
WANDERINGS



BALLAD VERSION
FROM HOMER'S ODYSSEY

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

MDCCCCXXIII

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MAIN

A TALE OF WANDERINGS

*Weary our hands, as through slow hours they wielded
The long, tough oar-sweeps past gray rings of foam ;
Weary our hearts, whereto no beacon yielded
Or glimmering hope or semblance frail of home.*

ULYSSES' TALE

The minstrel once silent the guest now speaks.

ALCINOÛS, mighty in the land,
This people's glorious king,
'T is splendid, hearing such a bard
Lift up his voice to sing.

Truly, I say, no lovelier time
There is, than when good cheer
Holds every heart, and feasters sit
The minstrel's lay to hear;

When viands plentiful and rare
Weigh down the festal board,
And in each brimming cup the wine
From wassail-bowl is pour'd.

That, to my way of thinking, seems
A splendid thing. But you
Ask for my tale, that so this heart
Its sorrows may renew.

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ULYSSES' TALE

After praising the entertainment he reveals his name and home.

What first, then, to your listening ear,
What last shall I relate?
Woes to my lot has Heaven assign'd
So many and so great!

Now, first my name I will declare,
That all may know it well,
And I, perchance, safe home at last,
As your guest-friend may dwell.

I am ULYSSES, through the world
For wily arts renown'd,
Laertes' son; and to my fame
The skies alone set bound.

My home is *Ithaca*: first to view
Mount Neriton appears,
Above the sunny isle his fringe
Of waving verdure rears.

More islands, close together set,
The encircling azure holds:
Samê, Dulichium, and steep
Zacynthus' thorny folds.

OF WANDERINGS

He avers there's no place like home.

Low, by itself, my island lies,
The farthest toward the west;
A rugged shore, but for a nurse
Of sturdy youths, the best.

No sight can I behold more sweet
Than one's own native land.
Long in Calypso's ocean isle
I paced the lonely strand;

Long, Circê held me in her halls
By spell of magic art:
Yet all those charms could never still
This yearning of my heart.

So, nothing sweeter is than home,
Though house and fields and gold
From home and parents far away
In foreign land you hold.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses begins his story of the return from Troy.

WELL, let me now take up my tale
Of wanderings fraught with woes,
Which, as from Troy I sail'd, it pleased
The Almighty to impose.

From Ilium to Ciconian land
The wind our galleys bore.
Captives from Ismarus town we took,
With booty in full store.

These spoils of raiment, slaves, and pelf
We portion'd out with care,
That of my troop not one might go
Deprived of equal share.

Then straightway I advised, that we
Should flee with utmost speed.
But (foolish men!) they to my words
Of warning gave no heed;

But many sheep and many beeves
They slaughter'd by the sea;
Much sparkling wine they drank, and fell
To feasting merrily.

OF WANDERINGS

Fatal encounter with Ciconians.

Meantime, for aid the plunder'd folk
To neighboring strongholds flew,
Ciconians to Ciconians call'd,
Firm friends and helpers true;

More numerous and more skill'd to fight
In distant rank or near,
From chariots or, in stress of need,
On foot with shield and spear.

Countless as leaves and flowers of spring
They came, at dawn of day,
On us, ill-fated men. But we,
Marshall'd in close array,

Join'd battle. And there by the moor'd ships
Spears clash'd on helm and shield.
Till midday, though outnumber'd far,
Scorning our ground to yield,

We held them: but when now the sun
Toward vesper hour sank low,
Greeks by Ciconians beaten, turn'd
And fled before the foe.

ULYSSES' TALE

Setting sail again, the voyagers,

Brave comrades in the combat fell,
Six for each vessel's share;
The rest, by kindly fates preserved,
Escaped destruction there.

OF WANDERINGS

caught in a tempest, take refuge on the shore.

THENCE farther sailing we moved on
With troubled hearts and sore,
Gladly from death, but still to mourn
Our mates who were no more.

Now on the ships fierce Boreas fell,
The seething wave flung high,
Wrapping in cloud both land and sea;
Black night burst from the sky.

Headlong the ships were swept, their sails
Twice, thrice split by the blast;
In terror lowering these, we row'd
To land our galleys fast.

Two nights, two long days there we lay
Heart-weary and forlorn.
But when the third day sprang to view
From mottled hues of morn,

Stepping the masts, and with white sails
To favoring breezes spread,
By wind and helmsmen guided well,
On a straight course we sped.

ULYSSES' TALE

Driven from their proper course they touch at Lotus Land,

Now, haply, I had come safely home,
But Boreas came to mar:
Malea we fail'd to round, and past
Cythêra drifted far.

Thence nine days o'er the fishy deep
Our barks the North Wind bore,
Till on the tenth I sighted land,
The Lotus-eaters' shore,

Eaters of flowery food. Fresh store
Of water we drew there,
And on the beach my men made haste
Their dinner to prepare.

After the meal, selecting two
With herald, I sent the three
To ascertain what sort of men
That country-folk might be.

Straightway they went, and came to speech
With men of Lotus Land.
And for our comrades no ill turn
The Lotus-eaters plann'd,

OF WANDERINGS

whence they barely escape without loss.

But offer'd them the fruit to taste
Of lotus, honey-sweet.

Now whosoever had once learn'd
That flowery food to eat,

Cared to return no longer, nor
Send word his tale to tell,
But, all forgot, forever there
In Lotus Land to dwell.

I forced them, crying, to the ships
And, dragging them on board,
Under the seats I tied them fast;
Then pass'd the speedy word,

That the rest, taking ship, for start
All things in order set,
Lest any, of lotus getting taste,
The homeward voyage forget.

Promptly all sprang on board, and soon
Seated in proper line
On the high thwarts, with bending blade
They smote the frothy brine.

ULYSSES' TALE

Description of an island, where they run in,

THENCE farther sailing we moved on
With sore and troubled hearts
To where the rude Cyclopes dwell,
Who know nor laws nor arts.

Trusting in Providence alone
They plow not nor sow seed,
But all unplanted and unplow'd
The soil supplies their need:

Barley and wheat and vines that bear
Wine from large clusters prest.
Heaven's rains for that wild folk bring these
To fruitage of the best.

No council-halls have they; a home
Some mountain cavern makes.
Each is a law unto his own,
No thought for others takes.—

Now then, a little isle extends
Along a shelter'd bay
In the Cyclopes' land—not near
Nor very far away.

OF WANDERINGS

lying over against the land of the Cyclopes.

Much forest; innumerable wild goats
No human footsteps fear.
Not huntsmen even, patient of toil
And hardships, visit here.

Ever unplanted and untill'd,
No woolly flocks it feeds;
For habitants its bleating goats
That desert islet breeds.

No builders the Cyclopes have
Of boats to ply the main,
That so their island they might turn
To ends of use and gain.

For 't is not poor: all fruits the soil
Would in their season bear;
Soft meadows sloping to the shore,
For grapes beyond compare.

Smooth plowing, too; waist-deep each year
The bearded grain would stand,
For them to reap at harvest tide,
Such fatness has the land.

ULYSSES' TALE

There they meet with good success

A harbor, where sailors find no need
To moor or anchor throw,
But, beaching ship, take rest and wait
Till favoring breezes blow.

Hard by the harbor's head a spring
Gushes with crystal stream
Beneath a grot, while round it leaves
Of quivering poplar gleam.

There we ran in. Some hand divine
Led us through gloom of night.
'T was dark ahead: through the sea-air
Wrapt in thick cloud no light

The veil'd moon lent, and no one saw
That island or its strand
And long surf rollers, till our barks
Struck on the shelving sand.

Thus beach'd, we lower'd all sail, stept forth,
And on the high shore lay;
There, slumbering soon, in peace to bide
Aurora's blessed ray.

OF WANDERINGS

hunting wild goats.

When rosy-fingered Morn dealt forth
Bright beams of day once more,
In wonder up and down we roved,
The island to explore;

And, trooping from their hilly haunts,
The goats our zest increased,
Roused by kind wood-nymphs to provide
My comrades with a feast.

Forthwith we fetch'd our bows and spears
From shipboard; and, array'd
In three divisions for the sport,
A glorious chase we made.

Of the twelve galleys in my train
Nine head fell to each one;
And, before all, my men chose out
Ten for myself alone.

So, the day long, till the sun sank
And evening shades prevail'd,
Feasting we sat, with savory meats
And ruddy wine regaled.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses is moved to pay a visit

For, of that wine there still remain'd
Full many a jar on board
Which at the sack of Ismarus town
Each galley's crew had stored.

Oft, at the meal, from where we sat
I cast a curious eye
Across blue waters toward the shore
Of Cyclops-land near by.

Whence to our ears faint voices came
And bleat of goats and sheep,
Whilst here and there the eye perceived
Some curling smoke-wreath creep.—

Again, when darkness fell, we made
By the seaside our bed;
Then, with the waking day, all hands
To council call'd, I said:

“The rest of you, good men, remain
Here, as you are; but I
With my one ship and my ship's crew
Will cross the strait and try

OF WANDERINGS

to the neighboring land of the Cyclopes.

“The temper of that tribe over there,
Be they of lawless mind,
Savage and rude, or to just thought
And pious act inclined.”

So saying, and now on board, I bade
My mates cast cable free.
They, straight embarking, mann'd the oars
And swept the azure sea.

ULYSSES' TALE

With his own ship's crew

THE place we steer'd for reaching soon,
At its extremest bound
A great high-beetling cave we spied,
By laurel-branches crown'd.

Before its mouth a pen was built,
Small cattle to confine,
With bedded stones; along their edge
Paling of fir and pine.

'T was the lair of a monstrous man
Who fed his flocks apart:
All by himself he nursed the thoughts
Of his own savage heart.

A monster indeed he was to see,
Not of bread-eating race,
But like some bristly mountain-crag
Looming in lonely place.

The rest now of my crew I charged
To stay and guard the ship,
While I with twelve men of the best
Set forth upon our trip.

OF WANDERINGS

he rows over to the opposite shore.

Moreover, a wine-skin of dark wine
I took along: the same
Which a good priest of Ismarus town
Gave me, Maron by name,

Because his wife and child we saved
And spared him in the fray,
Revering Phoebus' sacred grove
Where his possessions lay.

He gave me presents rich and rare:
Seven talents of wrought gold,
A silver punch-bowl; and of wine
All that twelve jars would hold.

Not to the servants in the house
Was that pure cordial known,
But to himself, his wife, and one
Old stewardess alone.

Of water twenty parts to one
Of that wine he would pay:
Then from the bowl such fragrance rose
'T was hard to keep away.

ULYSSES' TALE

Finding there a cave-dwelling,

I carried a full skin, and a sack
Fill'd with good things to eat;
My soul surmised our luck would be
Some mighty man to meet.

Promptly we reach'd the cave, but found
Its lord and master gone,
Tending his fat sheep far afield
Pastured on dewy lawn.

Entering, huge cheeses we beheld
In crates, while by them lay
Buckets in which he milk'd, and troughs
Swimming with curds and whey.

Lambkins and kids there were, in pens
All full as they could hold
Of firstlings, seconds, and new-yea'd,
Each age in separate fold.

My comrades begg'd me, taking first
What we could pack of cheese,
Then drive a batch of lambs on board,
Cut loose and sail the seas.

OF WANDERINGS

they enter and wait till its occupant returns.

Far better it had been so to act.

But my stout heart preferr'd
To wait and see the man himself,
Exchange a friendly word

And tokens, our loving thoughts to prove,
Were we to meet again.
But 't was not meant he should appear
Quite lovely to my men.

So, kindling fire, some cheese we ate,
Some for an offering burn'd;
Sat waiting, until he, leading home
His woolly charge, return'd.

A huge load on his back he bore
Of logs and fagot-trash,
Which on the cavern's floor he threw
With a tremendous crash.

