

years, retained all her youthful beauty, were detained in Egypt by contrary winds, sent to punish them for omitting the usual sacrifice to the gods. He at last consulted Proteus, who revealed how the wrath of the gods could best be allayed, and how favorable winds could be secured to waft him home.

As for Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks, he returned to Argos only to be murdered by his wife Clytæmnestra and her paramour Ægisthus.

“ ‘ Ægisthus, bent upon my death,  
Plotted against me with my guilty wife,  
And bade me to his house, and slew me there,  
Even at the banquet.’ ”

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

Then, mortally afraid lest Orestes, Agamemnon's son, should avenge his father's death, Ægisthus prepared to slay him too; but Electra, the boy's sister, discovering this intention, helped him to escape, and placed him under the fatherly protection of Strophius, King of Phocis, whose son, Pylades, became his inseparable friend. In fact, their devotion to each other was so great, that it has become proverbial in every tongue.

Electra had not forgotten her father's base murder, although years had elapsed since it occurred; and when Orestes had attained manhood, she bade him come and punish those who had committed the crime. Orestes came, slew Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra, and then, terrified at what he had done, took flight, but only to be pursued by the Furies and Nemesis, goddess of revenge, sent by the gods to punish him for taking justice into his own hands.

Arrived at Delphi, Orestes consulted the oracle, and learned that his crime would be forgiven if he brought a statue of Diana in Tauris back to Greece. The young prince hastened thither, accompanied by the ever-faithful Pylades, who never left his side; and there, in a temple, he found his long-lost sister Iphigenia, who helped him obtain the image he sought, and accompanied him back to his native land, where Nemesis left him forever.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ADVENTURES OF ULYSSES.

THE Greek chiefs, on their return from Troy, were, as we have seen, all more or less visited by the wrath of the gods; but none of them endured as many hardships as Ulysses (Odysseus), King of Ithaca, the hero of Homer's world-renowned epic the *Odyssey*. During ten long years he roamed the seas, driven away from his native land by adverse winds, sailing about from place to place, losing his ships and companions, until at last the gods allowed him to return home. His marvelous adventures and numerous mishaps during these ten years form the theme of the *Odyssey*, which is about as follows.

After leaving Troy in ruins, Ulysses embarked with his men and spoils, and, favored by a good wind, soon came within sight of Ismarus, the home of the worthy and wealthy Ciconians. To increase the riches he was carrying home, he proposed to his army to land and storm the city, — a proposal which was enthusiastically received and immediately carried out.

Siege of  
Ismarus.

But when the men collected near the fleet, instead of embarking as Ulysses urged them to do, they began to drink the rich wine, to roast oxen whole, and to indulge in games and revelry. While they were thus employed and entirely off their guard, the neighbors and allies of the Ciconians came upon them unawares, and put many to death.

The Greeks, although taken by surprise, fought bravely; but it was only when the sun was fast sinking, that they finally embarked, and left the fatal Ciconian shores.

"Onward we sailed, lamenting bitterly  
Our comrades slain, yet happy to escape  
From death ourselves."

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

A hurricane soon arose. The flying clouds blotted the stars from view. The vessels, with broken masts and torn sails, were driven far out of their course, and, after ten days, The Lotus-eaters. reached the land of the Lotophagi or Lotus-eaters,—a people whose sole food consisted of lotus fruit and blossoms.

Three of Ulysses' best men were sent ashore to reconnoiter; but they had not gone very far before they met the natives, seated under their favorite trees, banqueting on their sweet food. These received the strangers hospitably, and made them partake of the lotus blossoms; but no sooner had the three men done so, than all recollection of their waiting companions or distant homes passed from their minds, while a dreamy, lethargic sensation stole over them, and made them long to recline there and feast forever.

"Whoever tasted once of that sweet food  
Wished not to see his native country more,  
Nor give his friends the knowledge of his fate.  
And then my messengers desired to dwell  
Among the Lotus-eaters, and to feed  
Upon the lotus, never to return."

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

Ulysses impatiently watched for their return; then, seeing they did not appear, feared some evil had befallen them, and set out, with a few well-armed men, to go in search of them. Instead of finding them in chains, as he fully expected, he soon perceived them feasting among the Lotus-eaters. Their eyes had lost all animation, and rested upon him in a vague, dreamy way, which aroused his suspicions. At the same moment some of the Lotus-eaters advanced to invite him and his troop to join in their feast.

"Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
To each, but whoso did receive of them,  
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave  
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,  
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;  
And deep asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
And music in his ears his beating heart did make."

TENNYSON.

In peremptory tones Ulysses quickly forbade his men to taste of the magic food, directed them to seize and bind their unwilling comrades, and forcibly take them back to their ships. There the magic effect of the lotus food soon wore away, and the men rowed steadily westward, until they came to the Island of Sicily, then inhabited by the Cyclopes, a rude race of one-eyed giants.

"A single ball of sight was fix'd  
In their mid-forehead: hence the Cyclops' name:  
For that one circular eye was broad infix'd  
In the mid-forehead:—strength was theirs, and force,  
And craft of curious toil."

HESIOD (Elton's tr.).

The main part of the fleet was stationed at another island not far distant, but Ulysses and twelve companions landed in Sicily in search of food. The prospect was promising, for on the plains and hillsides great flocks of sheep cropped the tender grass; and Ulysses and his followers soon came to a great cave filled with rich stores of milk and cheese. This was the abode of Polyphemus, son of Neptune, the largest and fiercest among the gigantic Cyclopean race. The Greeks' first impulse was to help themselves, since no one was there to say them nay; but they finally decided to await the master's home-coming, and courteously ask his assistance. They had moored their vessel under an overhanging cliff, where no one would be likely to find it, and had therefore no fear lest their means of escape should be cut off.

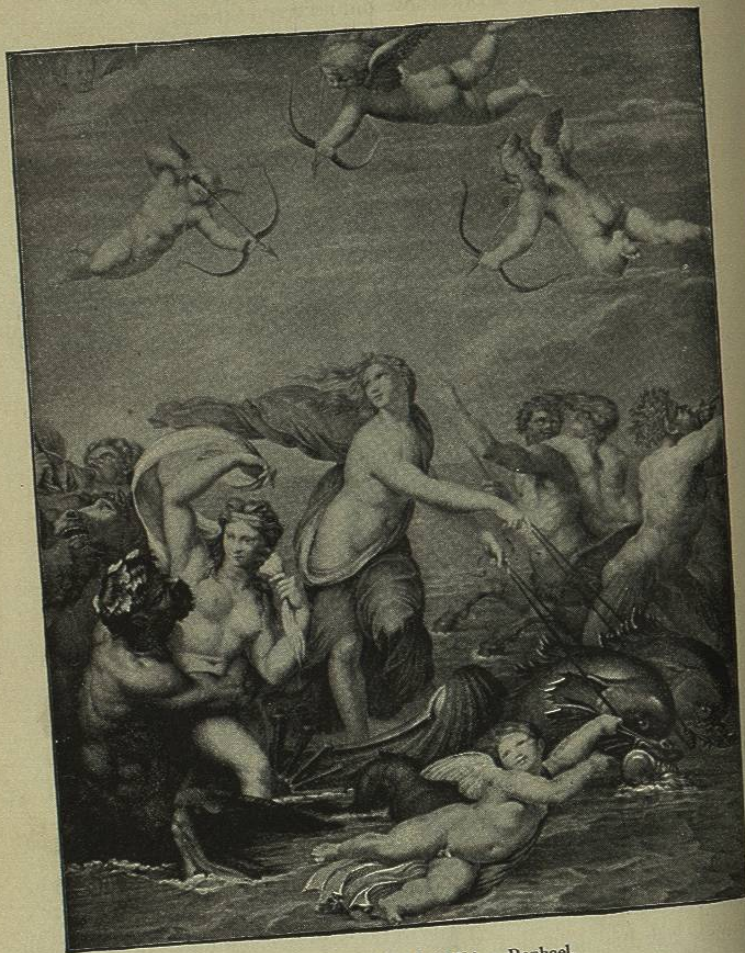
Polyphemus, the ugly giant in whose cave they were waiting, had once seen the charming sea nymph Galatea riding in her pearl-shell chariot drawn by bounding dolphins. Her unsurpassed loveliness made a vivid impression upon him, and he was soon deeply in love with her. He neglected his flocks, shunned his companions, and spent all his time near the seashore, watching for her, and bitterly cursing his fate, which prevented his seeking her in her native element, for the gods had cursed the race of Cyclops with an unconquerable aversion to water. He

— "lov'd  
Not in the little present-making style,  
With baskets of new fruit and pots of roses,  
But with consuming passion. Many a time  
Would his flocks go home by themselves at eve,  
Leaving him wasting by the dark seashore,  
And sunrise would behold him wasting still."