In terror we shrank far back; but he,
Leaving the others, drove
Those which he milk'd inside the cave;
Then to its mouth he hove,

ULYSSES' TALE

Accosted by him, Ulysses, on behalf of all,

Lifting it high, a mighty stone
That served him for a door:
Not two-and-twenty four-wheel'd carts
Could move it from the floor.

Seated, he milk'd his ewes and goats,
All in their order due,
And put a suckling to each dam.
In half the milk he threw

Fig-juice to curdle it; the curds
In wicker crates let stand:
The other half in buckets set
For supper-drink at hand.

When now his busy chores were done
He lit a fire, that shed
Light to the inmost cave; look'd up,
Saw us, and questioning said:

“Strangers, who are ye? Whence do ye sail
The watery ways? For trade?
Or rovers, risking life for loot
At risk of others made?”

OF WANDERINGS

appeals for hospitable treatment.

So he said; but our hearts were crush'd
At that deep, brutish cry
And his huge self before our eyes.
Even so, I made reply:

“We Greeks, from Troy, over far seas
Drifting, by wild winds torn
From homeward course, another way,
To other shores are borne.

“Agamemnon’s men we boast to be;
Heaven-high stands his renown,
So great a conqueror is he,
Destroy’d so great a town.

“And now to your hearth we are come
Our kind respects to show,
If you would spread a friendly meal
Or other gift bestow.

“But O! have mercy, mighty Sir,
On these your suppliants here,
Revering the great God, to whom
All prayerful guests are dear.”

ULYSSES' TALE

But he scouts their supplication

Then answer'd he with ruthless heart:

“Stranger, you are clean daft,
Or come from far, to bid me fear
Your gods or shun their wrath.

“For this great god you name, no whit
Do the Cyclopes care.
Far greater are we; nor would I choose
You or your mates to spare,

“For any hate of his, did not
My soul incline me so.—
But put your ship in at the land's end
Or near? Give me to know.”

Aiming to sound me, so he spoke.
But, in wise counsels tried,
I was not caught, but answering back
With crafty words replied:

“My ship at your land's farthest bound
Drove on a headland steep,
Whence by fierce wind her wreck was swept
Far out upon the deep.

OF WANDERINGS

and shows them no mercy.

“Only myself with these few here
Escaped a watery grave.”
So I said; he, with savage thoughts,
No word of answer gave,

But springing up pounced on my men,
And seizing two as one
Dash’d them to earth like whelps. We saw
The brains gush forth and run

Wetting the ground. Before his feet
Their sever’d limbs he laid,
Then like some lion mountain-bred
A horrid banquet made.

We to kind Heaven lifting our hands
With loud cries did protest,
The cruel deed before our eyes,
Despair our souls possess.

When now the Cyclops’ mighty paunch
With man’s flesh was replete,
And with the heavy milk he drank
On top of all the meat,

ULYSSES' TALE

Next day the survivors are left imprisoned in the cave.

As stretch'd along the cavern's floor
Amid the sheep he lay,
Then was my venturous spirit moved
A brave deed to essay.

I thought, going nearer, drawing my sword,
And with the other hand
Feeling for the spot, to stab him, where
Midriff and liver stand.

But second thoughts my impulse check'd,
For then ourselves had died
Right there, since we could never move
That great door-stone aside.

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses contrives a plan of escape.

So, prison'd there, with tears and groans
We waited through the night,
Till he his daily task resumed,
Rising with earliest light.

His milking and other busy chores
Soon finish'd, two more men
He seized and slaughter'd, to prepare
A horrid meal again.

That done, his fine sheep he drove forth,
Moving with ease the stone,
Then put it back as one would put
A quiver's cover on.

Loud whistled Cyclops as he turn'd
His fat flock toward the hills,
Whilst I staid brooding deep and sore
Over all plots and ills,

To punish him, and by Athena's grace
Ourselves from death to save.
And this plan seem'd to me the best:
At one side, in the cave,

ULYSSES' TALE

Four men, with Ulysses, are chosen

Close to a pen a great club lay,
Of olive-wood still green,
That he had cut to carry when dry.
We deem'd it, as first seen,

Full stout and long to make the mast
For ship of twenty oars,
Which, broad of beam, sails over seas
With freight to foreign shores.

About a fathom I cut off,
The men all prompt to lend
Their aid in shaving the stake smooth
And tapering toward the end.

I made a sharp point, and in fire
Held it till glowing-red,
Then hid it in the litter, wherewith
The cavern's floor was spread.

The others, now, I bade draw lots:
Who, with me, should essay
To bore the stake in Cyclops' eye
While sound asleep he lay.

OF WANDERINGS

to execute the design.

The lots fell to the very four
I could have wish'd to name.—
So we five waited till the hour
Of daring vengeance came.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses offers Cyclops a drink

At eventide he guided home
His fleecy charge, and drave
Quite all within, leaving not one
Corral'd outside the cave.

So to act this time, either some vague
Suspicion gave the sign,
Or a command upon him laid
By providence divine.

The doorway when he had well closed,
Heaving the mighty stone,
Seated he milk'd his ewes and goats;
Then, when his chores were done,

For the third time two men devour'd.—
Now by his side I stood
Holding a full cup of dark wine,
And spoke in manner good:

“Cyclops, here 's wine. Drink, and top off
Your dinner of man's meat.
See, what sort in our bark was hid
Of liquor dark and sweet.

OF WANDERINGS

of Ciconian; and directly,

“’T is a peace-offering I would bring,
If you would pity me
And help me toward my home; for now
You rage insufferably.

“Cruel one! how can any man
In the whole world take thought
To seek your hearth, where by your hand
Such wicked deeds are wrought!”

Even as I spoke, the proffer’d dram
Taking, he drank it up:
So wondrous good he could not wait,
But begg’d a second cup.

“Give me more, please, and tell me now
Your name, quick as you can;
So I may choose the friendly gift
To make you happy man.

“For, the Cyclopes’ country bears
Good wine for us: but this
Of nectar and ambrosia
A straight-out sample is!”

ULYSSES' TALE

while overcome by sleep and drunkenness,

So said he; and I brought on more
For his thirst unrestrain'd:
The full cup thrice I gave, and thrice
He in his folly drain'd.

When now the vinous fumes began
To work in Cyclops' head,
Then once again in accents bland
Addressing him I said:

"Cyclops, you ask my famous name.
I 'll tell you and you 'll pay:
Noman 's my name; *Noman* my mates,
My mother, my father say."

Then answer'd he with ruthless heart:
" I 'll eat the others soon;
Noman I 'll eat the last of all,
And that shall be your boon."

He said; lean'd back and fell supine.
Flat on his back he lay
With big neck drooping sidewise, till
All-conquering sleep held sway.

OF WANDERINGS

the monster receives his punishment.

The stake then in hot ashes deep
I thrust; and words of cheer
I spoke, lest any of the four
Draw back in sudden fear.

When now the olive stick was nigh
To bursting into flame,
Green though it was, and fiercely glow'd,
Then close to him I came,

Holding it ready, while my mates
With valor inspired stood by.
They grasp'd that hot sharp-pointed bar
And plunged it in his eye.

Myself, high reaching, twirl'd it fast,
As when a man bores through
A great ship-timber with a drill
Turn'd steadily and true.

The blood seethed while the fiery breath
Scorch'd lids and lashes round,
The eyeball burning to its roots
With horrid crackling sound.

ULYSSES' TALE

Other Cyclopes coming to the rescue consider him crazy

As irons the smith in water dips
A mighty singing make,
So Cyclops' eye sizzled and hiss'd
About that olive stake.

Terrific was the cry he raised,
The cliff resounded far.
We fell back, as he from his eye
Pluck'd forth the bloody bar.

Frenzied, he cast it from him, and call'd
With terrible loud shout
To those who dwelt along the heights
In caverns round about.

Hearing him came, some here, some there,
Cyclopes two and three,
And standing by his cave inquired
What might the matter be.

“What in the world leads you to raise
Such rumpus, Polypheme?
To mar the stilly night, and rob
Ourselves of doze and dream!

OF WANDERINGS

and leave him to his fate.

“ Is it some man who drives away
Your cattle?—or, what is worse,
Is it some man that ’s killing you
Yourself by fraud or force? ”

Stout Polyhemus from his cave
Replied: “ O friends, ’t is worse:
Noman is killing me myself
By fraud and not by force.”

Then they: “ If on you, being alone,
No man wreaks force or fraud,
’T is brain-stroke. To Poseidon pray,
Your father, the sea-god.”

So saying they turn’d away. But I
Chuckled, how over them
I came it with my clever name
And no man’s stratagem.—

Cyclops, groaning and rack’d by pains,
Groped till he found the door,
Where, moving off the stone, he sat
With hands held out before,

ULYSSES' TALE

To effect an escape from the cave

If haply some man he could catch
Making off with the sheep,
So simple he fancied me to be.
But I was not asleep:

Pondering was I on plots and wiles,
By what scheme I might try
To save myself and men from death,
For the great risk stood nigh.

This plan seem'd best: there were the rams
Large beasts, fleece thick and full,
Well-fed and heavy in their coats
Of violet-color'd wool.

Taking them each time three by three,
These quietly I tied,
With withies drawn from Cyclop's bed,
Together side by side.

The middle sheep of each three bore
Under its breast a man;
The others, one on either side,
As his protectors ran.

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses devises a sheep-ride.

One ram there was, of all the chief;
Him by the back I grasp'd,
Under his shaggy belly roll'd,
And, with hands round him clasp'd,

Fingers tight twisted in that mass
Of wondrous wool, I lay
Clinging with steadfast soul. And so
We waited for the day.

ULYSSES' TALE

He is himself the last to pass

PROMPTLY at dawn of day the rams
Forth to their pasture press'd;
The ewes, unmilk'd, about the pens
Stood bleating and distress'd.

Their lord and master, rack'd by pains,
As the sheep, standing square,
Pass'd by him making their way out,
Felt all their backs with care.

Poor fool! he argued not, that they
Whom on sheep-back to ride
He vainly thought, lay close at hand
Under their bellies tied.

Last march'd forth the great ram, weigh'd down
With his wool and with me
Full of my wiles. Stout Polypheme
Address'd him feelingly.

“Ah! dear old ram, why thus the last
Under my hand? Not so
Till to-day would you lag behind,
Foremost and first to go,

OF WANDERINGS

under the blinded ogre's hands.

“ Taking long strides, the while you cropt
The clover's tender bloom;
First at the river, first to strive
At eventide toward home:

“ But now the last of all! You miss
Your master's eye, you too;
Which a bad man bereft of sight,
Help'd by his villain crew,

“ When he had foil'd my wits with wine,
Noman—but no, not yet,
Not yet has he escaped the death.—
If only, you, my pet,

“ If you knew how to think like me,
Could you get power to talk
And tell me where he 's skulking now,
Hoping my wrath to baulk,

“ Then, dash'd to earth, his brains would fly
All scatter'd round my cave,
And lighten my heart of the woes
That naughty Noman gave.”

ULYSSES' TALE

The blind Cyclops, taunted by Ulysses,

So saying he let his ram pass out.

We, then, once well outside
Cave and corral, I from the ram
Dropt and my mates untied.

Briskly we rounded up that herd
Of sheep long-shank'd and fat;
Drove to the ships, where waiting long
Our other comrades sat.

Right welcome to their eyes came we
Who lived, while for the dead
Loudly they voiced their grief. But I
Forbade, shaking my head;

Gave order, with all speed to fling
A handsome lot of sheep
Into the ship, then casting loose
To plow the briny deep.

So did they at the word, and soon
Seated in proper line
On the high thwarts, with bending blade
They smote the frothy brine.

OF WANDERINGS

takes a random shot at the fugitives.

But when as far from land as one
By shouting can be heard,
Then to the sightless rogue on shore
I spoke a taunting word.

“ Cyclops, no coward it was, you see,
Whose comrades in your den
You were to murder and devour.
On your own head again

“ Your wicked deeds were bound to fall,
Wretch! since you scruple not
To eat guests in your home. Just gods
Your punishment have wrought.”

Thus I spoke. In his wrathful heart
The wrath rose fiercer still.
Seaward a ponderous rock he hurl'd,
Wrench'd from the rugged hill.

Before our galley's prow not far
Cleaving the tide it fell,
And back to land again she sped,
Heaved on the reflux swell.

ULYSSES' TALE

The first time he overshoots the mark.

Quickly a punting pole I seized
And shoved her from the shore,
Gave sign by nodding, that each man
Bend strongly to his oar.

Stoutly they pull'd; and when we stood
Near twice as far away,
Once more I talk'd. But in mild tones
This and that one would say:

“Rash man! why pray will you provoke
The savage fellow? But now
He flung a bolt into the sea
Before our very prow,

“Sweeping us back again to land
And to destruction near.
If but a single word, or sound
Of voice had reach'd his ear,

“The ship's timbers he would have crush'd
Together with our bones,
Letting another missile fly,
He heaves such mighty stones!”

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses taunts him again.

So they said, but persuaded not
My spirit to refrain;
With anger swelling in my heart
I taunted him again:

“ Cyclops, if ever man inquire
Into your precious case,
What circumstance your visage brought
To this blind-eyed disgrace,

“ Say ’t was *Ulysses*, taker of towns,
From him your sorrows come:
Laertes’ son, the rugged isle
Of Ithaca his home.”

I spoke thus; and he wailing loud,
In answer did exclaim:

“ Alack! the doom pronounced of old
O’ertakes me in that name.

“ A prophet, Telemus, there was
In Cyclops-land abode,
Who till old age for us his powers
Of divination show’d.

ULYSSES' TALE

Cyclops, learning the name of his tormenter,

“ The seer forewarn'd me by his art
Of this disastrous plight,
That by Ulysses 't was my fate
To be bereft of sight.

“ But I thought always of some man
Of grand, majestic mien,
Clothed with prodigious strength; but now
This dwarf, this manikin,

“ This feeble, good-for-nothing mite
Blinded me while I lay
Drugg'd by the wine he made me drink!—
But stay, Ulysses, stay;

“ Come here, be welcome! whilst I pray
The great god of the sea
To speed you on your homeward way.
His son I boast to be;

“ He only, my father, if he choose,
Will make me well again:
He and no other in the world
Of gods or mortal men.”

OF WANDERINGS

prays to the sea-god, his father.

Such were his words; whereto I spoke:

“ Would I could smite with death
And send you down to Hades’ house,
Bereft of life and breath,

“ As surely as not Poseidon even
Shall ever heal your eye! ”
I said; but he was praying, his hands
Uplifted to the sky:

“ Poseidon, compassing the earth,
God of cerulean brow,
If verily thou art my sire
Hear my petition now.

“ Grant that Ulysses, taker of towns,
Shall see his home no more;
Or, if his fate be to behold
His friends and native shore,

“ May he come miserably and late,
His comrades perish’d all,
In stranger ship; and may he find
Troubles by hearth and hall! ”

ULYSSES' TALE

He hurls a second missile, which falls short

So pray'd he; and the sea-god heard
His son's imploring cry.—
Now, lifting a still larger stone,
Whirling he let it fly,

And put immense force in the throw.
Down close behind the ship
The boulder plunged, fail'd by a hair
To hit the rudder's tip.

The sea surged high beneath the shock
Of the descending stone,
While to the wish'd-for landing sped.
Our galley forward thrown.

Soon as we touch'd that island, where
The other galleys stood,
And by them ever waiting sat
Our mates in mournful mood,

Our bark we beach'd, arriving here,
And set foot on the strand;
Then from her hold the Cyclops' sheep
Fetch'd forth and brought to land.

OF WANDERINGS

as the ship makes the island.

These we divided among all
In portions just and fair,
That of my troop not one might go
Deprived of equal share.

The ram my trusty mates assign'd
As special prize to me,
And piously of him I made
Burnt offering by the sea

To the all-ruling, cloud-wrapt God
Dwelling in heavenly seat.—
Yet not for happy end deem'd He
My sacrifices meet;

But 't was His will, as did appear,
That ruin should befall
My goodly vessels every one
And well-loved comrades all.—

So, the day long, till the sun sank
And evening shades prevail'd,
Feasting we sat, with savory meats
And ruddy wine regaled.

ULYSSES' TALE

The booty is divided and a feast follows.

Again, when darkness fell, in sleep
On the high shore we lay,
Till, with the rosy dawn, I bade
Slip cable and away.

Promptly all hands obey'd, and soon
Seated in order'd line
On the high thwarts, with bending blade
They smote the frothy brine.

OF WANDERINGS

Arrival at Æolus' floating island.

THENCE farther sailing we moved on
With troubled hearts and sore,
Gladly from death, but still to mourn
Our mates who were no more.

To the Æolian Isle we came,
A floating island. Here
Dwells Æolus, the King of Winds,
To the immortals dear.

All round his isle a wall of bronze
Defends it from the deep;
Within its cinctured pale the cliff
Shoots upward smooth and steep.

Twelve children hath he in his halls,
Six daughters and six sons;
Husbands and wives of them he made,
Left no unmarried ones.

These with kind father and mother dear
Live feasting all their days,
And myriad store of viands rare
The festive board displays.

ULYSSES' TALE

Setting sail again, the wanderers, by favor of Æolus,

Rich savors through the palace steal,
And music evermore
In fine strains weirdly sighing moans
Round court and corridor.

To their domain and mansion fair
We came; and a month long
He feasted me, and ask'd to hear
That tale of ruth and wrong:

All about Troy and the Greek ships,
And how for home they sail'd;
And to him each hap as befell
In order I detail'd.

Then, when I craved of him in turn
My home course to secure,
He refused not, but framed a plan
To make the convoy sure.

He flay'd for me a full-grown ox,
A bag made of the hide,
And in the bag impetuous blasts
Of howling winds he tied.

OF WANDERINGS

come in sight of Ithaca.

For, to be steward of the winds
Named by divine decree,
He curbs and quells what one he will,
And sets another free.

The bag with shining silver cord
He tied up in my ship,
So fast that not a breath beyond
That cunning knot might slip.

But for my course he launch'd the breeze
Of Zephyrus to blow,
Wafting my galleys and their crews
The way we yearn'd to go.

Yet, 't was not meant he should make good
The convoy as he sought,
That voyage to an unhappy end
By our own folly brought.

Nine days, by night and day alike,
Before the wind we ran;
The tenth, our native country near'd,
Its signs of beast and man

ULYSSES' TALE

But the contrary winds, released,

Could mark: the smoke of herders' fires,
Bleating of goats and sheep.—
That hour on me worn out with toil
Fell overmastering sleep.

For, all those days, the sheet I held,
Trusting no other hand
To work it, so with speedier skill
To reach our native land.

And as I slept the men began
To murmur, and averr'd
I brought home gold and silver gifts
By Æolus conferr'd.

Thus one would to his neighbor say:
“O! how this man doth win
Honor and friendly turn from all
Whose house he enters in!

“Choice treasures in full store from Troy
Of booty he brings home,
While we who the same journey fared
All empty-handed come.

OF WANDERINGS

force them back over sea.

“ And now King Æolus gives him more.
But come! without delay
Let us see how much gold there is
In this bag stow’d away.”

The evil counsel won assent.
They loosed the bag. Out sprang
The winds; and while the fretted air
With their wild clamors rang,

One whirling tempest snatch’d our barks,
My weeping comrades bore
Far out upon the billowy deep
From home and native shore.

Starting awake, my soul was sway’d
By impulse of despair
To cast myself into the sea
And drown my troubles there;

Or, should I silently endure,
Still with the living stay?—
And I endured; muffling my face,
There in the ship I lay,

ULYSSES' TALE

Æolus, besought by Ulysses,

While galleys all by baleful blast
Across the seas were swept
To the Æolian Isle again,
And comrades groan'd and wept.

We landed and fresh water drew,
Prepared a hasty meal;
Then, when restored by food and drink,
Bent on a new appeal

To Æolus, I chose my men,
A herald and one more;
Made for the palace, where we found
All feasting as before;

And at the threshold sat us down.
They questioned us, amazed:
“How now, Ulysses! What foul spell
By evil genius raised

“Prompts this return? Did we not lend
Convoy with generous hand,
Sending you surely to regain
Your friends and native land?”

OF WANDERINGS

refuses to aid him a second time.

Then I spoke out with aching heart:

“ The baleful spell was cast
By wicked comrades, and besides
A sleep that bound me fast.

“ But, O my friends! provide the cure;
Ye have the power to save.”
Thus did I plead; silent they sat;
Their father the answer gave:

“ Hence from my island, wretch! begone!
A sin it were for me
To proffer comfort or relief,
To speed by land or sea

“ A man by gods abhorr'd. Begone!
Unblest you tread this ground!”
So saying he sent me from his door,
Laden with grief profound.

ULYSSES' TALE

All the ships but one

THENCE farther sailing we moved on
With troubled hearts and sore.
The men's worn spirits droop'd with toil,
Wielding the stubborn oar.

For vain we deem'd our labor now,
No guidance more appear'd.
So six days, night and day alike,
A random course we steer'd,

Till on the seventh we rested, where
The towers of Lamus stand;
Telepylus the city's name,
In Laestrygonian land.

The paths of evening and of morn
Here close together fall:
Shepherd hails shepherd homeward bound,
Out-bound returns the call.

Two sets of wages in this clime
A sleepless man might earn:
One turn with silvery-fleeced flock,
With kine the other turn.

OF WANDERINGS

enter the trap-like harbor of the Laestrygones.

At a fine harbor we arrived,
Which a tall cliff surrounds,
Impending sheer. Before its mouth
Two forelands form the bounds,

Facing each other, of a straight
And narrow passage-way.
Right through it the doom'd galleys steer'd,
And moor'd within they lay

Close side by side; for there no wave,
Nor great nor small, can rise.
In placid calm on every hand
The unruffled water lies.

My ship alone I held without
Just at the harbor's edge;
Then, leaving her with cable lash'd
Fast to a craggy ledge,

To a commanding peak I climb'd
To scan the countryside.
No planted fields, only of smoke
Upspringing coils I spied.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses sends a party to make inquiries,

So of my crew I sent two forth,
A herald making three,
To ascertain what sort of men
That country-folk might be.

These went, treading a path worn smooth
By wagons that brought down
Wood from the forest-mantled hills;
And drawing near the town

They fell in with a buxom maid,
Who to the bubbling rill
Of cool Artacia had repair'd
Her water-urn to fill.

Her they accosted, and inquired
Who was the country's king?
What were the people whom he ruled?
She show'd them, answering,

The great house where Antiphates,
Her father, was to seek.
They enter'd there and saw his wife
Tall as a mountain-peak,

OF WANDERINGS

with the result that all the ships inside the harbor are destroyed.

And a revolting sight she was!—
Quick word the woman sent
To the market, to her spouse, who came
On deadly purpose bent;

And seizing one man on the spot
Prepared a horrid meal.
The other two, darting away,
Fled back with headlong zeal.

Through the town he set up a shout;
They, rushing at the word,
Like unto giants and not men,
The Laestrygonian horde,

Thronging the harbor's craggy brink
Pelted with ponderous stones
The close-moor'd barks below them ranged.
Then rose in awful tones

The din of shiver'd, shatter'd ships,
Men's groans in murderous fray;
While ogres spearing them like fish
Bore off their human prey.

ULYSSES' TALE

The lone vessel arrives at Æa,

While these dealt death in harbor deep,
I, drawing my keen blade,
Sever'd the hawser of my ship,
Her crew by swift word made

Bend to their oars, our lives to save.
Lustily all did sweep
The yeasty billow, fearing death;
And gladly to the deep

Those beetling cliffs my galley fled,
Fated alone to fare:
The others by one common doom
Went to destruction there.

OF WANDERINGS

the Isle of Circe.