THEOCRITUS (Hunt's tr.)

To induce Galatea to leave the salt sea waves and linger by his side on the white sandy beach, Polyphemus constantly made the most extravagant promises; but the dainty nymph merely laughed at all his professions, and strolled on the shore only when he was sound asleep. Although she made fun of his love, she was not so obdurate to the suit of Acis, a very fascinating young shepherd, who had no need to call her repeatedly; for she always yielded to his first appeal, joyfully joined him, and sat beside him under the shade of some great rock, listening to his tender wooing.

Polyphemus once accidentally came upon them thus, ere they were aware of his proximity. For a moment he glared down upon them; then, seizing a huge rock, he vowed his rival Acis should not live to enjoy the love which was denied him, and hurled it down upon the unsuspecting lovers. Galatea, the goddess, being immortal, escaped unhurt; but poor Acis, her beloved, was crushed to death. The stream of blood from his mangled



TRIUMPH OF GALATEA.—Raphael.

(340)

remains was changed by the gods into an exhaustless stream of limpid water, which ever hastened down to the sea to join Galatea.

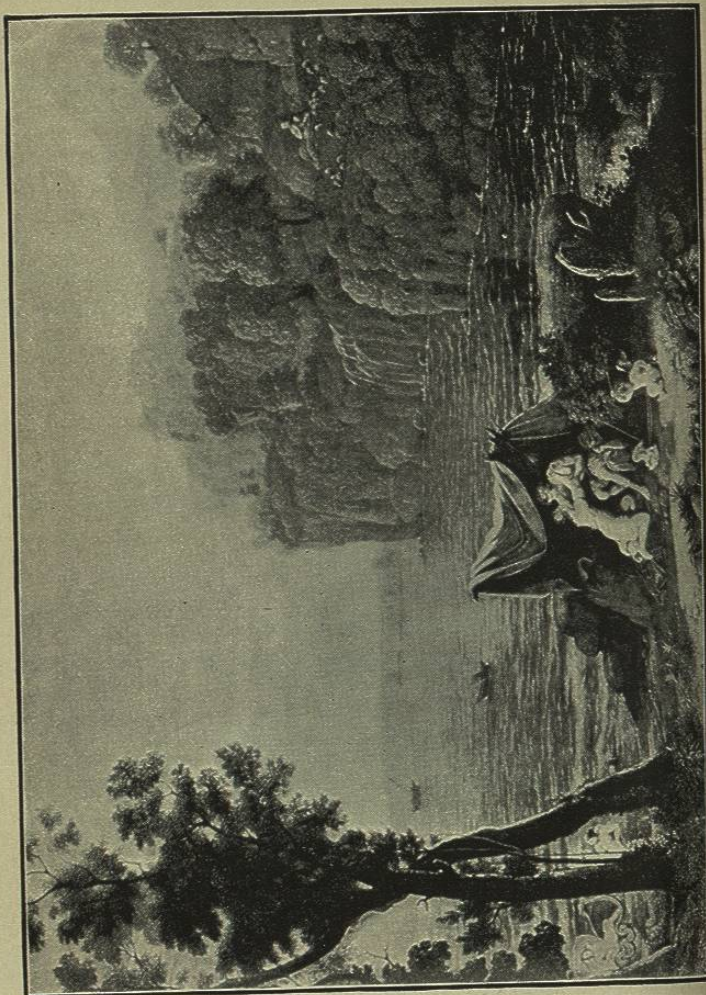
Ulysses and his companions, waiting in the cave, soon felt the ground shake beneath their feet, and saw the sheep throng into the cave and take their usual places; then behind them came the horrible apparition of Polyphemus, who picked up a huge rock and placed it before the opening of the cave, preventing all egress. Ulysses' companions had shrunk with fear into the darkest corners of the cave, whence they watched the giant milk his ewes, dispose of his cheeses, and make his evening meal. But the firelight soon revealed the intruders; and Polyphemus immediately demanded who they were, whence they came, and what they were seeking.