THENCE farther sailing we moved on
With troubled hearts and sore,
Gladly from death, but still to mourn
Our mates who were no more.

To the Land of ÆEa now we came,
The fair-hair'd Circê's isle,
Dread goddess magical in song,
Sister by birth and guile

To fell Æêtes, wizard king.
The Sun-god was their sire,
Their mother the nymph Persê, one
Of Father Ocean's choir.

In silence toward the beach we steer'd;
Some spirit led the way
Where peacefully a bark might lie
Within a curving bay.

Two nights, two long days there we lay,
Heart-weary and forlorn.
But when the third day sprang to view
From mottled hues of morn,

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses climbs a hill to view the country.

I started, taking sword and spear,
To scan the prospect round,
If haply some works I might see
Of men, or hear some sound.

On a bare hill-top when I stood,
Whence the whole isle one sees,
Smoke-wreaths from Circê's halls appear'd
Above embowering trees.

Thereat an impulse sway'd my heart:
Go and inquire there.
But second thoughts found it more wise,
First to the ship repair,

Spread for my men a meal, then send
A party forth to ask.
And, near the shore, some power benign
Pitied my lonely task;

Into my very pathway sent
A great high-antler'd deer.
From forest-browsing he came down
His thirsty frame to cheer

OF WANDERINGS

He brings back a deer.

At the cool streamlet's brink; for now
Irk'd him the sun's fierce ray.
My spear flew as the stag stept forth,
Through his spine clove its way;

With a moan he fell, yielding his breath.
Setting foot there, from the wound
I drew the brazen weapon out,
Laid this upon the ground,

Plaited a fathom's length of rope
Of withies growing near,
The great beast's feet together tied;
Then, steadied by my spear,

Bore off the burthen shoulderwise,
And throwing on the beach
My splendid prize, I roused my mates
With cheering word for each.

“ Courage! not yet shall we go down,
Good men, though troubled sore,
To Hades' halls before our time,
With food and drink in store.

ULYSSES' TALE

This provides a feast for the men

“Nay, come! while yet our vessel holds
Some sustenance and cheer,
Bethink we of the present need,
Not pine with famine here!”

So I said, and my words prevail'd;
And by the barren sea
Uncovering face they view'd the deer:
And a huge piece was he!

Thereon when their admiring eyes
To full content were fed,
They wash'd their hands and fell to work,
A glorious feast to spread.

So the day long till the sun sank
And evening shades prevail'd,
Feasting we sat, with savory meats
And ruddy wine regaled.

Again, when darkness fell, we made
By the seaside our bed.
Then, with the waking day all hands
To council call'd, I said:

OF WANDERINGS

and next morning a council is held.

“ Comrades, we know not on what side
To look for dusk or dawn:
What last the kind sun leaves in shade?
What first he beams upon?

“ High time it is to plan a way,
If some way yet there be.
I think of none; it is an isle
Ring’d by the boundless sea.

“ On high point standing yestermorn,
Whence the whole isle one sees,
Smoke at its centre I saw rise
Above embowering trees.”

So I said; and their hearts were crush’d,
Those foul deeds to recall:
Cyclops and the Laestrygones,
Man-eating monsters all.

They cried aloud, and bitterly
They wept; yet for no gain
Thereby forthcoming, but all tears
And moaning were in vain.

ULYSSES' TALE

One-half the ship's company,

But I made count of all my crew,
Order'd apart to stand
In two divisions; and I named
A captain for each band:

Myself to lead one; of the other
Eurylochus should be guide.
Then in a helmet we shook lots,
The hazard to decide.

His lot sprang out: our weal or woe
Eurylochus was to find.
With two-and-twenty men he went,
Left us in tears behind.

OF WANDERINGS

sent forth to make inquiries, arrive at Circê's palace.

ENSCONCED among the woody glens
Circê's abode they found,
Her palace built with polish'd stones,
Seated on sightly ground.

Round it were lions and gray wolves,
To gentle port subdued.
She had enchanted them herself
By potions that she brew'd.

These sprang not fiercely at the men
As if to rend their prey,
But wagging round them their long tails,
Stood up in friendly way.

As dogs upon their master fawn
From dinner when he goes,
For then 't is time they know to catch
The tidbits that he throws,

So on our men the strong-claw'd wolves
And lions fawn'd. In fear
They shrank away when they beheld
Those monstrous brutes so near.

ULYSSES' TALE

All but one of the men enter at her bidding

Now on the fair-hair'd goddess' porch
They stood, and from inside
Heard Circê singing with sweet voice
The while her loom she plied,

Weaving a wonderful great web
Soft, beautiful, and fine,
Such as the splendid fabrics are,
Woven by hands divine.

Then spoke Polites—of my mates
Most near and dear to me:
“Comrades, some one within doth weave
And sings enchantingly!

“O listen, how the whole floor moans
’Twixt loom and roundelay!
Be it a goddess or woman. But come!
Let us speak up straightway.”

Such were his words; and they spoke up,
Calling; and she replied,
Bidding them enter, as she threw
The bright doors open wide.

OF WANDERINGS

and, once inside, are transform'd by the Enchantress.

Following, they enter'd in close throng
With ardor indiscreet.
Eurylochus only stopt behind,
Suspicious of deceit.

Within, on couches and grand chairs
She seated them at ease;
Stirr'd for them honey in Pramnian wine
With barley meal and cheese.

But with fell purpose baleful drugs
She mingled with the mess,
That thoughts of home might buried lie
In deep forgetfulness.

Then, when she proffer'd and they drank,
With her wand smiting each,
She drove and shut them in a sty,
Bereft of human speech.

The voice they utter'd and the form,
Rough hide and bristles, wore
Of swine: only the human mind
Was in them as before.

ULYSSES' TALE

After waiting in vain for them to re-appear

So were they penn'd; while, as they groan'd,
Circê before their feet
Threw husks and acorns—all such food
As groveling swine do eat.

OF WANDERINGS

their leader returns to the ship alone.

BACK to us at the seashore came
Eurylochus, to relate
The strange tale of his comrades, left
To some unhappy fate.

Nor could he utter, strive as he would,
One word to bring relief:
Heart-stricken, his eyes were fill'd with tears,
His soul engross'd with grief.

Only after we all, amazed,
Plied him with questions, then
At last he told us by what chance
He lost the other men.

“ Up through the woody glens we went,
Guided by your commands,
Noble Ulysses, pausing where
A stately mansion stands.

“ There some one sang with tuneful voice,
The while her loom she plied,
Goddess or woman; and they spoke up,
Calling to her inside.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses sets out to find the lost men

“ She threw the bright doors open, and they
With ardor indiscreet
Enter'd as she bade; but I staid,
Suspicious of deceit.

“ At the same instant out of sight
Pass'd the entire throng;
Not one came forth, though sitting near
I watch'd and waited long.”

So said he. I to shoulder slung
My great sword and my bow,
And order'd him without delay
The same way back to show.

But, at my feet, he begg'd in tones
Of mingled grief and fear:

“ Take me not thither against my will,
Great chief, but leave me here.

“ For well I know, neither will you
Yourself return, nor lead
One comrade back. Nay, taking these here,
Let us flee with all speed!

OF WANDERINGS

and meets the god Hermes, who lends him aid.

“ Yet may we shun the evil day.”

To those words I replied:

“ Eurylochus, for your part, remain
Right here at the seaside,

“ Eating and drinking by the ship.

But I go; for on me,

To rescue my lost men there rests
A stern necessity.”

So saying I turn'd to wend my way

Upward from ship and shore.—

But, in the weird glens, ere I stood
At the Enchantress' door,

There Hermes met me, he who wields

The winged wand of gold;

Like to a fair youth, of that age
Most comely to behold.

Warmly he press'd my hand, and spoke

With intimate address:

“ Where now, poor wanderer, by steep paths
Fare you, companionless,

ULYSSES' TALE

Hermes forewarns Ulysses

“ Through woods unknown? Yonder your mates
In Circê's mansion, fed
As groveling swine, are fain to make
In noisome sties their bed.

“ Come you, forsooth, to set them free?
I tell you 't is in vain.
Return you will not, but right there
With them yourself remain.

“ But come! I will deliver you
And keep you safe and sound.
Here; take this good drug; hold it, while
You move on Circê's ground,

“ That from your head it may avert
The peril that impends.—
And Circê's wiles I will recount,
The mischief she intends.

“ She will prepare for you a mess,
As magic potion blent.
Yet to enchant you it will fail;
The good drug will prevent,

OF WANDERINGS

of the Enchantress' arts.

“ Which I shall give you and explain.
When Circê, with harsh word,
Smites with her long wand, then do you
Draw swiftly your sharp sword

“ And rush upon her as if to kill.
Whereat she in dismay
Will bid you share her bed. Fail not
The goddess to obey.

“ Thus shall you make her free your men,
And leave yourself unharm'd.
Bind her by oath, lest you become
Unmanly and weak, disarm'd.”

He, with these words, gave me the drug,
Plucking it from the ground;
Show'd me the nature of the herb,
By mortal men scarce found.

Black at the root it was, the flower
Milk-white; *moly* its name.
The gods can find it, for to them
All labors are the same.—

ULYSSES' TALE

Accordingly her spell fails

Hermes to Olympian heights was gone,
Leaving the woody isle.
Myself toward Circê's mansion turn'd
And ponder'd much the while.

Soon on the goddess' porch I stood
And call'd, and she replied;
Came forth and beckon'd me within,
The bright doors flinging wide.

I follow'd with troubled heart, and sat
As bidden, in grand chair
With footstool, while in golden cup
A drink she did prepare;

Wherein a baleful drug she threw,
To serve her purpose fell.
Then, when she proffer'd, and I drank
Nor yielded to the spell,

Striking me with her wand she spoke:
" Begone now to the sty!
Lie there among your wallowing mates!"
So ordered she; but I,

OF WANDERINGS

when Ulysses drinks the potion.

My sharp sword swiftly drawing, rush'd
Upon her as if to slay.
With a loud shriek she ran beneath
My sword-arm in dismay,

Clasp'd my knees and lamenting cried:
"What man! whence can you be!
Where is your land? your parents where?
A wonder 't is to me

"That you should taste these herbs unscathed!
For never, never yet
Did other man this cup endure,
Whose lips it once had wet.

"Ah, yes; in very truth you are
Wily Ulysses, whom
Hermes oft named to me, and said
To my isle he would come,

"Returning in lone bark from Troy.—
But pray sheathe now that sword;
Let us in love's embraces meet,
So trust each other's word."

ULYSSES' TALE

He exacts from her a promise

Thus the Enchantress spoke. Whereto
Mindfully I replied:

“ O Circê, how can you expect
Kind treatment on my side!

“ When you in these halls have transform'd
My comrades into swine;
And having me now here myself,
With sinister design

“ You call me to your bower, to share
Your bed; until at length,
Disarm'd, I rise therefrom bereft
Of manliness and strength.

“ Comply I can not with your will,
Goddess, unless you deign
To swear, toward me no further thought
Of harm to entertain.”

Thus I; and straight she took the oath
Solemnly, as I led.
That done, I follow'd to ascend
The goddess' stately bed.

OF WANDERINGS

to harbor toward him no further evil design.

MEANWHILE the servants in the house
On busy toil were bent.
Four handmaids Circê has, but not
Of mortal element.

These of the wilderness are born:
From forest, grove, and lea;
From fountains, and from streams whose waves
Flow murmuring to the sea.

Fine linen covers on the chairs
One of the maidens threw,
Then over these spread handsome rugs,
Soft, of sea-purple hue.

Before the seats another nymph
The silvery tables roll'd,
And on them set the bread-trays round
And trenchers of pure gold.

The third in silver wassail-bowl
The honey-sweet wine pour'd
And temper'd, and placed golden cups
In order at each board.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses refuses to eat

The fourth a tripod caldron fill'd,
Under it lighted fire,
To the hot water added cold
As bather might desire.

Then, in the bath-tub while I sat,
From the bronze kettle's glow
Dipping, she let the grateful flood
On head and shoulders flow,

Till from my limbs the carking strain
Of weariness was gone.—
So, when, all bathed, a tunic clean
And mantle I had on,

She led me then to a grand chair
With footstool, deftly wrought,
And bade me eat. But no; I sat
In absent, brooding thought.

As Circê saw me make no move
To touch or taste the food,
But sitting listless at the board
In grave and pensive mood,

OF WANDERINGS

while his men are still imprisoned.

In kindly tone she spoke: "Why, now,
Ulysses, sit you there
Like a dumb creature, and seem not
For food and drink to care?

"Can it be you surmise deceit,
Some movement insincere?
After the solemn oath I took
Surely there's naught to fear."

"O Circê," I replied, "what man,
By righteous thoughts impell'd,
Could bring himself to taste of food
Before his eyes beheld

"His comrades from vile durance freed?
Be it in earnest, then,
You bid me eat, free them, let me
Set eyes on my good men."

I said; and Circê through the hall
Was gone forth, wand in hand;
Open'd the pen, drove out the herd,
Before her made them stand,

ULYSSES' TALE

The Enchantress releases them, and at her bidding

Like unto porkers nine years old.
She, passing down the row,
Applied to each a wholesome drug.—
Off from their limbs did flow

The bristles which by baleful charm
Had grown there; and again
Taller and handsomer than before
They stood forth as my men!

They knew me, clung to my hands each one,
And fell to weeping all,
While with their deep, pathetic cries
Loud rang the stately hall.

Even the goddess' heart was moved.
Then, standing near, she said:
“ Crafty Ulysses, Laertes' son,
Of princely lineage bred,

“ Go now to the vessel by the shore.
For the first thing, draw high
Your bark upon the strand, and stow
Safely in grots near by

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses goes to fetch the rest of his crew.

“ Her tackle and your belongings all.
That done, return to me
Yourself, and with you bring the rest
Of your brave company.”

To those her words my valiant heart
Ready compliance gave;
And soon I came where my good men
Sat mourning by the wave.

As on a farm the calves around
The cows returning home,
When in a drove from grassy feast
These to the barn-yard come—

To meet them all the calves leap forth,
The pens stay not the crowd,
But round their mothers they run and frisk,
Bleating and lowing loud:

Even so the men when they saw me
On my neck weeping fell.
It was as if in spirit they came,
Entranced by magic spell,

ULYSSES' TALE

He summons them, and, though one remonstrates,

Unto the long'd-for island home
In visions heralded,
To rugged Ithaca's very town,
Where they were born and bred.

"To see your face, beloved chief,"
They cried, "we were as glad
As if we touch'd our native shore!
But what success you had,

"Tell us—the others who were lost?"
"First," I said, "draw we high
Our bark upon the strand, and stow
Safe in these grots near by

"Her tackle and everything of worth.
Then, make haste one and all
To come with me and see your mates
In Circê's banquet-hall

"Eating and drinking merrily,
With plenty by their hand."
Thus I enjoin'd; nor were they slow
To further my command.

OF WANDERINGS

leads them all into the palace.

Only Eurylochus would hold back,
Dissuade the eager throng.

“ Ah, wretched men! whither go we?
For what pains do ye long?

“ In Circê's great 'house to be changed
To lions, wolves, or boars!
Robb'd of your human shape, to guard
As brutes those fatal doors.

“ Just so into the Cyclops' den
Our comrades, to their cost,
This rash Ulysses led. They too
Were by his folly lost.”

He spoke thus; but my impulse was,
Yielding to wrath profound,
To draw my blade, smite off his head
And dash it to the ground,

Near though he stood to me by kin.
But with bland words the rest
Check'd me on this side and on that:
“ Dear master, if you think best,

ULYSSES' TALE

There they are invited to remain

“ This fellow we will leave right here
To guard the ship and stores,
While for ourselves you lead the way
To Circê's friendly doors.”

So saying they started; nor remain'd
Eurylochus aloof,
But follow'd soon; for much he fear'd
My terrible reproof.

Meanwhile the others in her home
Circê with kindly care
Treated to bath and ointment fine,
Change of clean wraps to wear;

And there we found them cheek by jowl
Feasting in lordly wise.—
When now all met, the echoing walls
Flung back their sobs and cries.

Thereon the charming goddess spoke:
“ Enough! no longer weep.
Full well I know what ye have borne:
Buffetings on the deep;

OF WANDERINGS

and take rest and comfort.

“ Deadly encounters with strange men
On the unwelcome land.
But come! turn now to meat and wine,
Until once more ye stand

“ Firm and stout-hearted, as when first
Ye left the rocky brow
Of your own isle—not weather-worn
And spiritless as now.

“ Now on your souls the memories press
Of wandering and sore need,
Bereft of cheer; for many and dire
Your trials are indeed.”

She said; prevail'd; and to the end
Of a full-rounded year
Merrily dwelt we there amidst
Unspeakable good cheer.

ULYSSES' TALE

In course of time, importuned by his men,

BUT when the speeding cycle turn'd
To seasons born anew,
Then softly summoning me forth
Spoke up my trusty crew:

“ Strange man! bethink yourself at length
Of home, if 't is your fate
Ever to reach your native shore
And nobly-built estate.”

So, by the goddess' stately bed
Fain was I to present
My earnest prayer; and to my voice
A willing ear she lent.

“ O Circê, deign now to fulfil
The promise which you made,
To guide me home; thither at length
My own still thoughts are paid;

“ And my true comrades wring my heart,
Who, when *you* are not by,
Besiege me with their homesick complaints.”
Straightway she made reply:

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses obtains consent to their departure.

- “ Crafty Ulysses, Laertes’ son,
Even as fate’s message calls,
Tarry ye all no longer now
Reluctant in my halls.
- “ But, first, before your homeward voyage,
Another there must be,
Unto the shadowy home of Dis
And dread Persephonê;
- “ Counsel of guidance there to ask
Of a departed soul,
Tiresias, the blind Theban seer,
Whose thoughts dwell sound and whole.
- “ To him alone, even in death
With firm mind to abide,
Persephonê vouchsafed; the rest
As foolish phantoms glide.”
- So said she; but my heart was crush’d.
There in the goddess’ bower
Sitting, I wept, nor cared to stay
In life another hour.

ULYSSES' TALE

Instructions for a preliminary voyage

But after I had wept my fill,
And rolling on the bed
Brought some assuagement of my woe,
I answer'd her and said:

“ O goddess, who shall show the way
To that unlovely shore!
To Hades no man ever came
Wafted by sail and oar.”

“ To course and guidance,” she replied,
“ Ulysses, pay no heed;
But step the mast, spread the white sails;
Sit, while your bark shall speed

“ By steady breath of Boreas borne,
Till, crossing Ocean's stream,
Persephonê's dim strand you touch,
Where her groves weirdly gleam,

“ Black poplars shimmer and pendent boughs
Of sterile willows weep.
Beach there your vessel by the edge
Of Ocean's eddies deep;

OF WANDERINGS

to the world of shades.

“ Walk thence to Hades’ mouldering tract,
Where into Acheron
Flow the united fiery waves
Of Pyriphlegethon

“ And of Cocytus, which itself
Of Styx an offspring seems.
Your sign, a cliff and junction form’d
By two loud-rumbling streams.

“ Once there, brave heart, approaching close
As I bid, in the ground
Dig you a pit of cubit’s length
Each way, and its edge round

“ Drink-offering pour for all the dead:
First, milk with honey stirr’d;
The next ingredient of sweet wine;
Water to be the third;

“ And sprinkle white barley over all.—
Then earnestly implore
The fitting shades with solemn vow:
Once on your native shore,

ULYSSES' TALE

Prayers and sacrifices

- “ To sacrifice a barren cow,
The best your herds afford,
Heaping besides a funeral-pyre
With costly offerings stored;
- “ And for Tiresias alone,
As victim from your hands
A sheep all black, that chief among
The woolly legions stands.
- “ When thus with vows you have besought
The famed tribes of the dead,
Let a black ram and a black ewe
Over the pit be bled,
- “ Holding the victims toward the gloom
Of Erebus; but your face
Avert, to Ocean's current turn'd.—
Then to the ensanguined place
- “ Thronging, souls of the dead will come.
Now, let your aids, with prayer
To Hades and Persephonê,
Burn the sheep lying there,

OF WANDERINGS

due to the departed souls.

“ While, yourself, sit with naked sword,
Nor suffer any shade
Draw near the blood, till due response
Tiresias shall have made.

“ Straightway the seer will come, brave chief,
And teach you how to keep
True course and measure of the way
Over the fishy deep.”

ULYSSES' TALE

During the preparations for departure

EVEN as the goddess ceased, forth beam'd
The gilded shafts of day.
Tunic and cloak she bade me take;
A long robe silvery-gray

Herself put on, fine-woven, rare;
About her waist she flung
A golden zone, while, floating free,
Her veil from head-band hung.

I through the mansion hied, to gain
My comrades within call;
And standing near by I rehearsed
Bland words to each and all.

“Yield now no longer to soft sleep!
'T is fixt, to-day we go.
Our prayers and yearnings have prevailed;
Great Circê wills it so.”

Prompt were they to respond. And yet
Not even from that land
Was I to lead my men unscathed.
Most youthful of the band

OF WANDERINGS

one member of the crew loses his life.

Was one Elpênor, a frail lad,
Not forward in the fight,
Nor quite well balanced in his wits.
Much wine he drank that night,

And seeking where to cool his head,
Drew from his mates aloof,
Found him a resting-place aloft
Upon the palace-roof.

Then, when at dawn the rest were roused,
Hearing the bustle and talk,
He sprang up suddenly and set out
Toward that hubbub to walk.

But the long ladder he forgot,
Which to the precincts led;
Fell headlong off; his neck was broke,
His soul to Hades fled.—

The men assembling, I began:
“ Ye fancy now to make
A home-start, but by stern decree
A different course we take:

ULYSSES' TALE

They repair to the ship.

“Unto the shadowy home of Dis
And dread Persephonê,
There from Tiresias' soul to learn
Of trials yet to be.”

So I said; but their hearts were crush'd.
Sitting there on the ground
They tore their hair, moan'd; but in tears
No help nor healing found.—

While grieving sore, we shoreward moved,
Meantime, withdrawn from view
Circê had by our galley tied
A black ram and black ewe;

Easily slipping past! What man
Can see the form divine
Of an unwilling god, or here
Or there its steps incline?

OF WANDERINGS

Setting sail for a gloomy voyage.

WHEN by the seaside we arrived,
The vessel first we drew
Into the deep, and mast and sail
Set up in order due.

Next, the two sheep we put on board;
Ourselves, embarking last,
Our places took, silent and sad.
But, a breeze following fast,

Filler of sails, a noble friend,
By fair-hair'd Circê sent,
Dread goddess magical in song,
Its cheery clamor lent.

Righting the tackle through the ship
We sat and waited now,
While wind and helmsman to straight course
Held her unswerving prow.

So all day long the sails were stretch'd
Above the speeding bark.
The sun went down; and all the ways
By land and sea grew dark.

ULYSSES' TALE

The ship crosses the river Oceanus to the region of darkness.

Unto the borders then she came
Of Ocean's stream profound,
Where the Cimmerian people dwell,
With fog and mist wrapt round.

Fair Helios never to those men
His radiant glances lends:
Not when he mounts the starry vault,
Nor when to earth he bends;

But under a leaden pall of night
The wretched mortals stand.—
Upon their shore we beach'd our ship
And brought the sheep to land;

These taking, by the circling flow
Of Ocean made our way,
Then halted when we mark'd the spot
Where Circê bade us stay.

Eurylochus and Perimêdes held
The victims, while in the ground
I dug me with my sword a pit
Four-square, and its edge round

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses, as instructed, propitiates the infernal powers.