Ulysses, ever wily, replied that his name was No man, that he and his companions were shipwrecked mariners, and that they would fain receive his hospitality. In answer to this statement, the Cyclops stretched forth his huge hand and grasped two of the sailors, whom he proceeded to devour for dessert. Then, his frightful repast being ended, he lay down on the rushes and fell asleep, his loud snores reverberating like thunder through the great cave.

Ulysses silently crept to his side, sword in hand, and was about to kill him, when he suddenly recollected that neither he nor his men could move the rock at the cave's mouth, and that they would never be able to escape. He therefore resolved to have recourse to a stratagem.

When morning came, the giant rose, milked his flock, made his cheese, arranged the vessels, and then, without the least warning, again seized and devoured two of the Greeks. His brawny arm next pushed aside the rock, and he stood beside it with watchful eye, until all his herd had passed out; then, replacing the stone to prevent the escape of his prisoners, he went off to the distant pasture ground.

During his absence, Ulysses and his men devised a cunning



(342)

plan whereby they hoped to effect their escape, and made all their preparations to insure its complete success. A huge pine club which they found in the cave was duly pointed, hardened in the fire, and set aside for future use.

When the darkness began to fall over the earth, Polyphemus again rolled the stone away to admit his flocks, keeping careful guard upon the Greeks. The sheep all in, he replaced the rock, performed his usual evening duties, and then devoured two of Ulysses' crew.

When this part of the evening meal was over, Ulysses drew near and offered him a leather flask full of heady wine, which the giant Ulysses blinds took down at a gulp, little suspecting its effect. Polyphemus. Very soon he sank into a deep drunken sleep; and then the men, at a sign from Ulysses, heated the point of the huge club and put out his sole eye, in spite of his frightful cries and execrations, which soon attracted the attention of the other Cyclopes.

They thronged without the cave, clamoring to know who was hurting him. "No man!" replied the Cyclops, howling with pain, "No man!" which answer convinced his would-be helpers that he needed no assistance, and made them disperse.

"If no man does thee violence, and thou  
Art quite alone, reflect that none escape  
Diseases; they are sent by Jove."

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

Deserted by his companions, Polyphemus spent the night in agony; and, when the anxious lowing of his herd roused him at break of day, he fumblingly milked them, and prepared to let them go forth, as usual, in search of their morning meal. To avoid the Greeks escaping, he rolled the stone only partly aside, and allowed the sheep to pass out a few at a time, carefully running his hand over each broad back to make sure that none of the prisoners were mounted upon them. Ulysses, in the mean while, having observed this maneuver,

Ulysses'  
escape.

fastened his companions under the rams, reserving one for his own use, and watched them pass out one after the other undetected. Then, clinging to the wool of the largest ram, he too was slowly dragged out; while Polyphemus petted the ram, and inquired how he came to pass out last of all.

"My favorite ram, how art thou now the last  
To leave the cave? It hath not been thy wont  
To let the sheep go first, but thou didst come  
Earliest to feed among the flowery grass,  
Walking with stately strides, and thou wert first  
At the fresh stream, and first at eve to seek  
The stable; now thou art the last of all.  
Grievest thou for thy master, who has lost  
His eye, put out by a deceitful wretch  
And his vile crew?"

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

Ulysses, having thus escaped, sprang to his feet, set his companions free, rushed with them down to the seashore, taking the choice animals on board, and then, when his men had rowed some distance, raised his voice and taunted Polyphemus, revealing at the same time his identity.

"Ha! Cyclops! those whom in thy rocky cave  
Thou, in thy brutal fury, hast devoured,  
Were friends of one not unexpert in war;  
Amplly have thy own guilty deeds returned  
Upon thee. Cruel one! who didst not fear  
To eat the strangers sheltered by thy roof,  
Jove and the other gods avenge them thus!

Cyclops, if any man of mortal birth  
Note thine unseemly blindness, and inquire  
The occasion, tell him that Laertes' son,  
Ulysses, the destroyer of walled towns,  
Whose home is Ithaca, put out thine eye."

HOMER (Bryant's tr.).

With a cry of rage, Polyphemus then ran down to the shore, tore up some huge rocks, which he hurled in the direction whence