Drink-offering pour'd for all the dead:

First, milk with honey stirr'd;

The next ingredient of sweet wine;

And water for the third;

Sprinkling white barley over all.

Then much I did implore

The flitting shades with solemn vow:

Once on my native shore,

To sacrifice a barren cow,

The best my herds afford,

Heaping besides a funeral-pyre

With costly offerings stored;

And for Tiresias alone,

As victim from my hands

A sheep all black, that chief among

The woolly legions stands.

When thus with vows I had besought

The famed tribes of the dead,

I cut the sheep's throats, let their blood

Into the pit be shed.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS
BY J. H. W. L.

ULYSSES' TALE

Departed souls come to partake

Forthwith innumerable souls
From Erebus gather'd there.
Straight to my helpers I made sign
The victims to prepare,

Which by the cruel knife lay slain
Burnt offering to be,
With prayer and vows to mighty Dis
And dread Persephonê;

While I sat holding the sharp sword,
Lest any shade draw nigh
To taste the blood, ere to my quest
Tiresias should reply.

OF WANDERINGS

of the drink-offering.

BUT first our shipmate's soul appear'd,
Elpênor's wandering shade;
For not yet rested he, beneath
The earth's broad bosom laid.

His body, since from it our care
Another labor kept,
In the court-yard we left behind
Unburied and unwept.

And when I saw him, to my eyes
Tears of a sudden came,
Moving my heart in winged words
Of pity to exclaim:

“ Elpênor! how came you hither to haunt
This region dread and dark?
Which you have sooner reach'd by land
Than I with Ocean bark! ”

“ An evil genius wrought my doom,”
He answer'd with deep sigh,
“ And wine unspeakable withal.
Thinking that night to lie

ULYSSES' TALE

The ghost of Elpênor

“ On the high roof, at morn I miss'd
The ladder that downward led;
Fell headlong off; the neck was broke,
The soul to Hades fled.

“ And now I pray you in the name
Of absent ones most dear:
By your good wife; your father, who gave
Your childhood's food and cheer;

“ And in Telemachus' name, left there
At home, your only son;—
For I know, when these sombre rites
In Hades' realm are done,

“ Back to the Isle of Æa again
Your good ship's course will be;
There then arriving, it is my charge,
Master, remember me.

“ Unmourn'd, unburied leave me not
When homeward thence you move,
Lest vengeful source of wrath divine
My slighted spirit prove.

OF WANDERINGS

prays Ulysses to give him burial.

“ But burn me, and with my body burn
The weapons that are mine;
Then by the surf-swept seashore raise
A mound, my sorrow’s sign.

“ This do; and fix upon my tomb,
That future men may know,
The oar with which among my mates
In life I used to row.”

So he address’d me; and I gave
Answer with promise true:

“ All this, unhappy man, I shall
Fulfil and surely do.”

Thus parley’d we two in sad words:
I, holding forth my blade
Over the blood; on the other side,
Pleading, my comrade’s shade.

ULYSSES' TALE

The shade of Ulysses' mother appears;

CAME now my mother's departed soul,
The brave Autolycus' child,
Anticlea, left still in life
When I for Ilium sail'd.

Tears, as I saw her, rose; a pang
Of pity. But to draw near,
Though deeply grieved, I suffer'd not
Till I should ask the seer.

Came then Theban Tiresias' soul,
A golden staff he held.
He knew me when he saw, and spoke:
" By what need now impell'd,

" Unhappy man, leaving the paths
Of sunlight are you come
Into the presence of the dead,
To view their joyless home?

" But draw back from the pit, and hold
Your weapon's edge afar,
Till I drink of the blood and speak
Words that unerring are."

OF WANDERINGS

then that of Tiresias, who recognizes him.

So said he; and I fell back and sheathed
My silver-studded sword,
Then, when the faultless seer had quaff'd
Dark blood, he broach'd this word:

“ Home-voyage honey-sweet you crave,
Ulysses; but full sore
A god will render that return.
For, methinks, nevermore

“ Will he who shakes the earth forget
What wrath engross'd his soul,
For that you blinded his son's eye.—
Yet can ye reach the goal

“ Even now, perchance, though sorely tried,
If you will but restrain
Your comrades' cravings and your own,
When, fleeing the billowy main,

“ Near the Thrinacian Isle the course
Of your stout bark you keep,
And find there pastured herds of kine
And flocks of goodly sheep,

ULYSSES' TALE

The seer instructs and forewarns Ulysses

“ The all-beholding Sun-god's prize.
Leave these all unharm'd, strive
With home thoughts only, ye can perchance
At Ithaca yet arrive.

“ But if ye harm them, I augur then
Ruin for ship and crew.
And should you shun the death yourself,
Tread your own soil anew,

“ You will come miserably and late,
Your comrades perish'd all,
In stranger vessel, and will find
Troubles by hearth and hall:

“ Insolent men frequenting there
Your substance to devour;
Daring to woo your noble wife
With wedding-gifts and dower.

“ Verily, your coming shall avenge
Their violence and greed.—
So, when the suitors you have slain
By craft or forceful deed,

OF WANDERINGS

as to his future course.

“ Thereon, turn inland and fare forth,
Taking along an oar,
Till you reach men who eat no salt,
Know naught of sea or shore.

“ No knowledge has that folk of ships,
Nor can the use divine
Of oars, which are to ships for wings.
I give you a sure sign

“ You will remember: when you first
Meet a wayfaring man
Affirms, on your stout shoulder laid
You bear a winnowing-fan,

“ There, at length, firmly in the ground
Planting the handy oar,
Prime offerings to Poseidon make
Of ram and bull and boar.

“ That done, march back and honor pay
In sacred hecatombs
To all the blest immortal gods,
Dwelling in heavenly homes.

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses learns how to gain recognition

“ For yourself, sunder’d from the sea,
Timely, in mildest mood,
Death will arrive and take you hence
In sleek old-age subdued,

“ While round you a happy folk will dwell.
These words I speak err not.”
Thus the seer. Then to him I said:
“ Tiresias, this my lot

“ Even as they will’d the gods did weave.
But this to me declare:
I see my mother’s departed soul
Hovering in silence there

“ Near to the blood; deigns not to grant
Word or look to her son.
Tell me, wise seer, how may she come
To know me as her own? ”

He answer’d, “ ’T is an easy task
Upon your thoughts I lay.
What one soever of the dead.
You suffer and give way

OF WANDERINGS

from his mother's spirit.

“ To touch the blood, from its response
True tidings you will learn;
But whomso you begrudge the boon
Will to the depths return.”

ULYSSES' TALE

His mother recognizes and accosts him.

So saying, great Tiresias' soul
Enter'd the realms of shade,
When his oracular tale was told.
But I with threatening blade

Guarded my place and waited there
Until my mother came,
Drank of dark blood, knew me straightway,
And sadly did exclaim:

“ My child, how come you to this dark
And dismal region cold,
Still living! 'T is hard for living men
These limits to behold.

“ Are you here, doom'd so long from Troy
With ship and crew to roam?
Have you touch'd Ithaca not yet?
Nor seen your wife and home? ”

“ My mother,” I replied, “ sore need
Led me to Hades' door,
The Theban seer's soul to consult,
His guidance to implore.

OF WANDERINGS

He questions her intimately.

- “ For not yet have I near’d the edge
Of the Achaean land,
Not yet set foot on my own soil;
But to far wanderings bann’d,
- “ Freight with troubles, from the day
When in Atrides’ train
I made one of the battling throng
On Ilium’s steed-scarr’d plain.
- “ But tell me truly your own tale,
The fate that laid you low:
In what shape the death-herald came?
Or malady long and slow?
- “ Or did the archeress Artemis
Beneficently send
One of her shafts, and bring your life
To swift and painless end?
- “ And tell me of my father, too;
Of the son I left. Do they
Still hold my sovereign right, or now
Some other man? and they say

ULYSSES' TALE

From his mother Ulysses has tidings of affairs at home:

“ Of me, ‘ He will return no more.’
What of my wedded wife?
What will she? what means she to do?
Leads ever the same life?

“ Staying with her son and guarding well
Our household and estate?
Or fain now of Achaeans to wed
The best and noblest mate? ”

Then my good mother answering said:
“ Indeed, she does remain
With patient heart in your own halls,
While, sorrow-laden, wane

“ Her nights and days counted in tears.—
As yet, your royal claim
No man disputes, but undisturb’d,
Telemachus, in your name

“ Reaps the imperial demesnes,
And, guest of honor, sits
At generous feasts, as rightful lord
And righteous judge befits;

OF WANDERINGS

about his wife Penelope, his son, and his aged father.

- “ For all invite him in due turn.—
Your father, at the farm
Stays ever, comes not to town. No couch
Of rugs and fleeces warm
- “ Is his. In winter, meanly clad,
Within by the fire he lies
On the ashes, where the farm-hands sleep.
But, under summer skies,
- “ And while luxuriant harvest-tide
Lingers, his lowly bed
At random on the vineyard slope
Of fallen leaves is spread.
- “ There lies he, nursing his great grief,
That you come not. Forlorn,
Bitter old-age his portion is.—
Even so had I to mourn.
- “ Neither sure-aiming archeress sped
With her mild shafts my doom,
Nor hateful malady, whose slow pains
The wasting limbs consume.

ULYSSES' TALE

His mother's spirit also reveals to him

“ Loss of *thee*, great Ulysses, it was;
Thy counsel day by day,
Thy gentleness and thoughtful care
Took my dear life away.”

Such words she spoke; and fain was I,
By sudden passion sway'd,
To reach forth and take in my arms
My mother's ghostly shade.

Thrice strove I, and within my grasp
The phantom shape did seem:
Thrice from my hands it flew, as if
A vapor or a dream.

Then rose a still more bitter pang
Of anguish in my breast,
And once again in winged words
Her spirit I address'd:

“ My mother, why do you not wait
My eager, fond embrace?
That even in Hades both may win
Chill mourning's sorry grace.

OF WANDERINGS

the destiny of the dead.

“ Is this some image falsely sent
By proud Persephonê,
To swell still more the groans that spring
From my heart’s agony? ”

Answer’d she then: “ Alas! my child,
Above all mortals tried,
Persephonê deceives thee not.
But, once a man hath died,

“ It is in nature so ordain’d,
The bones and flesh no more
Are by the sinews close contain’d;
But these the fire’s fierce roar

“ Conquers and brings to naught, when life
Has left the fragile clay,
While, like a vision of night, the soul
Takes wing and speeds away.

“ But hasten! and toward the daylight strive,
Nor for more tidings wait,
That in due time to your good wife
These things you may relate.”

ULYSSES' TALE

Taking ship and returning to Æa

Thus having said, my mother's soul
To inmost Hades pass'd.
I to the ship repair'd, gave sign
Stern-cable loose to cast,

Board ship all hands; and they obey'd.—
Our bark toward eastern seas
On Ocean's stream first light oars swept,
Then the fair-following breeze.

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses and his men pay funeral honors there to Elpênor.

PASSING from Ocean's circling flow
Our galley reach'd the waves
Of the wide sea and Æa's isle,
Where earliest Eos laves

Her dancing-lawns with saffron beam,
Neighboring to sunrise land.
Arriving at that isle we beach'd
Our good ship on the sand,

Stept forth upon the surf-lapt edge,
And on the sea-bank lay,
In welcome slumber to await
The morning's blessed ray.

When now the morn shone forth, it was
Elpênor's hour; and while
Some went to fetch his poor remains,
We for a funeral-pile

Cut logs, and on a jutting point
In tears we closed his doom.
Then, when his weapons and his form
Were burnt, we raised a tomb

ULYSSES' TALE

Circê welcomes the voyagers back

Crown'd with a stone, and fixt thereon,
That future men might know,
The oar, with which among his mates
In life he used to row.—

Thus were we busied, nor meanwhile
Had Circê fail'd to mark
Our coming from Hades, but right soon,
Attired well, to our bark,

Duly attended, she came down.
Bread her two handmaids bore,
Meats many, and sparkling, ruddy wine;
And standing at the shore

Amid our throng, in fervent tones
The charming goddess said:
“ Ah! ye perverse, who dared in life
Dis' dark abode to tread;

“ Ye of two deaths, when other men
Have but one death to die!—
But come; take food now and drink wine
Here, while this day speeds by;

OF WANDERINGS

and promises her aid for the home course.

“ Then shall ye with the morrow’s dawn
For homeward voyage set sail.
And I will point the way, its each
And every sign detail,

“ To the end that through no mischance
Of folly fraught with bane
Hinder’d on land or sea, ye may
Unscathed your goal attain.”

So said she; and we obey’d, and there,
Till evening shades prevail’d,
Feasting we sat, with savory meats
And ruddy wine regaled.

But when, as darkness fell, the rest
Made by the ship their bed,
Myself from slumbering mates apart
Taking my hand she led,

Reclined beside me while I sat,
Ask’d of that weird sojourn;
And in due order I told all.
Then Circê in her turn:

ULYSSES' TALE

The Enchantress warns Ulysses of perils that beset his homeward track:

“ So much for what is past. But now
Listen, and ponder all
I am to tell you, which betimes
Your genius will recall.

“ First met will be the Sirens. These
Bewitch all men who steer
Their way. Whoso unwittingly
To that fell shore draws near

“ And hears the Sirens' voice, for him
His dear ones wait in vain.
No wife and children he makes glad,
Arriving home again,

“ But with uncanny tuneful spell
The Sirens chant his doom,
Where heaps of dead men's bones surround
Their seat of meadowy bloom.

“ Pull past that shore, but let your mates
Their ears with soft wax fill,
Lest any hear. Yourself alone
Shall listen if you will.

OF WANDERINGS

melodious charmers; breakers unapproachable;

- “ Stand on the mast-block, and command
Your men to bind you there
Lash'd hand and foot unto the mast,
That so, with rapture rare,
- “ You may enjoy the Sirens' song;
Ordering, if you implore
To be loosed, that they stretch the cords
Still tighter than before.—
- “ When beyond these the crew have row'd,
Thence, I do not decide
Which of two ways your course shall be;
Your own quick thought must guide.
- “ For, on one side frown beetling cliffs,
Booming with surges roll'd
By Amphitritê's billowy tide;
Smiters, their name of old.
- “ No vessel this way steer'd escapes.
Wreck'd timbers, in the same
Eddy with drown'd men, wild waves sweep
And blasts of lurid flame.

ULYSSES' TALE

a cavernous cliff,

“ Save one, no bark e'er clove that sea:
Argo, by minstrels sung,
Laden with captured fleece of gold.
She, too, had perish'd, flung

“ Against the smiting crags; but her
Great Hera guided clear;
For Jason and his hero crew
Were to the goddess dear.—

“ On the other side two rocks are seen,
One towering to the sky,
Sharp-peak'd and by cerulean cloud
Encompass'd; nor rolls by

“ Ever that murky mantle, nor shines
Clear heaven upon the peak
In summer or at harvest-tide.
Vainly would mortal seek

“ To set firm foot on that tall cliff,
And its steep side ascend,
With twenty hands though he could clutch,
With twenty feet contend.

OF WANDERINGS

inhabited by a man-eating marine monster;

- “ For sheer it is and smooth as if
By handcraft polish'd round.
A dark cave cleaves it half-way up,
Yawning with gulf profound
- “ Open toward Erebus and the west.
Thereby your galley's course
Haply, Ulysses, you will hold.
Not with his utmost force
- “ Could a stout archer from the deck
Make arrow reach so high.
Within dwells Scylla, sending forth
Her horrid dog-like cry.
- “ Twelve feet are hers, dangling in front;
Six wondrously long necks;
Topping each neck a hideous head,
Sharp teeth ranged in three decks.
- “ Herself sunk waist-deep in the cave,
She holds her heads outside,
And fishes, feeling round the cliff,
For such prey as the tide

ULYSSES' TALE

a whirlpool dangerously near.

“ Brings within reach, dolphins, sea-dogs,
Some straggler her way led
Of Amphitritê's myriad brood,
Mid groaning billows bred.

“ No vessel's crew hath yet made boast
Unscathed that way to run.
Among the scared men Scylla dips,
With each head grabbing one.—

“ The other rock, now, lying low,
Ulysses, will be seen.
Near to each other are the two,
An arrow's flight between.

“ On it a great wild fig-tree grows.
Under its shady crown
Charybdis with vast whirling maw
Gulps the black water down.

“ Three times each day she sends it up
And three times sucks it in.
Pray not to come there at an hour
When swallowing-spells begin.

OF WANDERINGS

Between the two last named the ship must pass.

“ Not even Poseidon’s sea-born strength
To save you would avail.
Nay, nearer to Scylla’s rock incline,
Drive past with oar and sail.

“ Far better, surely, miss six men
Than perish one and all.”
So Circê said; whereto I spoke:
“ Yet might it not befall,

“ Goddess, that while at distance safe
We from Charybdis prest,
I, donning helmet, shield, and spear,
Fight off the other pest? ”

“ Rash man!” the Enchantress answer’d, “ still
On war and battles bent!
Not even to that which knows not death
To yield in strife content!

“ No mortal nature Scylla owns,
A scourge that never dies,
Fearful, invincible; from her
Wisest is he who flies.

ULYSSES' TALE

The Enchantress repeats

“ At her cliff tarrying to be arm'd,
Beware lest she again
Seizing as many as before,
Devour six more men.

“ Nay, rush from under, and invoke
Crataeis to your aid,
Mother of Scylla, that she deign
To check a second raid.—

“ To the Thrinacian Isle anon
You will arrive. There graze
The Sun-god's kine and goodly sheep:
Seven herds, seven flocks, which raise

“ No offspring, nor themselves decrease;
In each group fifty head.
Two fair-hair'd nymphs their herders are,
Phaethusa, Lampê, bred

“ By mother Neaera to the task.
Their father's cattle-maids
Far from home sent she them to guard
Thrinacia's grassy glades.

OF WANDERINGS

a solemn injunction of Tiresias.

“ Those cattle if ye leave unharm’d,
With home thought only strive,
Ye can, perchance, weigh’d down with woes,
At Ithaca arrive.

“ But if ye harm them, I augur then
Ruin for ship and crew.
And should you shun the death yourself,
Tread your own soil anew,

“ You will come miserably and late,
Your comrades perish’d all,
In stranger vessel, and will find
Troubles by hearth and hall.”

ULYSSES' TALE

Setting sail from Æa

CIRCE had finish'd when the morn
Beam'd forth from golden throne.
Her island path the Enchantress clomb;
I, to the ship alone

Descending, my companions roused
To cast off from the shore;
And promptly they were seated all
On the high thwarts once more,

Ready the frothy brine to smite.
Myself, embarking last,
In troubled silence pondering sat.
Now, a breeze following fast,

Filler of sails, a noble friend,
By fair-hair'd Circê sent,
Dread goddess magical in song,
Its cheery clamor lent.

Righting the tackle through the ship,
We sat and waited now,
While wind and helmsman to straight course
Held her unswerving prow.

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses makes the warnings partially known to his men.

Then to my whole ship's-company
I spoke from anxious heart.

“ Comrades, not to one only or two
Behooves it to impart

“ What, touching perils, unto me
Circê in augury saith.
And I will tell it, that, knowing well,
Either we die the death,

“ Or of escape some way contrive.
The Sirens' voices sweet
First she enjoins us to beware,
And flower-bespangled seat.

“ Only myself, the goddess said,
Might listen to that song.
So you will bind me hand and foot
With many cords and strong,

“ Here on the mast-block when I stand,
Lash'd tightly to the mast.
Round it let the ropes'-ends be bent
And knotted firm and fast.

ULYSSES' TALE

Signs of approach to the Sirens' isle.

“ Then if I strive to burst my bonds,
And earnestly implore
To be loosed, you will stretch the cords
Still tighter than before.”

Each terror as to my mates I told,
The speeding bark meanwhile
Into the restful region ran
That girds the Sirens' isle,

For hither the favoring zephyr urged.
And now the wind's breath fell,
Smooth calm spread wide; some spirit will'd
The crested waves to quell.

Our sails the men stood up and furl'd,
In the ship's hollow laid;
Then, sitting, glassy waters smote,
Flung white by polish'd blade.

I, taking a great ball of wax,
Cutting it up piecemeal,
Squeezed, work'd it well in my strong hands,
Till soon it came to feel

OF WANDERINGS

Ulysses alone is enabled to listen

Right soft and warm with help of sun;
Then walk'd from stem to stern,
Plugg'd soundly all my comrades' ears,
Each man in proper turn.

Next, on the mast-block when I stood,
They bound me to the mast,
Round it the ropes'-ends tightly bent
And knotted firm and fast,

And, once more seated, plied their oars.—
When now, fast running by,
No farther stood we from the land
Than one can hear a cry,

The Siren-pair fail'd not to mark
Their flowery strand along
A rushing keel not far; but straight
Struck up their clear-toned song.

*“ Hither, O hither sailing turn,
This way your galley steer,
Ulysses glorious and great,
Our melody to hear.*

ULYSSES' TALE

to their song until their shore

*“ For never mortal this way sails
And presses farther still,
Ere from our throats strains honey-sweet
His charmèd senses fill;*

*“ But all-enraptured moves he hence
And wiser than before.
For we know all that Greeks endured
On Troja's blood-stain'd shore.*

*“ How with wild waves they strove, we know,
By tide and tempest whirl'd.
We know all things and everything
That's done in the wide world.”*

So in enchanting tones they sang.
My soul craved of the glee,
And frowning and nodding to my men
I sign'd to set me free.

But, forward leaning, they row'd on;
While, quickly rising, two,
Eurylochus and Perimêdes, strain'd
The yielding cords anew.

OF WANDERINGS

is left behind.

These safely pass'd, when linger'd now
Of Siren voice no sound,
They from their ears the wax removed,
Me from the mast unbound.

ULYSSES' TALE

The Smiting Rocks are avoided

THEREAFTER soon smoke I could see,
Huge waves, and heard the roar
Of breakers; while each rower, dismay'd,
Let drop his handy oar,

Their blades trail'd rustling on the tide.
The ship stopt in her flight,
No longer by strong arms propell'd.—
My comrades from their fright

Aiming to rouse and cause the scene
Less awful to appear,
Through the ship going I address'd
Each man with words of cheer.

“ Brave comrades, not unlearn'd are we
In sights that try the soul.
No greater peril waits us here
Than when in rock-bound hole

“ The savage Cyclops held us penn'd.
Even thence my wiles could find
Deliverance safe; and so, methinks,
We shall yet call to mind

OF WANDERINGS

by steering for Scylla's cliff.

“ What threatens now. These my commands
Strive well in mind to keep.
Handle your oars, and seated firm
Score the foam-crested deep,

“ If, haply, the all-ruling god
May grant us to elude
This looming menace to our lives.
And you, helmsman, make good

“ The charge I lay upon you. Your hand
Guides our lone bark. Mark now!
From yonder smoke and billow keep
Well clear, and hold her prow

“ Straight on the *cliff*, unswervingly,
Lest ere you are aware
She sheer off, and you send us all
To ruin over there.”

I said thus much; and they obey'd.
Of Scylla still no word
I breathed, lest of that horrid pest,
Resistless, when they heard,

ULYSSES' TALE

While keeping well off from Charybdis

Frighten'd, they cease their rowing and crowd
All in a heap below.—

But in that hour I quite forgot
That I must needs forego

To take up arms—as Circê warned;
But, donning armor grand
And taking my two longest spears,
On the fore-deck made stand.

For I expected, at the bows
From Scylla of the Rock,
Bound to make havoc in my crew,
Would come the earliest shock.

Yet nothing on that surface sheer
I caught of sight or sound;
My eyes grew weary as I scann'd
The murky cliff all round.

Hard pulling up the narrow strait
With sighs and groans we toil'd.
On this side, Scylla; and, on that,
Charybdis belch'd and boil'd.

OF WANDERINGS

the ship's company are exposed to the attack of Scylla.

Each time when she threw up, 't was like
A kettle on great fire.

Seething, in furious turmoil mixt,
She flung the salt spray higher

Than the tall cliff, drenching both rocks.
But when the briny flood
She suck'd back, all the inside was seen
Down to the bottom mud;

And terribly bellow'd the rock round.
Pale fear the men seized. Whence,
As toward Charybdis' side all gazed,
Dreading destruction thence,

Scylla meantime from lofty lair
Spied the unwary crew,
Out of the passing vessel took
Six comrades brave and true.

Turning, I saw them already lost,
Legs and arms in mid-air
Dangling, and heard them call my name
In accents of despair,

ULYSSES' TALE

With the loss of six men

Then for the last time, in death's throes.—

As when a fisher stands
On a projecting rock, and holds
A long pole with both hands;

And for small fishes throwing down
Tolings to lure them on,
Casting far out his line and hook,
Jerks them up one by one

And slats them gasping on the rock:
Even so my hapless men
Were jerk'd up gasping to the cliff,
Where at her doorless den

Her shrieking prey the monster ate.
That spectacle to me
The awfulest was of all I saw,
Roaming the pathless sea.

OF WANDERINGS

they sail on and approach the Sun-god's island.

To the Thrinacian Isle we came,
Luxuriant fields divine,
Where Helios' fleecy flocks are fed
And herds of broad-brow'd kine.

There, while on board and still at sea,
The bleating sheep I heard
And cattle lowing; and recall'd
Tiresias' warning word

And Circê's, when on me they laid
The solemn charge, to shun
The sea-girt land where graze the herds
Of the joy-bringing Sun.

Then, mid my shipmates as I stood
I spoke from anxious heart:
“Hark to my words, long-suffering friends,
Till I to you impart

“Theban Tiresias' boding charge
And Circê's, that we shun
The sea-girt land where graze the herds
Of the joy-bringing Sun;

ULYSSES' TALE

Ulysses warns his companions against landing on the Thrinacian Isle,

“ Since dire disaster there, they said,
Awaits us. But refrain;
The fateful shore touch not. Nay, hold
Her head still to the main.”

So I said; but their hearts were crush'd.
Straightway, with frowning brow,
Eurylochus hateful answer made:
“ A harden'd man art thou,

“ Ulysses; over-much of strength
Is yours; your limbs sink not
In weariness. You must verily
Be all of iron wrought,

“ That now your comrades you forbid,
Sleepy and spent with toil,
To take rest and set foot once more
On a fair island's soil,

“ Where a fine supper we might make;—
Ordering vague course to keep,
Just as we are, through dreary night,
Far on the murky deep.

OF WANDERINGS

but under evil advice they compel him to put in there.

“ Hard winds are of the night hours born,
Ruin to ships at sea.
How could one save himself alive,
To what sure refuge flee?

“ If of a sudden come a squall
By shrilly Zephyrus sent
Or Notus, breathing oft a doom
Which kind Heaven never meant.

“ Nay, this hour let us rather yield
To the night’s warning shade,
Get supper and take our rest on shore,
Beside the vessel laid;

“ Then, at dawn putting off, renew
Our coursings on the wave.”
Thus spoke Eurylochus; and the rest
Their loud approval gave.

Now saw I that indeed the worst
Our evil genius will’d;
And to Eurylochus I said:
“ Be now thy wish fulfill’d,

ULYSSES' TALE

Stormy weather prevents them from leaving promptly

“ Eurylochus, since ye overpower
My one dissenting mind.
But swear now all this solemn oath,
That, if perchance we find

“ Either some herd of kine or flock
Of fat sheep where we stay,
No man in impious folly on these
A slaughtering hand will lay.

“ But with the viands be content
Of Circê's generous store.”
So said I; and at once the oath
As I prescribed they swore.

That done, within a curving bay
The ship we promptly brought,
A bubbling spring near; and the men
All needs for supper sought.

Then, when their hunger was appeased,
Thoughts rose of the sad fate
Those good friends met, whom at her cave
The monster Scylla ate;

OF WANDERINGS

and Ulysses repeats his warning.

And sleep o'ercame them while they wept.—

When now the stars verged low,
The night far spent, the cloud-wrapt god
Roused a fierce wind to blow,

The hurricane, hiding in clouds
Alike both sea and land.
With the first light of day we haled
Our bark well to the strand,

Under a sheltering grot, where nymphs
Had seats and dancing-floor.
Then, all to council call'd, I said:
“ Comrades, there 's yet in store

“ Victuals and drink on board the ship.
But mind we do abstain
From these herds, lest forbidden flesh
Become to us a bane.

“ For a dread deity they are fed,
Ruler of heavenly spheres;
Sacred to Helios the Sun,
Who all things sees and hears.”

ULYSSES' TALE

Their provisions being gradually consumed,

Compliance to my words they gave.
And now a whole month through
Eurus and Notus ceaseless raged,
No other breezes blew.

Whilst bread and wine the men still had,
So long they left the kine
To graze unharm'd, not yet through need
Tempting the wrath divine.

But when the whole ship's store was spent,
Famish'd they roam'd the sands,
Sea-birds to catch or fish with hooks,
Whatever reach'd their hands.

Myself then from the shore withdrew,
That I might offer prayer
To powers above, if any some sign
For sailing would declare.

When far enough within the isle
My comrades to elude,
A place where thick-embowering oaks
The boisterous wind exclude;

OF WANDERINGS

pressed by hunger the men are tempted to sacrilege.

Washing my hands, there fervently
To all the gods I pray'd,
Who in Olympian mansions dwell.
Then on my eyes they laid

The sweet, subduing spell of sleep.—
While there secure I lay,
Counsel of mischief to his mates
Eurylochus did essay.

“ Hark to my words, long-suffering friends.
All forms of death, we know,
To wretched mortals hateful are;
Yet none so fraught with woe

“ As by sheer hunger to expire.
Come now! then; let us take
Choice cows of Helios, whereof
Burnt-offering we may make

“ To the immortal heavenly gods.
And, if perchance we came
At last to Ithaca our home,
There to the Sun-god's name

ULYSSES' TALE

During a brief absence of Ulysses sacred animals are slaughtered, as victims

“ A stately temple we would rear,
And in it consecrate
Full many rare and costly gifts.
Or, if it be our fate

“ That in his wrath for cattle slain,
By other powers approved,
Our galley Helios will destroy,
Still rests my mind unmoved.

“ For my part, I would rather die
Taking in sailor style
One gulp of brine, than slowly fade
Starved on a desert isle.”

Thus spoke Eurylochus; and the rest
Their loud approval gave.
Forthwith choice cows of Helios' herd
From near at hand they drave.—

For, from our mooring-place not far
The sacred cattle fed.—
And when to altar quickly raised
These solemnly were led,

OF WANDERINGS

for a holy sacrifice preliminary to a feast.

The men stood round them, and to Heaven
Put up their prayers and vows,
And, lacking barley, pluck'd oak-leaves
To deck the victims' brows.

After the prayer and when the kine
Were slaughter'd, bled, and flay'd,
The hams they wrapp'd in fat, whereof
A double fold was made.

On these they placed raw bits of meat;
But, for libation due
Having no wine, pour'd water on
The blazing barbecue.

When now the sacred parts were burn'd
And acts of ritual ceased,
The rest in proper shares they carved
And spitted for the feast.—

Then was sleep lifted from my eyes.
Shoreward my steps I turn'd;
And, as the landing I drew near,
Sweet savor of meats burn'd

ULYSSES' TALE

In the Olympian assemblage

Stole round my sense; and from my lips
A cry of horror burst:
“ Eternal Father! all ye gods!
Truly as one accursed

“ Am I, by fatal gift of sleep
Held fast in hour of need,
Even while my comrades left behind
Plotted an impious deed.”—

Announced swift Lampê to her lord
Our raid upon his herds,
And straightway in the Olympian throng
He spoke with wrathful words:

“ Now, Father, and ye immortals all,
This wrong to me requite,
Of insolent men who slew the cows
Wherein I took delight

“ Each time the starry vault I clomb,
Each time I earthward fared.
Fail me those mortals to atone
For the whole deed they dared,

OF WANDERINGS

the Father promises to avenge Helios.

“ To Hades’ realm will I go down
And shine among the dead.”
Such threat the Sun-god made; whereat
The Cloud-compeller said:

“ Helios, continue on this world
For gods and men to shine.
Ulysses’ crew shall feel the weight
Of punishment condign,

“ When presently their speeding bark
With fiery bolts I sweep
And fling her shiver’d planks abroad
Far on the briny deep.”

It was Calypso told me here
What she from Hermes learn’d.—
When to the shore now and that scene
Of orgy I return’d,

This man and that man I rebuked.
Yet was there naught to gain;
No cure to find; the deed was done;
The sacred cows were slain.

ULYSSES' TALE

The wind falling the voyagers put to sea again.

Portentous omens from that hour
Offended Heaven show'd:
The hides did creep; meats on the spit,
Both raw and roasted, low'd.

For six days my companions made
Of sacred kine their feast,
Till on the seventh morn the wind
Its furious clamor ceased.

Soon as our trusty ship might leave
Her shelter from the gales,
We put to sea, stepping the mast
And hoisting the white sails.

OF WANDERINGS

Their vessel is wrecked by a tempest.

AFTER that island's coast had sunk
From view, nor could the eye
Of other lands a trace discern,
But only sea and sky,

A livid cloud the Thunderer set
Above our fleeing bark.
Beneath its overshadowing gloom
The troubled sea grew dark.

She ran on, but not long. Upsprang
With fierce tempestuous blast
Shrill-piping Zephyrus; a gust tore off
Both forestays from the mast.

The mast fell back, rigging and all
Slump'd down into the hull.
It hit the helmsman where he stood
Abaft, splitting his skull.

He, like a diver, from the deck
Pitch'd headlong, as the flash
Of lightning darted through the ship,
Link'd with the thunder's crash.

ULYSSES' TALE

The whole crew, excepting Ulysses, perish.

She spun round, smitten by the bolt;
Rank fumes of sulphur rose;
The men fell out, wash'd round and round
Dotting the waves like crows.

No more of homeward voyage thought they.
But I stuck to the craft,
Till from her keel the surge broke off
The rib-beams fore and aft:

A bare keel on the billow borne,
And, heaving alongside,
The mast, to which the backstay clung,
A strip of tough ox-hide.

With this I tied together both,
Bare keel and broken mast;
And seated on such raft, was swept
Before the baleful blast.

Soon Zephyrus fell; but Notus rose.
And now with anxious soul
I turn'd back toward Charybdis' rock
And all-engulfing hole.

OF WANDERINGS

Clinging to fragments of the wreck he is swept back to Charybdis;

All night I drifted; then, not far
From Scylla's cliff at dawn
Into Charybdis' whirling flood
My helpless craft was drawn.

Her hour of swallowing then was near;
But branches overhung,
The fig-tree's. One I barely reach'd,
There like a bat I clung.

No foothold had I, for the roots
And stem far from me grew.
Only the pendent boughs their shade
Over the whirlpool threw.

Steadfast I held on and long watch'd,
What hour that keel and mast
Out of the depths would be disgorged;
And up they came at last.

My hold then gently I let go,
Splash'd down beside the beams,
Climb'd on my raft, and with both hands
Paddled for calmer streams.

ULYSSES' TALE

thence, finally, cast upon Calypso's isle.

Nine days I drifted. On the tenth
At night my timbers came,
By fortune guided, to an isle
Ogygia by name.

Home of Calypso, clever nymph,
Who tended me with care.—
But why these things to you, great king,
A second time declare?

Last night to you and your good queen
That tale I did unfold.
Far be it from me to repeat
A story once well told.



